

Crucified with Christ

An Encouraging Word

Crucifixion

Same Meaning – Different Application

The Holy Spirit drew me to this verse this morning in my QT to remind me I had once memorized it and need to keep this powerful thought of the Apostle Paul at the forefront of my mind.

Jesus was crucified on a cross in the literal sense for me and you. While we may never be nailed to a cross, He expects us to be crucified, nonetheless, in all areas of our lives in obedience to Him and demonstration of our love for Him.

"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me." (Galatians 2:20 NASB)



Adultery in the Christian Church – The Scarlet Letter Revisited

People usually associate adultery with sexual sin of infidelity. God and Jesus both give us different perspectives for the church.

“Secret Sins” – Finding Forgiveness

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“...be sure your sin will find you out.” (Numbers 32: 23 ESV)

Pastor Thomas got caught. The fourth *desperate man* character in the book, *All Men Are Desperate Whether They Admit It or Not*, Thomas made a rather stupid mistake that uncovered his “secret sin” of pornography—forgetting to close out one of the porn sites he frequented on his computer. One day when her iPad battery was dead, his wife decided to check Facebook on the computer in his study. Uh-Oh!

What she saw stunned her. As she checked the URL history in the drop-down menu, she began to weep bitterly because this was no discovery of a random act. Many of the sites led straight into the abyss known as the *dark Internet*. How could her husband, a Christian father and pastor, get involved with something evil like this? Composing herself, to the extent this shock allowed, she went in to confront Thomas—his “secret sin” was secret no more.

No one wants to get caught doing something he knows is wrong or violates a trust—especially when it brings consequences that devastate our families, as well as our own lives. But that kind of forward-thinking does not precede sins such as pornography and others from the realm of “lusts of the flesh” Satan uses to tempt us. He has one purpose in mind—enslave ours.

Jesus’ warning in the Sermon on the Mount seemed over the top when we first read it. From Matthew 5: 29, Jesus said, *“if your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away...”* Surely not. But then He gave it again in Matthew 18. We know Jesus wasted no words when He taught. And when He

said something twice, it was not to get out attention—that should have happened the first time. It was to save us from ourselves. Both passages speak to the consequences of not taking sin seriously enough—Hell.

[I want to interject here I am not a licensed, professional Christian counselor. Dealing with any addiction and/or secret sin revealed (and the consequences) usually requires that level of help. If this is where you are, I strongly urge you to seek that level of help. Do not think you are strong enough to climb out of the abyss by yourself. Going downhill alone into such is not that difficult. Climbing out alone is impossible. There are many qualified Christian counselors whose methods are biblically based. Find one!]

Finding Forgiveness is a two-way proposition. Unfortunately, we only control one side of the deal. This is one of the rare times that demands we focus initial attention on ourselves. Three biblical prerequisites come to mind to facilitate the process and give it a chance to be successful. These are based on many years of working with hundreds of men from all walks of life dealing with these and related issues.

1. We must **confess our sin**. The sin most frequently discussed among Christians is *someone else's*! Admitting we may have a problem is lame. Admitting we have a problem and are willing to consider addressing it is still weak. Admitting we have a problem with sin is the correct biblical response—also the hardest. Why? Easy answer—PRIDE.

David provided the best examples of *true confession*. Despite his issues (and there were many), he was the only one God called “a man after My own Heart.” I believe that is, in large part, because David spent time confessing his sins to the Lord. He taught us to understand that our sin is first against God.

“Against You, You only, I have sinned and done what is evil

in Your sight, so that You are justified when You speak and blameless when You judge.” (Psalm 51: 4 NASB)

He also taught us the consequences of holding onto or harboring sin—physical and emotional pain.

*“When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away
Through my groaning all day long.” (Psalm 32: 3 NASB)*

Confessing our sin means we own it and accept responsibility for the consequences.

2. We must **ask for forgiveness**. When our youngest son was a little boy, he came up with what he thought was a sure-fire means of avoiding time-out or a spanking. Sometimes even before being confronted with his misdeeds, he would begin running around repeatedly saying he was *sorry*. As you might have guessed, those attempts, though well-conceived for a little boy, were unsuccessful.

He was not sorry. He was just sorry he got caught!

