

CELEBRATE THE JUBILEE

CHAPTER ONE: WHATEVER HAPPENS HERE STAYS HERE

As Roger climbs the stairs he appears visibly burdened, not by age or the steepness of the steps. Rather a great emotional weight is pulling on his heart. An October sun is pouring harvest light through the windows of his small town church, and outside the trees are dressed in an autumn glow of red and yellow. Roger pauses at the top of the stairs and places his hand on the wooden sign scrawled painstakingly with the room's appropriate title, the Upper Room. He bows his head and prays that the Spirit will fill this Upper Room as it did in a similar room 2,000 years ago. He has arrived early to pray for the men he has been serving as leader of this Wednesday night men's group. Soon his prayer is interrupted by footfalls and the joking conversation of men as they enter this Upper Room.

ROGER 'Evening men. John, I'm glad you're here tonight.

ALL Hey, John—welcome—we're glad to see you—we missed you!

ROGER I had planned on continuing our Bible study in the Gospel of John tonight, but something happened to me a couple of weeks ago and I really feel like it's time to talk to you guys.

JEREMY Sure.

KEN Go ahead, Roger.

ROGER A couple of weeks ago, I was checking my email messages—like I just learned to do—

PHIL Well, it's about time you learned to do that!

ROGER Yes, I know, I know...there was this email message to click on a link and all of a sudden, half a dozen screens of pornography popped up! I was shocked! I couldn't believe what I was seeing!

PHIL That's called SPAM, Roger. You should never click on a link from an email message unless you're absolutely sure where it's from.

KEN Well, what did you do?

ROGER I couldn't close them fast enough. They kept popping up faster than I could close them.

KEN That's why I don't have a computer! I never did trust them.

ROGER Even though I closed them as fast as I could, a couple of those nasty images were burned into my mind. I turned off my computer and when I turned it back on again they were gone.

PHIL What about the message itself? Could you get rid of that?

ROGER Actually, no. I didn't delete it at first. But the worst thing of all is that every time I saw that message sitting there it made me think about those pictures.

Last night, it finally hit me that I was being tempted to sin just by leaving that email on my

computer. So I deleted it and realized that I need to tell you guys what happened.

GEORGE Phil, you set up my system, could that happen to me?

PHIL Oh yeah... It happens to almost everyone who's connected. Anyone who uses the net regularly is eventually going to get something like this. It goes with the territory. I read somewhere that everyday there are 2.5 billion porn emails sent^a

GEORGE Did you say "billion" with a B?

PHIL Yup. And the number is growing.

JEREMY There are a lot of bad websites out there too.

ROGER If there are that many pornographic emails going out every day there must be an awful lot of guys like me who are being tempted by them.

GEORGE Roger, I've known you for twenty years and I can't imagine that you would ever get involved with pornography! I'm not condemning you for it. But I'm just really shocked.

JOHN They're just pictures. Guys are exposed to that stuff all the time. It's not that big of a deal. It's not like they're *doing* something.

KEN What do you mean it's not that big a deal? Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount that if a man looks upon a woman to lust after her he has committed adultery in his heart!

JOHN I mean, they're just pictures! It's one thing to *do* it—sex I mean. It's another thing to have some pictures shoved in your face.

KEN I don't know, John. Do you remember about King David and Bathsheba? He was looking at his neighbor's wife, lusted in his heart for her, and ended up getting the judgment of God upon the whole nation!

JOHN But it's not like a person is really doing what David did by looking at some pictures. David slept with another man's wife, for crying-out-loud! Then he killed her husband!

ROGER We'd better talk about that word "lust" for a few minutes. What does it really mean?

PHIL Lust means "desire." To "want" something—to want it really bad.

ROGER Right. Let's look at a Scripture passage in James 1 that discusses the development of lust. I've been thinking about it a lot the last few days. Would someone like to read it? James 1:14, 15.

JEREMY *"But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death."*

ROGER When the word "lust" is used in the Bible, it usually refers to an *intense desire* which is *excessive* and *misdirected, and leads to sin*, like Jeremy just read. Sometimes it's used to describe the intense desire for money or power. But most of the time when we use it today we mean some kind of sexual experience.

Guys, I can tell you that those pictures sexually aroused me. Not only the images themselves when I first saw them, but also by the memory of them. And I call that lust!

I've heard that 70% of Christian men say they have struggled with Internet pornography ...

Now you can count me in that group...

I also know that a significant number of Christian men are tempted by it even more than I was. They can even become obsessed with it, addicted to it, and begin living a secret life.

When a man has a "secret life" it affects every area of his life; and for the Christian man, it affects every area of his ministry. Imagine that many men having a secret life with pornography! What kind of impact do you suppose that has on our marriages? Our families? Our churches? Our relationship with God?

GEORGE How big do you suppose this problem really is?

ROGER It's big. *It's very big!*

GEORGE How about if before next week we try to come up with some numbers to prove that? I'm not doubting you, Roger. But you know me—

PHIL We all know you, George—you old Bean Counter you!

