

CELEBRATE THE JUBILEE

CHAPTER FIVE: HELP! I NEED SOMEBODY

(As more and more men in the Group came to grips with the sexual temptations in their lives, there were moments of great emotion. Roger was encouraged on many levels. But something was still missing—not from the group as much as from his own heart. With that awareness, he came to the Men’s Group one night with a deep sense of heaviness and seriousness. As the men came into the Upper Room that evening they could sense the gravity of the situation. It was like walking into a funeral parlor. They spoke but in more hushed tones. There wasn’t the normal teasing and back slapping. Roger began to speak.)

ROGER Guys, I’m convinced that pornography is a much greater problem than we’ve realized. It’s apparent to me that Internet pornography is the greatest lifestyle issue facing the church in this decade. I know that’s a strong statement, but I think our experiences even in this group—not to mention the statistics we’ve seen—have proven that.

It’s devastating to the church when a staff member or pastor is found involved in pornography. We’ve seen how it can split a church wide open. It brings disillusionment to people who trusted and followed that leader. The whole church experiences a sense of betrayal.

And that’s not to mention that the person will probably lose his job. His family is now in shambles. And the church will have to find someone else to fill that position.

Think about those families for a minute. Think about their wives. Most Christian women don’t really grasp the hold that pornography can have on a man. On the other hand, more and more women are getting involved in pornography. In my research I’ve discovered when women get involved in Internet pornography it’s usually for different reasons—for companionship, because of loneliness, to make themselves feel special—but the number is growing, especially in chat rooms and other forms of cyber-sex.

The sin of Internet pornography is damaging churches, it’s ruining families, and it’s wreaking havoc in men’s personal relationships with God.

I told you guys a few weeks ago about my experience with Internet pornography. I didn’t tell you many of the details of the battle that raged inside of me—the battle with temptation. I’ve had some time to examine my own experience and I’d like to share some of that with you today. I do so because I feel there is more victory I need to experience in this area. I haven’t looked at porn lately—not since we’ve been sharing together. But I’m concerned that the deadly roots of lust are still very much alive in my heart. And I know that’s true for you as well.

Some of you know that I’ve been keeping a prayer journal for many years. It’s a very personal thing. Not even my wife has read it. But I’m so concerned about this issue I’m going to read you some of what I wrote in my journal during that time.

This is my journal entry on the Thursday when I first saw the Internet pornography.

THURSDAY

Dear Father,

God, forgive me for the thoughts I had today. I saw some Internet pornography. I didn't mean to at first, but once I saw it, something came over me. I am still whirling from it. And I have to admit part of me wants that feeling again. Oh God. I feel both euphoric and ashamed. Please help me!

When I saw those pictures—young, beautiful women, in suggestive poses—they did something to me. I was sexually aroused in ways I hadn't been for a long time. I wanted to see more. My breathing was shallow. I felt dizzy with anticipation. My stomach began to flutter with desire. I wanted to be young again. I wanted to be there in the picture with them.

Then, I started thinking about what I was doing. Thoughts of my wife flashed through my mind and what she would think and feel if she knew what I was doing. But no sooner had that thought passed through my mind and I mischievously realized she wasn't there—that no one else could see what I was doing.

But you saw me, Father! You were there. "Against Thee and Thee only have I sinned and done this evil in Thy sight... Create in me a clean heart Oh God, renew a steadfast spirit within me!"

That was Thursday. Now, let me read a section from Saturday of the same week...

SATURDAY

Oh God,

I did it again! I partook of the Forbidden Fruit. I saw that it was pleasant to the eye and lusted after it in my heart. Like Eve, I sinned against you. I transgressed Your law. I put myself back on the throne of my heart. I was king again. I was in control.

I foolishly left the disgraceful email in my inbox this week. I couldn't bring myself to delete it. But those images of shame kept crowding my mind—at

the most unforeseen times—like when embracing my dear wife, or speaking to my kids, or just sitting alone at my desk to pray.

I went back today to delete the link in my inbox. I still couldn't do it. I've been your child for almost 50 years, Lord! You've never failed me once. You've solved my greatest problem in life with Your Son, Jesus Christ. But I have truly failed You today. I'm held prisoner by a wretched email link in my inbox! It's consuming my thoughts and feelings; like an invisible arm choking the spiritual life out of me. I can't pray. I can't read my Bible. I can't kiss my wife. The image of shame is branded deeply in my brain.

"I see the members of my body waging war against the law of my mind, making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. Wretched man that I am, who will set me free from the body of this death?"