So it is with many of us. Caught in the act or confronted with our transgressions, we respond in much the same way hoping it gets us off the hook or mitigates liability and consequences. We are not sorry—just sorry we got caught. The Apostle Paul helps us understand *true sorrow*:

“Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.” (2 Corinthians 7: 10 NIV)

The difference is evident to all involved. A repentant heart turns from sin, seeks forgiveness, and desires to reconciliation. That leads to the final prereq.

3. We must **commit to the process** of healing and restoration. Let's begin by stating two truths.

- *The unconditional love of God, in concert with His grace*

and mercy, makes His forgiveness immediate. He even promises to go beyond forgiveness and forget our sins. (Isaiah 43: 25)

- *Unfortunately, because we are still human, that is not often the case with those whose lives are wounded or crushed by our reckless sins.*

There are many verses about our need to forgive others—even warnings about not doing so. Here are three that focus on the keys to success.

*“Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who **confesses** and forsakes them will obtain mercy.” (Proverbs 28: 13 ESV)*

*“And whenever you stand praying, **forgive**, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.” (Mark 11: 25 ESV)*

*“So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First **be reconciled** to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.” (Matthew 5: 23-24 ESV)*

God knows the human heart better than any of us because He created it—after His. He also knows most of us require time to work through the process of confession, forgiveness, and, ultimately reconciliation. I hope those verses and words of encouragement do three things for Christians:

- Draw us closer to the loving, forgiving heart of God Who reconciled us to Himself in Christ.
- Encourage those who need to engage in this painful process to do so.
- Strengthen those who are engaged to see it through to the end God intends.

This is the hardest work assignment God gave us this side of

Heaven.

Your desperate brother in Christ,

Walter

Review of previous lessons:

Thus far we drilled deeper into the lives of three of the five *desperate* men whose stories begin my most recent book, *All Men Are Desperate Whether They Admit It or Not*. One key takeaway from each is this:

We have more in common with these “desperate men” and their issues than we would like to admit.

- The Addict – The Addict and Is the Christian Man
- The Prisoner – “Not all prisons have bars.”
- The Rich Man – Taking Our Turn in the Crucible of Wealth
- The Pastor – Secret Sins

Secret Sins – Things We (Think We) Hide from God

“Secret Sins” – Things We (Think We) Hide from God

“For nothing is hidden...nor anything secret that will not be

known and come to light.” (Luke 8: 17 NASB)

When our youngest son was a toddler if he could reach the cookies, left too low on a shelf, he would grab the bag and take off. He had two hiding places—in the curtains or under the comforter on our bed. It was comical to watch the covers shake and hear giggles coming out while he celebrated getting away with something because he “hid” himself from us.

As funny and silly as our son’s thought process sounds to us as adults (thinking he was getting away with something unseen), we do the same kinds of things when we attempt to hide our “secret sins” from others—especially the Lord. But, in our case, the Lord is not standing at the door smiling or trying to keep from laughing. He is not amused. His expectation of men who claim to be biblical Christians-devoted followers- is a continuous striving for perfection. (Jesus’ words in Matthew 5: 48)

Many sins readily fall into the category “secret sin.” As you may expect, and I am about to confirm in ways many may find startling, pornography has *wormed* its way to the top of the heap.

Pornography is the most well-known and popular “secret sin”—Satan’s most effective weapon against Christian men and pastors.

Consider these published sobering statistics that include only Christian men and pastors. If they do not get your undivided attention, check your pulse.

- 54% of pastors said they viewed pornography in the last year; 37% admit it is a current struggle.
- 95% of Christian men admit having looked at porn; 54% do so with some regularity.
- 18% of born-again Christian men admit to being addicted to pornography. (That is > 1 out of 6.)

Consider these stats on millennial men—the first generation raised in a large percentage of single-parent, absentee dad homes. They provide a scary glimpse into the future if we fail to act.

- 77% view pornography at least monthly; 36% do so daily; 32% admit having an addiction.

(FYI, the number of women, especially young ones, viewing and becoming addicted to pornography is increasing rapidly.)

