

THE LDS CLASSIC BESTSELLER

THE *Worth* OF
A SOUL

A PERSONAL
ACCOUNT OF
EXCOMMUNICATION
AND CONVERSION

STEVEN A. CRAMER
AND LAUREL CRAMER

Publisher's Note: *The Worth of a Soul* was first published in March 1983 using the author's pen name, Steven A. Cramer. It was republished under a new title, *The Worth of Every Soul*, in February 2004, with the author's real name, Gerald Curtis. It also included his wife, LoAnne Curtis, as a coauthor.

We are pleased to once again bring you this powerful, heart-rending story, now in a brand new edition, published under the former title and using the author's pen name, Steven A. Cramer. LoAnne, or Laurel Cramer, is also included in this edition.

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This book would not be possible were it not for the example and support of our family, past and present. Worthy ancestors who preceded us paved the way for our deliverance from our own trials. Our living family, close and extended, sustained us in every way possible. We gratefully acknowledge their contribution to our eventual recovery.

We express our deepest gratitude to George Pace, who first opened my mind to the availability of Christ's power and grace as "the way" out of darkness and captivity. And to Charles Beckert who then helped my heart to soften so that I could be released from bondage to the past and accept Christ's way.

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We gratefully acknowledge all those who shared their hearts and their pains with us, for it was the discovery that their sorrows, problems, and frustrations were so similar to ours that encouraged us to share what we have learned and gained through ours.

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PROLOGUE



In 1976 I was released from my calling as a bishop. I was living a clean and worthy life when I was called to serve in that position, and I continued to do so while I served in that office. But after I was released my life quickly fell apart and in less than two years I was excommunicated. This book will tell you why that happened and how it could have been prevented. It will explain how, as a young boy, my life got tangled up in sexual abuse and the subsequent addictive compulsions which eventually led to my excommunication and which almost destroyed our marriage. It will describe thirty years of failure as I struggled to overcome those addictions, with all the attendant despair and self-loathing.

And then you will read of the incredible rescue that I received from our Savior, Jesus Christ. In fact, I will tell you the entire story of my rescue from that life of failure, addiction, suicidal depression and shame, how he saved our marriage and our family, as well as how he helped my wife through the heartache I caused her. We will share with you the success story of how he changed my heart and my nature, setting me free from addiction, and giving us both a new life of freedom, peace, joy, and self-respect so that we could experience his grace and grow in his love.

Most important, we will explain the gospel principles that make it possible for every person to experience the same kind of rescue and change of heart. My wife, Laurel, will also explain how the Lord supported and sustained her as she suffered the abuse, betrayal, and heartache that my sins

imposed upon her for so many years, with the hope that those spouses who are currently suffering similar trials can find the help they need to journey through their pain.

I can still remember that early morning as though it were yesterday, when I answered a knock on our front door. My heart pounded wildly and my hand trembled as I reached for the knob. Even though I had been expecting this and knew who it was, I opened the door with fear and apprehension. I glumly said good morning to my bishop and the high priest he brought with him as “a second witness.” There was an awkward silence as we stared at each other wordlessly. These were my brethren—men with whom I had prayed and served and counseled. But now I was without words to express my despair. The mixture of grief and pity that I saw in their faces manifested the intense discomfort they felt on my behalf. They handed me an envelope from the stake president. I already knew what it contained: the summons—the summons to a Church disciplinary council where the status of my membership would be decided. The procedures at that time required it to be delivered in person by “two trusted Melchizedek Priesthood holders” who could then stand as witnesses that the accused person was properly notified of the action pending. They stammered a few clumsy words, trying to express their regret, but soon turned awkwardly to leave, not really knowing what to say.

What *can* be said at a time such as this when, for one brief moment, time is frozen? A time when injured hearts are breaking and the heavens are weeping over the loss of another child of God. Weeping, not in condemnation or anger, but in the knowledge of the many heartaches to come, yet with that perfect and stubborn love which does not lessen—even in these unfortunate circumstances. For a brief moment, as I watched my brethren leave, I actually felt more sorrow for their pain than I did for my own. I shut the door and opened the letter, already knowing what it would say: “Dear Brother Cramer, You are hereby requested to appear before a high council court in the high council room for investigation of your conduct in violation of the law and order of the Church.” The words blurred as bitter tears of remorse, confusion, and frustration flooded my eyes. With a trembling hand, I wiped the tears away and read the rest of the letter.

