

## Steve's Testimony

Steve is a counseling client of Dr. Tim Barber

I come from a strong Christian family. I've been educated and ordained as a Christian minister. I have served on the mission field, sung in the choir, and worked in various ministries in the church. I am a husband and father of a good Christian family.... And I struggle with sex and relationship addictions.

My story began early. I was the youngest of 9 children. There were no particular abuses in my family; no substance abuse, no physical or emotional abuse. I came from a good, hardworking, conservative, God-fearing family. My story began when my oldest brother, a pilot during the Vietnam conflict, was listed as missing in action. This event impacted my whole family. For me, my self-worth was on the rocks. I tried to be "good enough" to deserve my parents' attention, but it never seemed to be enough. All I wanted was to feel wanted.

In my pre-teen years I was taken to a counselor. The advice I remember still to this day from him and my parents was that I would "out-grow" these issues. But I didn't outgrow the pain and disillusionment of my own inadequacies and poor self-worth.

I knew God "loved" me, but I wasn't sure He "liked" me. My gut instinct kept me from accepting that love. I could never be good enough for Him; I'd always believed I had to earn His favor. But earning it always eluded me. I've struggled my entire life to find a way to live a "NORMAL" life. But the addiction in my life never disappeared. I didn't grow out of it. I couldn't control it. It controlled me.

In high school I became active with a youth group and began a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. I became active in my church. Did my life change because of my encounters with Jesus Christ? Yes. Did my addictions go away? No. With insufficient tools to deal with my emotional pain and baggage, I kept hidden and closed the area of my life where my pain was real and my addiction lived.

My addiction continued even after marriage. I wrongly believed that marriage would fix it. Instead, I have brought pain to my wife and children. Anger, being emotionally distant, and eventual legal problems have brought more pain to my loving wife than either of us thought possible. My addiction and my behavior have caused her to doubt herself. She burdened herself with a sense of responsibility for what I thought and did. My remorse was never enough. Remorse doesn't cure addiction.

Eventually, through the help of family and our church, I was able to confront the lies that had been so much a part of my life. It hasn't been easy. My road to recovery has had many ups and downs. The layers of my addiction and resulting behavior have been many. It has taken years to peel away these layers through much counseling, tears, and prayer. It has been more than a thirty-five year struggle. The layers of protection and defense that I piled on have been difficult to shed. I cannot change the choices I made so long ago. But I can face my pain.

My recovery has helped me develop relationships with other people through accountability. I have faced reality instead of living in fantasy. I have begun to develop a level of accountability

which I have never allowed before. Now I can share openly, with transparency, my thoughts and feelings. My participation in men's ministry has broadened the number of relationships in which other men keep me accountable to my walk with God, as well as my relationships at home and out of the home. I can function in the world without being a slave to my addictions.

I am now active in a recovery program in our church. In that, I find strength for my own journey as the layers of deception continue to be peeled away. It also gives me the opportunity to encourage and walk alongside others in their journey of recovery from their hurts and habits. Together we find encouragement one day at a time. God has been faithful through it all. He loves me and wants to help. Philippians 1:6 reminds us God is faithful to complete His work in us.