

AFFAIR RECOVERY TIMES

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THE FOUNDER'S CORNER

POWERLESSNESS AND UNMANAGEABILITY

"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Luke 1:38

It's not uncommon to hear a murmur of complaint when the concepts of powerlessness and unmanageability are raised. For the hurt spouse, these concepts seem to provide an unfair avenue of escape for those guilty of an offence. They believe these concepts may somehow transform the perpetrator to the role of victim, allowing them to escape responsibility for inexcusable actions. For the offender, these concepts present another obstacle. Their pride prevents them from accepting the harsh reality. Are they really incapable of doing better? Can it be true their best efforts have brought them to this place of failure? They know that if they only apply more effort that eventually they can overcome, that they can succeed.

I'd like to invite both the betrayed and the unfaithful

to take a fresh look at these concepts. In many ways, this is the beginning of the process. If we are unable to grasp these concepts, then we may never be willing to do what it's going to take to heal. This will be a two-part series. This month we will look at "powerlessness" and next month we'll explore "unmanageability."

The answer of a young girl in response to life-shattering news is astounding. Mary had just been told that she was to be with child and that it was to be the Child of God. Some of you may wonder what that type of event has to do with your situation, but there are many similarities and a wonderful example. For Mary this was a life-changing event. How many people were going to believe her story that she hadn't slept with a man? How many people were going to believe that she was actually carrying the child of God? Do you think she worried about what others would think? Do you think she struggled with who it was safe to tell? Do you think she might have been concerned about her upcoming

marriage? How do you think this impacted her



Founder Rick Reynolds

dreams of how life was to be? The fact is that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was facing a hard reality, and those impacted by infidelity also face a harsh reality. How do we respond when we are facing the reality of our impossible life changing? There are just some moments in life, when things are revealed to us or about us, that are so huge that life as we know it is shattered. How do we respond?

For many, the first response is an attempt to control or change the reality. The hurt spouse may try to cope by attempting to change and control their mate. They work desperately to save an out of control situation. They may become bitter about their lot

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HARBORING HOPE

In our continuing series of true firsthand stories of couples and their journey to recovery, we are proud to introduce to you the story of Don and Heather.

Don's Story

Compiled by Leslie Hardie

It's hard to understand how someone who was raised in a Christian home by godly parents, took his wife and children half way around the world to serve as missionaries and served as a deacon, Sunday school teacher and soloist in his church could struggle with sexual addiction as I have. It most likely started early in my childhood when one of my sisters took me into her room, undressed herself and me and became intimate with me. I was likely not even five years old at the time. This apparently awoke curiosities and desires in me far before I was able to understand and cope with such desire.

Later in my early teens an incident of voyeurism further awoke those curiosities and desires. My parents had allowed a young woman to board with us that I found somewhat attractive. On more than one occasion I would sneak outside at night to her bedroom window to watch her. Thus began an addictive cycle of fantasy and masturbation. I had some of the same "innocent" curiosities that most boys do, but I always wondered if somehow they might have been stronger in me than in most other boys. Through the years I struggled with mental fantasies and masturbation as a way to medicate my low self-esteem and frustrations. I knew this thought life was not pleasing to God but it was such a convenient way to escape from the realities

with which I was often displeased.

In college I met a girl who seemed to meet my every desire. We dated for about a year and a half, were engaged and married at the end of my senior year. That year and a half courtship was often a real struggle as we were so physically attracted to one another. While we did not have sexual intercourse before marriage, we came about as close as we could have without the very act. Having married, I hoped the sexual fantasies and lust would be gone for good. How naïve! For several years I did do much better and there was seldom if ever a



temptation to fantasize or masturbate. However, as we began to have children and our lives became centered more on them and less on each other, my mind once again began to wonder. It began while we were overseas with a missionary organization. On one occasion while on vacation my curiosity caused me to look through a keyhole in a door at a mission home where we were staying. I

had no idea if it were a guest's room or a storage closet and I have no idea what possessed me to look. For a brief moment I saw an attractive young woman partially unclothed and though I had not expected to see this I was strangely excited and aroused by the scene. I was beginning to be trapped by my own desire.

It wasn't until we returned to the United States several years later that my secret was exposed. By now I had begun a pattern of voyeurism that took me more and more into a dangerous secret life of hiding for which I was sure everyone would reject me. The moment of truth came when I was arrested for criminal trespassing, the legal term for window peeping. It came as a horrible shock to my wife, teenage children, extended family and our church. My family had put me way up on a pedestal and the higher you are the harder you fall!

Having been exposed I began having much needed counseling and accountability with other Christian men. Things went well for a couple of years until my company moved me across the United States. The move for my wife and I was like a new beginning. As with any big life change there was some stress and uncertainty. We knew very few people and it took some time to build a circle of friends. For me there was no one I could feel safe to which to be accountable. I began to slip back into a pattern of acting out this time with Internet pornography. It wasn't long before my wife discovered my new addiction and confronted me about it. Rather than humbly admitting it and accepting the need for help, I tried

HARBORING HOPE (CONTINUED)

to claim that it was between the Lord and me and I would work it out.