You should be present with witnesses, if you desire them, at the time and place specified. If there is good reason why you cannot be present, please notify the undersigned in due time. In the event of your absence, without excuse, action must

necessarily be taken in accordance with the evidence presented and the established procedure of the Church in such matters.

My excommunication process had begun. I thought I knew what it would mean to open the door and receive that summons, but I was wrong. As I finished reading the letter and the tears increased, I could hardly know that the intense anguish and torment which I felt at that moment, and which I had *already* caused in the hearts of my loved ones, had only *begun*. As I stared at those unbelievable words, I had absolutely no conception of the horrible struggle that lay ahead for myself and the loved ones I had betrayed. But Satan had been there before, with many other victims, and he knew well the sorrow and heartache that was about to come into our family. Destroying marriages and families are among his greatest victories, and I am certain that somewhere nearby he and his diabolical helpers were rejoicing over the delivery of that letter; rejoicing that they were about to receive yet another victim of their deceiving lies and skillful manipulations. After twenty-eight years of struggle to gain my soul, he was at last going to have me fully within the grasp of his evil power. Because he had finally persuaded me to violate sacred temple covenants, I was about to be expelled from the Church and kingdom of God—the church I had loved and spent all my life serving to the best of my ability; the church on which I had turned my back and polluted with deliberate sin of the most serious nature; the church that would now be required by the laws of God to expel one who had broken solemn temple vows and deliberately violated sacred covenants between himself, his God, and his spouse.

Yes, Satan was most surely rejoicing, certain that he had won. But Satan was wrong. His victory would only be *temporary*. It was true that he now had me wrapped securely in the chains of hell. But unknown to me, the Savior was already planning my rescue. Now that I know him better, I realize one of the main things Christ does is to plan the rescue of those who are willing to be rescued. He will rescue them not only from their sins and addictions, not only from weaknesses and bad habits, but also from broken hearts and broken relationships. His rescue extends to *every* heartache, resentment, and negative emotion which keeps us from believing and receiving his love and healing forgiveness which is so abundantly available if we will only accept it.

At that time, after a lifetime of sexual addiction and failure to live up to the spiritual standards taught by the Church, it was beyond my belief or

comprehension that I could ever become clean, pure, or acceptable to the Lord. I had no understanding of what it means when the Lord changes your heart and makes you *new*. At that time I could neither understand nor conceive the freedom, joy, and resulting feelings of self-worth that are possible when we allow God to change our hearts and our natures, transforming us beyond the carnal nature of our fallen flesh. At that time, my perceptions of being obedient were based only on what I could do to restrain my evil desires with my limited willpower and self-discipline that (after twenty-eight years of failure) I already knew were unquestionably inadequate to overcome my sinfulness or to make me worthy before the Lord.

As the Lord guided us through the coming years, my wife and I would both learn that *nothing* is impossible for Christ if we will allow him to do his work within us. The time would come when I would be delivered from my sinful addictions by the majesty and power of his redeeming love and Atonement. Before this horrible experience was over, I would learn that it is never too late to repent. By the time I was fully rescued, I knew that absolutely everyone who will respond to the Atonement is within the reach of Christ's perfect, unconditional, and unwavering love. I think, as I wept and stared at that letter, that somewhere in the heavenly courts above, the beautiful words of the Savior to his grieving Apostles were echoing again: "Ye shall weep and lament...and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy" (John 16:20).

In the original book, *The Worth of A Soul*, I described the things we experienced through my years of addiction, the excommunication, my recovery, and rescue. However, looking back twenty-five years later, I realize that the picture I painted was not complete, for we had not yet stepped back far enough to appreciate its full significance. Since that original version of our story was published, we have met many who continue to struggle through addiction, broken marriages, and despair, because they do not know how to come to Christ to be rescued.

It has been our privilege to work with hundreds of individuals and families who have experienced defeats similar to ours. We deeply appreciate the trust these people have placed in us, and the insights they have provided by sharing their struggles with us. Through them we have learned that the path to rescue and victory is seldom the same for any two people or families. This is because we all come to him with differing needs,

backgrounds, weaknesses, and failures. But there are basic principles that apply to all of us, key ingredients that can guide us in our individual paths to the Savior. We also come to him with different misconceptions, weaknesses of faith, and common barriers of unbelief and doubt that must be overcome before we can part the veil to grasp that divine hand that will lift us beyond the fallen, carnal flesh. We will attempt to identify all these processes as we have come to understand them through our own experience.