PHIL "Help, I need somebody . . ."

ROGER What was that?

PHIL The Beatles' song: "Help, I need somebody . . ."

ROGER You got that right, Phil. That, guys, is where I was just a few weeks ago.

GEORGE Roger . . . I don't really know how to say this. Maybe—been there, done that. But I've been there. I know what you're saying. When I was involved in that adulterous affair, I felt those same things. I just didn't know how to talk about it.

PHIL Thanks for being so transparent with us.

JOHN That took a lot of guts, y'know?

KEN Yeah, thanks, Roger.

GEORGE We love you even more than we did before all this happened.

ROGER Guys, multiply my experience by 70, 700, 7000! Do you realize how much of this is going on? Right now? I was on the road to having a secret life. Even the short distance I walked down that road affected every area of my life. If 70% of men are struggling like this, what kind of impact is this having on the church? On our church? On you?

I read that there are some 400,000 who call themselves "clergy" in North America. 400,000. If the statistics are right, half of them—200,000 admit to being tempted with Internet pornography. How many of those pastors are standing in the pulpits of their churches each week, praying in front of their congregations, preaching sermons from the Bible on Sunday—while Saturday night they are up late, maybe their wives and children are sleeping soundly, and they are secretly looking at pornographic images on their computers?

And that's just pastors. The number of Christian men who are not pastors is even higher. 70%. Seven out of ten—probably even more.

Listen you guys, I am feeling more and more burdened about this every day. As I talk to pastors now, I try to talk about the problem. I'm amazed at how many just refuse to admit it. Some say it can't be as serious as I'm suggesting. I'll have to admit that I get really concerned when I talk to any man—whether pastor or not—and he refuses to admit there is a problem. It really makes me wonder what's in his heart.

JEREMY Roger, can I say something?

ROGER Sure, Jeremy. Go ahead.

JEREMY Guys, **I'M A LIAR!**

JEREMY I lied to you guys! I lied to my wife! I've been involved with Internet porn for four years. And it was destroying my marriage. It was destroying me. Kate found out about it a few weeks ago. I was sitting in my office at home, looking at porn and she saw it . . . The night I told you, John, that I couldn't come to Men's Group? That was the day Kate confronted me. I didn't come here. I lied to Kate. I told her this is where I was going. Instead, I went to the public library and looked at some porn sites there. That's what I was doing while you guys were meeting here!

Kate insisted I get an Internet filter. She was worried about our son. We did get one. But just about anybody can get around filters pretty easily. And I did.

When things didn't get better between us, she eventually threatened to leave me.

I could have lost the most wonderful person in my life because of **stupid pictures! STUPID PICTURES, GUYS! That's what this is about!**

ROGER But not just pictures, Jeremy. You know that. There's more going on behind the scenes. Satan is having a victory party in the church today—the biggest Superbowl party in history. And it features Internet pornography. There is a spiritual dimension to this trap and I'm only just beginning to understand that part of it. Do you recall I talked about the chokehold those images had on me? I don't know exactly how it all works, but there was something holding on to me, something grabbing my mind and feelings. And it wasn't just flesh and blood.

KEN *“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood . . .”*

ROGER That's true, Ken. Paul said that in his letter to the Ephesian Christians. The Ephesians knew something about the supernatural world. 2,000 years ago, Ephesus had one of the most important pagan temples in the world—the Temple of Artemis or Diana. And that temple was the center of all kinds of prostitution, sorcery and astrology. In Acts 19, there is a story about the triumph of the gospel during Paul's first visit there. It says that the Christians, who had come out of their life of involvement in magic and astrology—brought their magic books and pagan

paraphernalia to a huge bonfire to burn it publicly as a demonstration of their repentance and confession. The total of the materials was 50,000 pieces of silver. That represented a lot of money back in those days.

It was to these dear Christians that Paul said, *“for our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.”* And you know what? Ancient Ephesus is not the only place that Satanic powers have set up shop. In Ephesus it was temple prostitution, magical charms and incantations, and sacrificing animals to a pagan goddess. But here, in our own country, Satan has used other methods to capture and torment his victims. I’m convinced Internet pornography is one of his chief means.

The pornography industry is one of the fastest growing in the world. Worldwide it is a \$57 billion industry—\$12 billion in the U.S. alone. Porn revenue each year is reportedly larger than the combined revenues of all professional football, baseball and basketball franchises! It’s that big. Now, don’t tell me this isn’t the biggest challenge facing the church in America in this generation!