GEORGE Ah, you guys. You've got me figured out don't you?

PHIL Back to our verse, what do those words in verse 14, "drawn away," really mean?

ROGER The word "drawn" literally means to "drag." It's a strong term in the original language the Bible was written in. It implies an intense action—almost aggressive. Sexual temptation is like that. It screams for our attention and tries to rope us and drag us in.

GEORGE Roger, I think I can talk about that.

ROGER Go ahead.

GEORGE You guys know that I've been around a lot longer than the Internet. Back when I was in Korea, we didn't have email or pornographic websites. The pin up posters that guys hung up in the barracks looked pretty tame by today's standards. But that doesn't mean we didn't have lust back then. Sexual lust is as old as civilization!

PHIL Pin up posters? You are old, George! Ha! Ha! Just kidding. We love ya, Big Guy!

ROGER Let's take a look at the words Ken quoted earlier. They're from the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:27-28. Jeremy, do you still have your Bible open? Can you read those verses for us?

JEREMY Sure

"You have heard that it was said, you shall not commit adultery...but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

ROGER It's obvious that sexual lust is connected to adultery. But let's explore that connection a bit more. Do pictures, like I saw, really count here? Jeremy, what do you think?

JEREMY I guess if they were just paintings or drawings, John's point earlier about "just pictures" might be true. But it sounds like you saw photos of real women.

ROGER That's true.

GEORGE And those posters we used to have were of real women. A lot of them were actresses or models. Some of them even came to visit us at the USO meetings...

The guys used to fantasize about having sex with them. So even though they were just drawings, they definitely made some of us lust after women. I'd say it's the same thing as adultery.

ROGER When Jesus used the word "lust" in this passage, it's sometimes translated as "covet" in other passages of the New Testament. Isn't that interesting? When you hear the word "covet" what do you think?

PHIL The Ten Commandments. The last one says, "Thou shalt not covet."

ROGER What does the rest of that say, Phil?

PHIL Something about not coveting your neighbor's house or his wife.

ROGER Right. So coveting suggests wanting something that doesn't belong to you. So here is another element in sexual sin. Not only is lust "intense desire" but also it's intense desire "for something that does not belong to you."

GEORGE That's exactly what happened with those pin ups in Korea. They wanted something that didn't belong to them.

PHIL It's really no different from looking at my neighbor's new BMW sitting in his garage. He paid \$50,000 for that baby. Man do I want one of those!

JOHN In your dreams, man. Only in your dreams...

ROGER Wanting a certain car or motorcycle or wishing you had as green a lawn as your neighbor can be lust too. But there's something about sexual lust that seems to be different from other kinds of covetousness.

JOHN But sin is sin. Y'know, how can one be worse than another?

ROGER Maybe one reason is because the consequences of sexual sin in marriages, families and societies are so devastating. The Bible is filled with stories that illustrate this. Does anyone remember the Old Testament story of Absalom's half brother and sister?

KEN Do you mean where Absalom's brother, Amnon, raped Absalom's sister Tamar?

ROGER Right. It's found in II Samuel 13. We don't have time to read the whole thing. So let me

summarize it for you.

David had a son named Amnon and a daughter named Tamar. They had different mothers. But Amnon lusted after Tamar. The Bible says she was very attractive and suggests that every time Amnon saw her he had an intense desire to have sex with her. He tried to convince her to sleep with him but, being a decent girl, she refused. That didn't stop Amnon, however. One day, he and a friend devised a scheme to get her into his bedroom so he could make his move. He pretended to be sick and said one thing that would make him better would be to have his dear sister Tamar make him a special meal—

JOHN You gotta be kidding! What a line—

ROGER But it worked. Tamar was sent to his bedroom. And then he demanded that everyone leave except her. And the Bible says he then demanded she have sex with him. When she refused, he violently raped her.

KEN If that were my daughter I would have strangled him!

ROGER Sadly, David really didn't do much about it, Ken. But that made Tamar's brother Absalom even angrier. So, Amnon ended up getting killed by Absalom.

Remember what James 1 said about lust leading to death? We certainly see it in this case. Amnon died physically. But notice what happened immediately after he raped her. Does someone want to read from II Samuel 13:15-18?

JEREMY Sure. Just a minute. Let me find it... Okay...

“Then Amnon hated her with a very great hatred; for the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her. And Amnon said to her, ‘Get up, go away!’ But she said to him, ‘No, because this wrong in sending me away is greater than the other that you have done to me!’ Yet he would not listen to her. Then he called his young man who attended him and said, ‘Now throw this woman out of my presence, and lock the door behind her.’”

KEN Scoundrel!

GEORGE I can really understand what happened there. As most of you know, I had an affair 15 years ago. Even though I continued to lust after her, and we even had sex together, it didn't satisfy my lust. The longer it went on, I began to hate her and myself. The more she began to depend on me emotionally, the more I despised her.

ROGER Why do you suppose that happens, George?