We have been led to an increased understanding of Satan's power to deceive and manipulate. More important, we are convinced of Christ's power to heal and rescue individuals, families, and marriages, no matter how long they have been in Satan's grasp, no matter how completely they have been enslaved, and no matter how deeply the wounds were inflicted. We have experienced the lifting, changing power of his infinite Atonement and know that it brings great joy and peace to the suffering soul. And we know that when proper principles and faith in Christ are applied, the "natural-man" dilemmas that keep so many of us from obtaining victory will be overcome.

Because God never changes and because he is no respecter of persons, his blessings are equally available for every person. Thus, the personal journey of discovery and rescue we will describe is available to every reader. It is our earnest desire that by sharing what we have learned during the last twenty-five years, others might also experience our Savior's mercy.

Since that first publication, we have been besieged with requests for more information from my wife. I appreciate her valuable insight and aid in this retelling. You will recognize her text by the following font:

When I look back over my life and its trials and adversity, I don't see anything that is earth-shakingly different from anyone else's trials and sufferings. We are all sent here to learn and grow through the things we suffer. Your pain may originate from a different trial than mine, but we all experience pain. And the grand purpose of pain is to bring us to Christ.

For some, coming to Christ is a sudden, revelatory experience, while for others it is a gradual, step-by-step process. But for all of us, the goal is the same. Your life's experiences may be more valid and valuable than mine in helping another person. But because I believe we must all reach out to each other in an effort to come to Christ together, I am willing to share my pain and my progress along that path if someone else may benefit by it. To

that end I am willing to relate some of the principles I have learned and the insights I have gained on our mutual teles-tial trek of tears. This is also an opportunity for me to bear unwavering testimony that, after all we can do, it is Christ who brings us home.

Note: All italic emphasis in quotations is the author's unless otherwise noted.

1

HOW I GOT INTO TROUBLE



The seeds of addiction that led to my excommunication were planted by the sexual abuse I encountered as a young boy. To explain how an innocent boy with a strong Latter-day Saint family background fell into a life of immorality that eventually led to suicidal despair and then excommunication, this chapter is divided into five sections: the sexual abuse that was *the origin* of my problems with sexual addiction, the *consequences* of the choices I made in regard to that addiction, how the addiction *escalated* in spite of my efforts to stop, the various *things I tried* to overcome the addiction, and the *things we have learned* looking back from a perspective of thirty-two years later.

ORIGINS

As a child, I was taught the gospel in the home and was expected to live it. I think I did a pretty good job of it until age twelve, when I was sexually abused by my father's friend and employer. He taught me to masturbate, a practice that was completely unknown to me until then. There had been other relatives and friends(?) of the family who had abused me sexually before this man did, and there would be more in my later teenage years, but this was the pivotal event, because he told me this secret practice was something that must be taught to all boys to develop their manhood. He ordered me to never reveal or discuss this practice with my parents—an order most abusers give to their child victims. He persuaded me to keep it a secret by convincing me that it would be terribly embarrassing and

humiliating to my father to have to discuss such things, because my dad, crippled with polio, was “not fully a man.” He claimed he was doing my father a favor by explaining this to me for him. Nevertheless, my conscience warned me that something was wrong with this man’s instructions, and after his initial introduction, I abstained from the practice of it for a long time. Eventually, however, the day came when natural urges and the curiosity of puberty overcame my apprehension. It is significant that the first time I decided to perform this act on my own, I distinctly heard a voice from the other side of the veil, warning me not to do it, but to go and discuss it with my father.

Oh, how I wish I had heeded that warning! But I did not. Instead, I chose to go ahead and experiment. That single act of disobedience was soon followed by another, and another, until it eventually grew beyond a youthful habit to become a compulsive addiction, an obsessive behavior which would dominate my life and keep me enslaved through thirty years of heartache and despair.