There is a spiritual battle raging around us. Most of us don’t even realize who the real enemy is in this battle. But let me add quickly, even though the spiritual battle is fierce, the victory has already been won! And that’s what I meant by jubilee. Jubilee means that prisoners have been set free. And Jesus is our jubilee!

JEREMY I still need help, guys. I’m not over this yet. Roger, you just had one email link in your inbox. I have hundreds of porn pictures on my computer.

ROGER Let’s talk about jubilee today. Let’s see what we can do for Jeremy.

The word “jubilee,” as used in the Bible, means “a horn of celebration.” The Jubilee Horn was blown during the Season of Jubilee. Jubilee was a time in the national calendar picturing how God would redeem His people, freeing them from their bondage*.

That’s what we need, guys. We must learn to blow the Jubilee Horn. And I’ll tell you how we can do it. Are you with me? If not for yourself, then for the guy next to you. For me. For Jeremy.

KEN For my son-in-law.

ROGER Right. George, are you with me?

GEORGE Yes, Sir. It’s obviously a problem. We need to deal with it.

ROGER Phil?

PHIL Of course. I’ve struggled with it. I didn’t admit it to you, but I have.

ROGER Good. How about you Ken?

KEN Yes. If for no other reason than to help Jeff and Julie—but I’m still not getting a computer!

ROGER You won’t have to. John, how about you?

JOHN I guess if that’s what you guys want to do.

ROGER John, I think you might be struggling to understand some of this. But we’re here for you. And I hope you’ll join with us. Think of this as helping Jeremy. OK?

JOHN OK.

ROGER Jeremy?

JEREMY You guys don’t know how important this is for me. This is my life and my marriage. I have to do this—*whatever it is*.

ROGER We’re all in this together. I am proposing that we make a covenant together. We’re going to blow the Horn of Jubilee—together.

ALL OK.

ROGER Here is the Covenant of Jubilee. It is actually made up of seven affirmations or promises. I call them the Seven Jubilee Affirmations. To make them easier to remember, I’ve developed a simple acrostic on the letters J.U.B.I.L.E.E. I’ve also attached scripture memory verses to each one that I want us to learn together.

Seven Jubilee Affirmations

J – **Jesus is my true Lord and Master** – Romans 10:9

U – **Unless God empowers me, I am hopelessly bound by sin** – Ephesians 2:8,9

B – **Bible meditation is the key that sets me free** – Psalm 119:9,11

I – **I confess my sins to God and others I trust** – I John 1:9

L – Lust, Pride and Fear are chains that bind my heart, mind and actions – I John 2:15,16

E – Escape from sin bondage comes when I maintain integrity in my relationships
– Galatians 6:1,2

E – Everyone around me also needs a Jubilee

ROGER: Well, what do you think? Phil?

PHIL Roger. How can we really be sure we're able to do this? You talked about the chokehold of Internet porn. Isn't it dangerous to start making promises to God we can't keep?

ROGER Covenants, commitments and promises to God are very serious things, Phil. I agree. But so is integrity. When something like Internet porn gets a grip on us, we need strong tactics to overcome it. Rather than ask if it's risky to make a covenant with God, I would rather ask, is it more dangerous not to?

GEORGE So, how can we help each other uphold these Jubilee Affirmations? Do we just take each other's word for it? I mean, I think we all know that it's difficult to be totally honest, even with our friends, if we're in deep trouble.

JEREMY I think I can answer that, George, at least as far as Internet accountability. I've done some research on filters and other types of programs to help people stay accountable. There are some good programs out there that do this. They provide accountability so that every website I visit is logged and reported to my accountability partners Kate and Roger. The one I use even highlights websites that are questionable. Kate was really grateful when I told her I was going to do this. Because I offered to do it, I felt like a little trust was restored.

JOHN That sounds pretty scary! Recording somebody's web activity... is that legal? It sounds like an invasion of privacy!

JEREMY It is legal. For one thing, there's a contract I signed so I know it's there. But more than that, it's necessary.

JEREMY I can't tell you how liberating it's been. I voluntarily told my wife I was going to use this program, not just for her, but also for me. I wanted to be free from this sin. Now, it's like my wife is right there, looking over my shoulder, every time I use the Internet. For the first time in years I feel free.

ROGER Jubilee.

JEREMY Right.

ROGER That's what the sixth affirmation is all about: **E – Escape from sin bondage comes when I maintain integrity in my relationships.** The only way you can do this with the Internet is if you know that someone else knows everything you're looking at.