GEORGE In my case, I know why. Because as a Christian, God wouldn't let me get away with it. It was sin. It was wrong. It was destroying my own family and her marriage. And I was miserable.

JEREMY Wow, George. I didn't know that about you.

GEORGE I don't go around telling everybody about it.

JEREMY Thanks for telling us. I see something in common between your story, George, and Roger's.

ROGER What's that?

JEREMY Both of you did things in secret. You didn't want anyone else to know. And you didn't think anyone would find out. George, you thought what happened in that bedroom would go nowhere else. Roger, you thought that too. But now, here you are talking about it.

PHIL That reminds me of something. I was out in Vegas for a conference a while ago. They had these billboards that said, "Whatever Happens Here Stays Here."

KEN The Good Book says, "Be sure your sin will find you out!"

ROGER Yes. There are always consequences to sin. The promise, "whatever happens here stays here" is definitely a lie, especially when talking about sin. Those deep dark secrets that we think no one will ever find out about have an unsettling habit of coming to the light. Just when we think we've succeeded, it gets discovered. The things we think no one will ever know become known.

GEORGE That was certainly the case for me. I thought my adultery was a secret. I imagined I was hiding it from everyone. Of course, God knew, and I suppose I had a vague notion that I wasn't hiding it from Him. But I never imagined my wife would become suspicious.

KEN That's what they all think!

JEREMY How did she find out about it?

GEORGE Oh, I think women sometimes have a sixth sense about this thing. Our marriage was in trouble. I was growing emotionally distant. I was spending more and more time away from home. I guess she put two and two together.

PHIL I'll bet she was devastated.

GEORGE You'll never know what I put that woman through... And my kids...

ROGER That's right. The consequences of sexual sin are devastating. That's why sexual sin—especially Internet pornography -- is such a danger in our society right now.

Well, look at the time. I think we better wrap things up for tonight. George, you asked earlier that we all do some more research on the severity of the Internet porn problem. I agree. Let's try to do that this week. In fact, maybe we could try to talk to one other person about it: ask someone if they think it's much of a problem; see what others say.

Okay?

OTHERS Sounds good.

ROGER Let's take some time to pray for one another...

(As the men bow their heads in prayer, most are glad this meeting is over. This is a subject they have never discussed in a group before. One man in particular is staring off into space while the others pray. His hands are sweaty and he is feeling light headed. Privately he asks himself, What is going on with me? Why am I reacting

like this? Everything will be okay...He forces himself to relax.)

STUDY GUIDE: Chapter One

There are a variety of ways you can use the lesson material in Celebrate the Jubilee—by individuals, by accountability partners, families or groups. You have permission to duplicate or distribute the materials freely for non-commercial use. Here are some suggestions for ways to get the most out of Chapter One. Feel free to pick and choose from among them. If you have ideas we haven't thought of, we'd appreciate it if you let us know.

FOR ONE

- Read through the lesson in the chapter.
- Think about the issue of Internet pornography in your own life. Have you ever struggled with pornography of any kind? If so, when did it begin?
- What did the lesson mean by “a secret life?” Do you have a secret life?
- Read James 1:14, 15 and note the word “lust.” Can you rewrite these verses putting them in your own words? Can you personalize them so that you insert the word “I” or “my?”
- In what areas do you struggle with lust?
- Do you agree with Roger's statement that the consequences of sexual lust are likely more destructive than other kinds of lust? Why or why not?

FOR GROUPS

- Distribute copies of the lesson or ask the others in the group to download it for themselves and read it prior to coming together.
- If you have at least three people in your group, have each person read one of the parts out loud in the group. Some may need to read more than one part. If you want, you can even “act” it out (but you don't have to).
- Discuss the concept of “secret life.” When does a secret life become a problem? Ask if anyone is willing to share their own story of trying to lead a secret life? What happened because of it?
- Ask someone to read James 1:14, 15 and note the word “lust.” Talk about the meaning of this passage of Scripture together. After reading it, discuss the word “lust.” Do you agree with the definition of lust given in the lesson? If not, why not?
- Ask if others agree with Roger's statement—that the consequences of sexual lust are likely more destructive than many other kinds of lust. Why or why not?

FOR EVERYONE

- Be sure to spend some time in prayer. Pray that God will teach you about integrity through these lessons. Ask God to open your eyes to see where you can improve in this area.
- If you are using the material in a group and any personal problems were shared, remind everyone about the importance of respecting the person's privacy and not sharing personal information outside the group.

^a Pornography statistics 2003, www.familysafemedia.com/pornography_statistics.html

Copyright © 2007, 2008 by Covenant Eyes, Incorporated.

This document may not be reproduced or printed
in any form without written permission,
except for non-commercial use.

Covenant Eyes, Inc.
1525 W. King Street
Owosso, MI 48867
877.479.1119

www.covenanteyes.com

"Scripture quotations taken from the New American Standard Bible[®],
Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973,
1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation
Used by permission." (www.Lockman.org)