This sexual sin, that leads readily to addiction, glides in low, like a stealth bomber, undetected until the problem is upon us. Such was the case with Pastor Thomas in the book where it snuck in through a misspelled URL during a web search. Most men are very visual—especially when it comes to sexuality. The first glance can be innocent (as it was for this pastor). But not so those second and third looks! They draw us in like a fly into a spider's web. If you recall that poem, the fly went away initially but eventually returned for another look and got a little too close to the web. Once ensnared, getting free becomes a war.

The impact of issues with and addiction to pornography cannot be overstated. The fallout is widespread, affecting many areas of our lives. Closer to home, collateral damage creates casualties by inflicting deep wounds—beginning with our wives and children.

The apostle John listed “the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes” (1 John 2: 16) as two of three primary categories of sins in the world today. Both contribute to incredible numbers cited above. The third category, “pride of life,” keeps men enslaved—we are too proud and ashamed to confess it.

Secret sins are areas of our lives we deliberately hide from others and think we hide from God.

Only God knows the extent of the truth of this statement, but

I believe it safe to say all men harbor *secret sins*. Pornography is only one of them. They include *thoughts* and *behaviors* that, if exposed, would create issues, some serious, for the man believing they are hidden.

Before searching the Scripture, I imagined having trouble finding a key verse that would speak directly to *secret sins*. I was shocked. I found specific verses spoken by Moses, David, Isaiah, and Jesus. The fact that these mighty men of God and our Lord Himself addressed it requires no further explanation.

(Moses) *"You have placed our iniquities before You, Our **secret sins** in the light of Your presence."* (Psalm 90: 8 NASB)

(David) *"When I **kept silent about my sin**, my body wasted away...groaning all day long."* (Psalm 32: 3 NASB)

(Isaiah) *"Woe to those who **deeply hide their plans from the LORD**, And whose **deeds are done in a dark place**, And they say, 'Who sees us?' or 'Who knows us?'"* (Isaiah 29: 15)

(Jesus) *"For **nothing is hidden** that will not become evident, nor anything secret that will not...come to light."* (Luke 8: 17 NASB)

I chose to end the first part of this lesson here so you can reflect on the Word of God and allow the Holy Spirit to invade the most private areas of your heart regarding your secret sins, especially pornography— perhaps the most challenging sin affecting Christian men and pastors today.

I will follow up soon with the last two parts:

- Part Two: Secret Sins – Finding Forgiveness
- Part Three: The Key to Successfully Staying Out of the Web

From one desperate brother in Christ to another,

Walter

Review of previous lessons:

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Are You Your Own Worst Enemy?

So many people are their own worst enemy – down on themselves more than the world. This message provides three solutions.

Disappointment with God

Forgiving God is one of the hardest things the human heart must do. Sound crazy? Read more...

How Much Is Enough? The Rich Fool

Jesus had a lot to say about wealth and rich people. Some of it is scary. Not all was meant for people with a lot of money.

“Not all prisons have bars. Some live in the Prison that is your PAST.”

The saddest thing about this prison is we sentenced ourselves to do time there.

Mother's Day Tribute to Gigi Spires – amazing wife and incredible mother

The timing of this worked out well, despite the fact that I had planned to write it for a while now well in advance of Mother's Day.

A quick search through the men's lessons archives of this ministry reveals a tribute I wrote three years ago that esteemed and blessed our mothers and the mothers of our children. This one needed to be written specifically to and for Gigi, my wife and mother of our children.

Some will think this is personal with no purpose being a blog that gets posted, and that's fine. But most men do not know how to bless and esteem our wives and mothers of our children. Perhaps your dad was a poor example of this biblical mandate to honor the women He placed in our lives. Or maybe you have simply become, like so many of us men, consumed with everything else in your life that receives more honor and attention than it should-displacing our wives as second only to Christ in our lives.

The women God placed in our lives very often demand from us less than is due them and serve tirelessly without calling attention to themselves or seeking affirmation we should so obediently heap upon them. So let this meager attempt of mine serve to help or encourage you do that which, for many, may be overdue.

Wife. Gigi Rook entered my life in 1982 through an introduction at a Singles' group at Central Church in Memphis, TN. She is a native of that city and graduate from what was known at the time as Memphis State University. We dated about four months, were engaged six more, and married August 6, 1983.