I think it's going to be important to memorize these Seven Jubilee Affirmations and to recite them together before each of our meetings; that way, we remember our covenant to one another.

GEORGE It sounds like you're planning that we continue meeting together. Are we all in agreement about that?

KEN Definitely. More than ever.

You know, guys. I've been pretty hardnosed about this whole issue. But what I've seen here, especially from you Jeremy, has really made me see things differently. I love you, Brother.

There are probably other guys in our church who are struggling with this same thing. Maybe we can help them prevent the kinds of problems Jeff and Julie are having.

PHIL Maybe we can get Jeff to come to our Men's Group.

ROGER Good idea. We haven't talked much about this concept yet, but the third Jubilee Affirmation is **B - Bible meditation is the key that sets me free.** The Jubilee process involves renewing our minds. Scripture says that our minds must be transformed and renewed. Does anyone remember where in the Bible it promises that God's Word can set me free from sin?

GEORGE I memorized that a long time ago. Psalm 119:9, 11 . . . *How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word. Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You.*"

I think about that verse a lot. Even though I don't have a problem with Internet pornography, I have enough sexual sin in my past that images are always there.

ROGER Yes, we all must do that. Romans 12:1, 2 reminds us that God's word transforms us by the renewing of our minds. I have to fall back on this promise a lot. I need my mind to be renewed and transformed.

I've put together a Scripture verse memory pack for each of you. There are seven Bible verses here. And over the next seven weeks we'll memorize one each week. These verses are designed to renew and transform our minds. See, it fits into your shirt pocket. I want you to carry it around with you everywhere you go. And when

you have a few minutes, start memorizing and reminding yourself of the verses you've already memorized.

JOHN This seems like a lot of work. I mean, I'm willing to try, but I don't know if I can handle it.

JEREMY I'll tell you what, John. Why don't we get together one night a week after work, and memorize the verses together. I need help too. We can also pray together . . .

ROGER I'm so delighted to hear you guys talking like this. This is exactly what it's going to take for this to work.

Earlier I quoted from Paul's letter to Rome. Paul says in Romans 7, "*Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?*"

The rest of that verse goes, "*Thanks be unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord...for the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the Law of Sin and Death...For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace...however; you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you...He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you...*"

As we will discuss in the weeks to come, God has promised His own Spirit to give us victory and to equip us to fulfill these promises we are making to each other. That's what the second Jubilee Affirmation is all about: **U – Unless God empowers me, I am hopelessly bound by sin.** The way God empowers us is by His own Spirit—the Holy Spirit—who lives inside all those who affirm the first one: **J – Jesus is my true Lord and Master.**

We aren't in this alone. We aren't just here together. God is for us. God is actually inside us. And if God is for us, who can be against us!

Are you guys ready? Starting next time we'll take one of the Jubilee Affirmations each week.

That evening, as the newly named Covenant Group dismissed, there was a new hope and strength for the men as they drove home. But there were hard things to deal with too. At Jeremy's home, there was not only the trust to rebuild with Kate; but Little Jeremy had discovered Internet pornography. The results showed up on an Internet accountability log. Jeremy realized then and there that his own battles would take on even greater significance now. He must have victory over this—not only for himself, but also for Little Jeremy.

(Later that night, in Little Jeremy's bedroom)

JEREMY Son, we've got to talk.

STUDY GUIDE: Chapter Five

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 Five. Feel free to pick and choose from among them. If you have ideas on how to improve this study, we'd be happy to hear from you.

FOR ONE

- Read through the lesson in the chapter.
- As you read Roger's journal entries what did it make you think of him? Could you write something that personal about your own secret sins and share it with a group of trusted friends? Have you ever done so?
- Do you think it was important for Jeremy to admit his secret life to the whole group? Why or why not?
- Read Ephesians 6, especially the sections that deal with spiritual warfare (verses 11 and following). Do you think there is an invisible war going on with pornography as weaponry?
- Print out the seven Jubilee Affirmations. Are you willing to make these personal? Are you willing to write out the verses and begin memorizing them? Are you willing to enter into a covenant group with others who are making the same affirmations?

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 whether Roger should have read his journal to the group. Why do you suppose he did this?
- Discuss Jeremy's admission of lying to the others. Do you think it was necessary for him to admit his secret life to everyone? Why or why not?
- Print out the Seven Jubilee Affirmations and distribute them to everyone. Ask if they are willing to enter into a covenant using these affirmations as the basis for it.

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 areas 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.

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