Tension continued to grow between us until in a counseling session she asked me to move out of our home for a period of separation. This came as quite a shock to me, and my first reaction was one of anger. I couldn't understand how she could risk the end of our marriage over this. I still wasn't able to understand that it was I who was risking our marriage. I moved out of our home into an apartment in town. Here I was on my own in an apartment complex where many younger people (women) lived. The temptation proved too great for me so two and a half months after moving there I was again arrested for voyeurism. This should have

spelled the end of my marriage but by God's grace it resulted in a new start with a miraculous healing in our marriage. I was humbled once again to realize just how low I could stoop to satisfy my

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own twisted desires. Through a series of group counseling sessions with other couples in similar situations, my wife and I began to have a better understanding of what had happened and how God could heal us. I began to understand

how selfish I had been to choose a pattern of behavior that was so offensive and disrespectful to the woman I loved.

There is hope in recovery from this addiction but it takes hard work and it can't be done in secrecy! The old lie that I can break this pattern of acting out without anyone else knowing what I have done has to be rejected. The fear that others will reject me if they know the truth must be confronted. The reality is that some may reject you... that's their problem. But for those who are honest about their own weakness and shortcomings your honesty will be respected. It's worth the risk to be free from the addiction.

Next month: Heather's Story

THE FOUNDER'S CORNER (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

in life and their extreme misfortune and become a victim with no solution in sight. The unfaithful spouse may respond with denial or minimization, or maybe they are angry, blaming their spouse and the deficits in the marriage for their failure. Perhaps they approach their failure with renewed promises to change and are motivated to work harder than ever at changing their defect of character. In my mind however, *any response not based in the recognition of our powerlessness puts us at severe risk of coming up with the wrong solution.* The field of dreams created by the refusal to accept the reality of our powerlessness becomes the fertile ground for bitterness, failure and self-condemnation. It is a place of false hopes where future disappointments are just waiting to occur.

If on the other hand we can accept our powerlessness and our weakness, then there is a "Way." The recognition

of powerlessness opens a brave new world of possibilities. In my own recovery it was refusal to accept my powerlessness that kept me trapped in a spiral of death. I just knew I could deal with the situation, that I could handle it, that I could overcome and be victorious. I just couldn't believe that a great guy like me was incapable of stopping these destructive patterns of behavior. In fact, I couldn't even accept the reality of how I really was. Refusal to accept my powerlessness allowed me to live in the illusion that my wife and my God were really fortunate to be a part of my life.

Refusal to accept powerlessness is what keeps the hurt spouse believing that he or she can be good enough to stop their wandering spouse, or to believe that their mate can actually change or be fixed so that they never do this again. There are no true solutions to this type of tragedy until we become willing, as Mary did, to move

into acceptance. Only when we accept the reality of our powerlessness and of our mate's powerlessness can we begin to live in the solution and not in the problem. I've learned through my journey that it was the acceptance of what I did, of who I was and of my own powerlessness that allowed me to finally escape from the insanity of utilizing old and ineffective ways of dealing with the problem, and to begin to truly address the unmanageability of my life. I learned that where I am weak He is strong, and that it wasn't about getting stronger- rather it was about being weaker. This month I invite you to take the first half of the first step, like Mary, and accept your situation and your own powerlessness. Believe it or not, that's the first step toward living in the solution.

Rick

AFFAIR RECOVERY CENTER

4131 Spicewood Springs Rd.
Building Q-1
Austin, Texas 78759

Phone: 512-346-9299
Fax: 512-345-3139
E-mail: believenow@sbcglobal.net

A Community of Hope and Healing

We're On the Web!
www.affairrecovery.com



**Affair Recovery
Center**

Affair Recovery Center is a community of counseling professionals and couples. Our professional counselors are dedicated to the restoration of marriages crippled by infidelity. Our organization includes numerous couples who have experienced the abundant blessings of reconciliation and renewal.

Our mission is to offer hope, support, and recovery for couples and individuals who have suffered the pain resulting from infidelity, betrayal, or sexual addiction.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

We are fresh off of another EMS weekend, and it was wonderful to see the changes in the participants from Friday to Sunday. The Holy Spirit was moving in wonderful ways, and it was a true privilege to be part of that.

One of the things that we do for each of our EMS weekends is to invite members from all over the country to

pray for the participating couples. It is a very reassuring gift to a couple who is going through very difficult times to know that people are lifting their marriage up in prayer.

Our next EMS weekend is scheduled for September 16-18. We still have space for those of

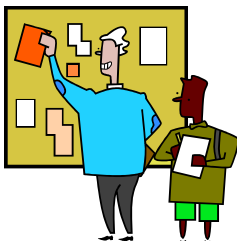


Dr. John Mark Haney

you who are thinking about joining us. You can take a look at the brochure on the web site or call us if you desire more information.

Of course, if you are not joining us, I know that the couples who are coming would truly appreciate your prayers.

THE BULLETIN BOARD



The Affair Recovery Center wants to announce our next EMS (Emergency Marital Services) weekend. It is an intensive couple's seminar that has helped countless marriages. It is scheduled for September 16-18. Call us or log on for more information, to register, or to request a brochure. Weekend lodging information is available.

THE PROFESSIONALS AT THE AFFAIR RECOVERY CENTER OFFER NUMEROUS SEMINARS FOR GROUPS AND ORGANIZATIONS. CALL US OR VISIT US ONLINE FOR A LIST OF LENGTHS AND TOPICS. WE CAN ALSO TAILOR A SEMINAR OR RETREAT TO YOUR NEEDS.