Gigi took the biblical role of a wife and 'helpmeet' very seriously. The old KJV used the phrase *helpmeet—a helper (eve) suitable for Adam*. Gigi was (is) that in my life. While I took my role equally seriously, I am certain she filled hers better than I did. Gentleness and grace are among her virtues that stood out most and filled some of the many gaps in my life.

[I have spoken to thousands of men over the last four decades and share the following as often as it fits and sometimes when it does not. *"Marriage is God's hardest assignment this side of Heaven."* It

really is. It takes commitment and hard work to stay married. The commitment is to God first and then our spouses. The hard work is required to build a biblical marriage. Even harder work is required to maintain it or repair damage caused by attacks of Satan, our fierce enemy, and selfish remnants of our carnality that insists it is all about me.]

Gigi has been more than accommodating, forgiving, and unselfish over the course of our thirty-four years of marriage. There is a great verse toward the end of the book of Proverbs that is attributed to Solomon. He asked the question:

"An excellent wife who can find?" (Proverbs 31: 10a ESV)

In the margin of my Bibles, I wrote many years ago, "I did." And then wrote in the date of our wedding.

Mother. I could write another book on the early years of our marriage dealing with serious, painful issues related to becoming parents. In less than two years, we went through three miscarriages and a full-term stillbirth of our first daughter. The pain was excruciating-overwhelming and unbearable except that Gigi and I are believing believers. Enduring all of that was our first real test of faith and our marriage.

Many marriages crumble after such hardships. But the Holy Spirit intervened. He brought healing and forgiveness to our brokenness, and filled the holes in our hearts because He alone could. Finally, despite the expert medical opinions that we would never have children, the Lord God Who is our Father blessed us beyond hope with three amazing children.

I always knew Gigi would be an amazing mother. All that happened to bring her to that point only strengthened her resolve. My children have the best mother, hand-picked by the Lord to love and nurture them as only she could and did. I am thankful that they know this and esteem her. Yet, I hope they read this every Mother's Day and

remember to do as the Bible commands—honor her and rise up and bless her.

For all my shortcomings as a husband and father, I can say that I did my best to do that and make sure my children did so as they grew up in our home; even in the difficult teen years. Dads, it is critical that you do that for your wife and teach your children what it means and looks like to honor their moms.

I cannot move on without a couple of comments on the second-most difficult time in Gigi's life—her battle with Lyme Disease. The physical and emotional toll this took on her for several years was so painful to watch, much less endure as she did. Yet, she grieved more over the time away from and events missed during the high school years of our youngest son more than the pain she experienced. We praise God that after years of trying so many possible helps and treatments, she did find freedom and deliverance from the continual pain and many of the side effects. She has only minor flare-ups these days.

Dedicated Homemaker. Despite what you think, this is not about how well Gigi made our houses into homes and a safe, loving nest for our family because she did that so well. She had more practice than most. We recently moved into our twelfth home together in thirty-four years of marriage. I always tell men I am just glad to still be married to the same woman after such a journey. She has been an amazing pillar of support through what has at times been very exhausting, mentally as well as physically.

www.gigisellsnashville.com The context in which I use the phrase, *dedicated homemaker*, now refers to another stage of life in which she pours her time, talents, and gifts into helping others find and establish their homes. I never nagged Gigi about anything during our many years of marriage except for one thing. As our kids got older and hit the driving (we don't need you around now, Mom and Dad) years, I strongly encouraged her to become a realtor. She was born for this helpful role.

Gigi's dad was a home builder and spent many years in the building supply business in Memphis. She majored in a related field in college and used her talents in our twelve homes spread out across the southeast. She is the most conscientious people person I know, despite my bias. So I knew that if she ever chose to do this on her own, she would be the best at helping others do what she had done for us so many times. I gladly toot my own horn here because I was right. She does an amazing job.

So my dear Gigi, here we are thirty-four years into our marriage, having successfully raised three kids who are in Christ, and now not so patiently rocking babies in the nursery as we wait on grands! I am so thankful for your life as my wife and the incredible mother of our children. Here's to many more (years, that is, not children except grands!) I love you.

Walter Spires Guest Blog for Lifeway Men

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Great honor to be able to contribute to this excellent resource for men. You can help Desperate Men as a ministry and me as an author/teacher by going to this link and commenting. Thanks for your encouragement and support.

Walter