

# AFTER

Overcoming His Secret Life with Pornography

# SHOCK

A Plan for Recovery

I'd like to put this book in the hands of every wife who has experienced the trauma of discovering that her husband has turned to pornography. Reading *Aftershock* is like sitting down with empathetic counselors who offer a roadmap to recovery.

**GARY CHAPMAN, PhD**

Author of *The 5 Love Languages*

JOANN CONDIE

*with Jeremy Keeton*

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GARY CHAPMAN, PHD, author of *The 5 Love Languages*

*Aftershock* is a hands-on, biblically grounded resource that will guide you toward hope and healing. From their expertise and many years of experience, Joann and Jeremy provide compassionate and practical advice to address the real-life questions and experiences you are facing. This book will remind you that you are not alone!

DR. JULI SLATTERY, clinical psychologist; author of *Rethinking Sexuality: God's Design and Why It Matters*; president of Authentic Intimacy

I'm always excited when another quality book rises up to offer hope, tools, and healing to women devastated by betrayal. When a woman faces the devastation of a cheating husband, there is no such thing as too many resources. She will need to hear other women's stories of hope, she will need to understand the forensics of sexual addiction, and she will need wise godly counsel. Joann and Jeremy provide this through their book *Aftershock*. The voices are honest, hopeful, and full of biblical wisdom. This is a must-read for any Christian woman's healing library.

MEG WILSON, founder of Hope After Betrayal Ministries and author of *Hope After Betrayal: Healing When Sexual Addiction Invades Your Marriage*

This book is absolutely crucial for a woman to read as she walks through recovery from her husband's issues with pornography or sexual infidelity. Far too few resources exist for this problem that is plaguing countless marriages across the country and around the

world. When a wife finds herself reeling from the impact of her husband's choices, she needs sound, trustworthy, biblically based advice. *Aftershock* can be that trusted voice in your journey. This is not a path that any one of us can navigate alone. This invaluable resource can gently guide you into how to face your emotions, construct a plan to work with your husband, and find hope to stay the course as you go through the ups and downs of recovery. We wish this book had been available when we walked through a restoration process over a decade ago. We learned many of these exact same insights from expert counselors and teachers. But *Aftershock* packs all of that wisdom into one powerful "roadmap" for your recovery. We highly recommend this book for anyone facing the tumultuous journey from loss and betrayal to hope, healing, and freedom. There is joy on the other side!

NICK AND MICHELLE STUMBO, Pure Desire Ministries

With dozens of captivating anecdotes, practical advice, and sound integration of theology and psychology, *Aftershock* offers help and hope to wives deluged by their husbands' secret sins. Condie and Keeton guide you through the ups and downs of a personal recovery that offers your marriage the best opportunity for reconciliation. This is the book I've been needing for over two decades, to use in my own practice specializing in the treatment of sex addiction.

ROB JACKSON, MS, LPC, certified clinical sex addiction specialist

I'm excited *Aftershock* is available. I personally know the authors, and for years, I've followed their work in the area of marriages struggling with pornography or other sexual addictions. *Aftershock* does not give an empty guarantee to the reader that everything will

be “happy ever after.” What it does provide is a balanced, honest, straightforward explanation of the problem and a practical, doable plan—a plan that helps the reader see the problem clearly, confront her husband, and recognize what true, long-lasting recovery looks like. If you find yourself reeling in the aftershock of discovering your husband’s pornography addiction or affair, I would highly suggest you read this book before doing anything else.

TIM SANFORD, licensed professional counselor and author of several books, including *Forgive for Real: Six Steps to Forgiving*

Women who discover their husbands are involved in pornography experience a myriad of emotions—from shock to anger to heartache to a deep sense of betrayal and loss. Joann Condie and Jeremy Keeton have a wealth of counseling experience in this arena, and they have written *Aftershock* as a means of providing wives with concrete steps they can take and offering them renewed hope for the future. If you or someone you know is facing the pain of a spouse’s pornography addiction, we highly recommend this book.