CONSEQUENCES OF MY CHOICES

Even though the spiritual dangers and consequences of masturbation were never discussed in my home or priesthood classes, this secret habit made me feel dirty. As the years passed and I became more and more dependent upon the practice, my feelings of guilt also grew, creating within me a haunting sense of inferiority. I avoided friendships. I never felt worthy or comfortable with others. I learned to distance myself so that no one could ever get close enough to discover my dark secret.¹

At the end of high school I received an academic scholarship to our local college, but having no goals or ideas about what to do with my life, I decided to join the Air Force. Since I grew up in various small towns, I never had the opportunity to attend seminary, but in the Air Force I discovered a love for the scriptures, and I began to rapidly grow and mature in the gospel. In the first six months, I read the standard works from cover to cover. The spiritual strength I gained was a great help in trying to overcome my habit, and the closer I grew to the Lord through prayer and the scriptures, the greater the guilt I felt whenever I indulged in the practice. Then, two years after joining the Air Force, I married a girl I had known for just a few months during the first part of my senior year of high school. Not

only were we very young, immature, and ill-prepared for the adjustments required in a normal marriage, but we were also completely unprepared for the trials that lay ahead because of my addiction to masturbation.

ESCALATION

I had expected that marital sex would bring an end to my addiction, but to my surprise and confusion, the compulsion for this act of self-abuse actually increased. I can now understand why that was so. Because of the feelings of inferiority and guilt that had accumulated during the previous eight years of shame, I not only found it difficult to *give* Laurel honest affection, but also to *receive* the love she tried to give me. The resulting loneliness, confusion, and discouragement continued to drive me back to the same form of self-gratification time after time.

Then, for the first time in my life, I discovered pornographic magazines and everything changed. Viewing these presentations of nudity fueled my lust beyond anything I had ever fantasized. It added a new and obsessive dimension to the temporary comfort and escape that my previous self-abuse had provided. I was now caught by a filthiness and more powerful carnality than had ever been there before.² As my dependence upon pornography grew, the addiction developed so much power over me that I was constantly vulnerable to it, even when it was not part of my thoughts or intent. For example, every time I felt lonely or discouraged, if Laurel and I had an argument, if I saw a pin-up, or even if I noticed someone else looking at a pornographic magazine, my body would start shaking and I'd break into a cold sweat. My face would turn white and my heart would pound wildly. I would find myself seized with an overwhelming compulsion to indulge in that vile trash, consumed with desires that I had not planned or chosen. Like an alcoholic or a drug addict, I was "hooked," believing the delusion of every addict that indulgence would somehow ease the pain and make me happy.

I tried very hard to overcome these two rapidly growing addictions. Sometimes, by setting goals and making endless promises to myself and to God, there were times when I withheld myself from sin for several months at a time, and this was wonderful. But during those periods of abstinence, the *other* part of me, the rotten part that loved the sin, would be growing stronger and more insistent. The pressure to give in was like water building

up behind a faulty dam. The longer I abstained, the greater the pressure I felt to give in and the weaker I grew. No matter how hard I tried to prevent it, sooner or later my resolve would weaken, the dam of my resistance would crack, and the accumulated pressure of months of abstinence would wash my willpower away in another flood of indulgence.

Sometimes I could resist these diabolical attacks, but even when I was successful in a temporary resistance, I would be haunted by it for days, wondering what I had missed. For example, one morning some years later, I got up early to do some yard work. As I took my first load of trimmings to the alley, I found two discarded pornographic magazines lying on the ground behind our fence. I immediately began to shake and tremble, filled with an overwhelming desire to pore over the nudity I knew would be displayed therein. Somehow I managed to throw them into the bottom of the garbage dumpster and bury them under the trimmings. That should have been a victory. But the carnal part of me was so terribly haunted by what I had missed in those magazines that within a few days I gave way to the pressure of desire and fell into another cycle of indulgence.

When I lost control and gave in, I often went on pornographic binges, much like an alcoholic who goes back to drink after a period of abstinence. Sometimes I could throw off these devastating cycles of surrender in only a few days, but often they extended to several weeks of rampant lust. I would eventually become so saturated with the filth that it became abhorrent and disgusting to me. Overpowered by self-loathing and shame, I hated myself for what I was doing and for what it was doing to me. Somehow that self-disgust and guilt would give me the strength to throw it off and begin another cycle of repentance.

I cannot adequately describe the fear and helpless insecurity I felt as I found myself being swept away by desires and compulsions that had grown beyond my personal power to resist. Now I understand that is the nature of addiction. These problems did not persist because I didn't care or didn't try hard enough. Even though there was a part of me that was content to continue in the sin, I, the spirit person inside, the real me was determined to conquer this monster and live worthy of the celestial kingdom at all costs. But while my periods of repentance were sincerely genuine and fraught with great shame and remorse, the temporary "high" produced by the evil combination of pornography and masturbation made it seem worth any price that must be paid. As the years passed, I became a living "Doctor

Jekyll and Mr. Hyde” kind of person in my cycles of indulgence and repentance. I felt desperate because of this emotional roller-coaster ride. It is a horrible way to live. I struggled for another twenty years trying to overcome or manage that double life.

THINGS I TRIED

I tried everything I could think of to overcome the evil that was controlling my life. I attended all my church meetings regularly. I immersed myself in the scriptures and church work to the point of fanaticism. I loved my opportunities for service in the Church and served faithfully in many positions, including four stake missions. For most of the addiction years I read the four standard works cover to cover each year. But I didn’t know back then that merely reading the words will not change you until you add faith to the promises you read. Marking the interesting verses will not change you either. Though my mortal eyes were scanning the promises of deliverance, my spirit was blind to their real message, the message that only Jesus Christ could save me from the spiritual prison that was binding me with the chains of hell. I also fasted frequently and prayed constantly for deliverance. As sincere as those prayers were, however, in my ignorance of the Savior’s power to change my nature, those thirty years of prayers were little more than desperate begging. They were not the prayers of faith, which can pull down the powers of heaven, because they were not based with confidence in what the Savior has revealed he can do to free people from such situations.

During my cycles of repentance, I also read dozens of motivational, therapy, and self-help books to try to understand myself and learn how “the experts” could help me overcome my compulsions. These philosophies of men were helpful, because they taught me how our attitudes and thought processes relate to behavior. I learned about the powerful, self-defeating effect that a negative, failure-focused mind can have on our beliefs and expectations. So I set goals and tried to fill my life with positive affirmations. I still benefit from doing that today. For example, one of my favorite affirmations is “My body is a temple and my mind is the holy of holies.” Another is “I am a disciple of Christ, therefore, I will never deliberately choose to do something that would disappoint him.” I hope I never stop using such positive input, but I now understand why man’s

wisdom and willpower, unaided by Christ, will never be enough to change a heart or a fallen nature.

Over the years I have come to understand that there is a danger in relying too much on the wisdom of men, because all those terrestrial philosophies of “positive thinking” are designed to build faith in our own power rather than Christ’s. Of course, it is important to have self-confidence and positive expectations, because, as someone said, “The will to do something springs from the knowledge or confidence that we *can* do it.” But one of the most difficult lessons for the natural man or woman to learn is that the confidence to live worthily must be based in Christ and his power, rather than in our own limited abilities, because “there is no flesh that can dwell in the presence of God, save it be through the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah” (2 Nephi 2:8).

I can now see that many aspects of those self-development books were harmful to me, because they fed my delusion that somehow, if I learned enough, if I persisted long enough and tried hard enough, someday I would triumph and heal myself of this evil part of my nature. I have seen this same mistake made by hundreds of other determined, well-meaning people. This seems to be a mistake typical of the natural-man’s prideful expectation of fixing himself instead of allowing his weaknesses to teach him to rely on the Lord. Perhaps that is why Alma counseled his son Helaman, “Teach them to withstand every temptation of the devil, with their faith on the Lord Jesus Christ” (Alma 33:37). And perhaps that is why he taught his son Shiblon (and us) the spiritual formula that “as much as ye shall put your trust in God even so much ye shall be delivered out of your trials, and your troubles, and your afflictions” (Alma 38:5). As Paul said:

And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power: That *your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men*, but in the power of God. (1 Corinthians 2:4–5)

Eventually, with increasing resolve and self-discipline, my periods of abstinence lasted longer and the cycles of indulgence grew further apart. I found myself serving in positions of increasingly higher responsibilities within the Church, and I loved it. But the righteous times were always haunted by the threat of that ever-increasing pressure behind the faulty dam of my limited willpower. Because I had not yet received the mighty change of heart that comes through the “born again” process, deep inside there was

still that fallen, carnal part of me that loved the sin. Eventually, no matter how hard I struggled to resist, the evil on the inside would win, and I would plunge into another cycle of sin. As the years passed, the cyclical addiction grew more powerful and frightening, because each time I fell, my indulgence went deeper and lasted longer than before. Every time I fell, another part of me died. Each fall destroyed more of my self-image.³ The shame and insecurity were devastating. It became more and more difficult for me to decide which part of me was Doctor Jekyll and which part was Mr. Hyde. It became harder and harder to hope that I could ever conquer myself.

CONCLUSIONS—WHAT I HAVE LEARNED

My torturous up-and-down cycles lasted through twenty years of marriage and eight children. During all this time, Laurel did what she could to support me, trying to understand and help. In spite of the incredible pain this betrayal inflicted on her, she was patient and forgiving. But it was not a problem she could solve for me. Whether it is drugs, alcohol, or pornography, no wife can solve such problems for her husband. There would be many bitter lessons before I finally learned that it was also not a problem that I, an imperfect, fallen being could solve either, because spiritual death can never restore life to itself. Indeed, my addiction would never be conquered until I learned how to turn it over to the Savior and *his* power.

There really were two parts of me, both fighting for mastery. The first and most important part was my eternal, but now very wounded, spirit. That part of me was determined to conquer this addiction and live worthy of the celestial kingdom. But deep inside there was also another part of me that was equally determined to continue in the sin. That second part was the fallen part of me, the “natural-man” part, which made *me*, the spirit person inside, vulnerable to the carnal lusts that held me in a prison of uncontrollable desires. At that time I did not understand that this dual existence is a normal part of mortality and is the same conflict every mortal being faces as part of their probation, whether in addiction or not. I did not understand that we all *inherit* a fallen nature and vulnerability to sin just by being born as a descendent of Adam, so I made the mistake that many of us make: I added to my problems by condemning myself for my vulnerability

instead of turning to the Savior for the rescue and change of nature which he is so eager to provide.

Eventually I would learn that only God has the power to change our hearts and fallen natures so we no longer *need* or *want* improper behaviors. Eventually I would add my witness to that of King Benjamin's converts, who testified "the Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent ... has wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that *we have no more disposition* to do evil, but to do good continually" (Mosiah 5:2). I had read those words many times. I even had them underlined, but I was blind to the essential steps that must come before any of us can receive that precious and mighty change of heart and nature. First must come the recognition that we can never save ourselves, that we must all surrender our needs to a higher power. "And they had viewed themselves in their own carnal state, even less than the dust of the earth" (Mosiah 4:2). I was an expert in that part. I was a master at admitting my sin and beating on myself for my filthiness and unworthiness. But I always got stuck there, and it would be many years before I could move beyond that focus to the fulcrum that King Benjamin's people described in the rest of the same verse:

And they had *viewed themselves* in their own carnal state, even less than the dust of the earth. And they all cried aloud with one voice, saying: O have mercy, and *apply* the atoning blood of Christ [to us] that we may receive forgiveness of our sins, and our hearts may be purified; for we believe in Jesus Christ, the son of God. (Mosiah 4:2)

But at that time I was blind to his power to help me change and become what he wanted me to be. I was buried in filth and degradation. I was forty years old and fighting the same battle I had begun at the age of twelve. I was without hope because I was enslaved by an evil that had grown beyond my power to resist. I was without hope because I could not think of a single thing I could do that I had not already tried over and over during all those dark, dark years. When would this struggle end? Time was running out. In this state of hopeless despair, I was about to encounter the next major change in my life, a change that would break every heart and wound every soul who had stood with me through all those trying years.⁴

NOTES

1. Such damage to important relationships is one of the worst consequences of secret sexual sin.
2. This may seem strange in today's world of easy Internet, cable, and satellite access to pornography, but such things were not available during my years of addiction.
3. Struggling with poor self-image is not limited to excommunicants or people in addiction. For more information, see "The Goliath of a Poor Self-Image" in my book *Conquering Your Own Goliaths*.
4. The reader should understand that in today's society, there is nothing unique about the two addictions that held me prisoner. Unfortunately, the abusive self-gratification of masturbation and pornography have become two of Satan's most common and deadly weapons, causing tremendous heartache to the person who misuses the sacredness of his or her mind and body, as well as the loved ones who struggle to understand and forgive the problem. Over the last thirty-two years there have been hundreds who have shared with us similar stories of broken lives and marriages from the addiction to pornography. Our Church leaders are totally correct when they warn us, with increasing emphasis and frequency, that pornography is just as addictive and destructive as drugs and alcohol, if not even more so. Feeding upon its own awful lust, the viewing of pornography creates an ever-increasing hunger for more filth. Like a runaway cancer, it is never satisfied, but demands more and more of our time and passion until the victim can scarcely think of anything else and becomes willing to abandon everything of importance just to satisfy the cravings.

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