DR. GREG AND ERIN SMALLEY, Focus on the Family Marriage and Family Formation; coauthors of *Reconnected: Moving from Roommates to Soulmates in Your Marriage*

If you’ve discovered that your husband has become involved in pornography, you’re likely feeling heartbroken, confused, and desperate for help. Know that you’re not alone—Joann Condie has counseled many other women who have walked through similar crises, and she can help you navigate this painful season as well. *Aftershock* offers tangible, biblically based steps you can take to move toward healing and hope.

JIM DALY, president, Focus on the Family

I have the utmost respect and admiration for Joann and Jeremy. Their expertise in counseling and personal care for a wife facing sexual betrayal is evident on every page. The content in this book is powerful for helping a wife discover hope and healing after sexual infidelity has been disclosed. For wives wanting personal and practical help in navigating the recovery process after betrayal, *Aftershock* is a must-have resource. You won't regret following the advice in this book!

JONATHAN DAUGHERTY, founder and president, Be Broken Ministries

*Aftershock* . . . is a great resource for women. The book offers a clear, wise, compassionate, and biblical approach for healing and restoration. I highly recommend this book for hurting wives and the counselors who are committed to assisting them on their recovery journey.

DR. JOHN THORINGTON, counselor and author of *Pure Teens: Honoring God, Relationships, and Sex* and *Pure Teens: Free to Love*

In *Aftershock*, Joann Condie and Jeremy Keeton calm the chaos of sexually betrayed women with expert spiritual support and an immensely compassionate bedside manner. Their decades of counseling couples through marital crisis is evident on every page through practical, methodical, and deeply spiritual guidance for walking forward through pain and into lasting healing. This book is essential reading not only for wounded wives, but for any caregiver pastors, counselors, small group leaders, or friends who choose to walk with women through one of life's most painful challenges.

DANIEL WEISS, president of the Brushfires Foundation

AFTERSHOCK



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JOANN CONDIE

*with Jeremy Keeton*

FOCUS  
ON  
THE FAMILY®

A Focus on the Family Resource  
Published by Tyndale House Publishers

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The case examples presented in this book are fictional composites based on the authors' clinical experience with hundreds of clients through the years. Any resemblance between these fictional characters and actual persons is coincidental.

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*We dedicate this book to the many wives and couples who have taught us so much by their brave and God-reliant approach to recovery and the surrender to Him it takes. The Lord is good and faithful in all times and in all circumstances.*

*—Joann and Jeremy*



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## INTRODUCTION

YOU'VE PICKED UP THIS BOOK because something happened or has been happening for a long time: Your husband has used pornography, and that may, or may not, have led to other unfaithful actions.

I'm sorry. *So very sorry.* Whatever the details are in your situation, I'm certain it hasn't been easy, and you'd much rather be reaching for some other kind of reading material. But you've picked up *this* book. The "something" you now live with shocks you and leaves you swirling as you face a reality you never anticipated being part of your marriage.

You may feel as if your inner world is crumbling in the after-shock of this devastating betrayal. Maybe on the surface you're holding the threads of your life together for the sake of your family. But those threads are fraying, and the painful reality of your situation feels overwhelming.

### There Is Hope

The crisis you're experiencing is real. Pornography use is widespread and damaging. The fallout often includes broken relationships and failed marriages.

But hang on! Hope lives and is available to you and your husband.

I have had the humbling honor of watching as people's lives and marriages are restored against all odds—even in worst-case scenarios—so I have confidence for you as well. I believe and trust that God will begin a transformation in you beyond anything you've ever imagined or thought possible. I also believe that your spouse can experience such a transformation, depending on his choices.

I've counseled many women, men, and couples who have struggled with the damage that pornography use has caused. These hurting people often begin counseling with little to no hope that the process will heal and restore their broken marriages. But they agree, sometimes out of desperation, to keep walking toward restoration with me and with the God who loves them and wants them to enjoy the blessings of a faithful marriage.

I passionately desire to reach out to you through the pages of this book and infuse you with hope. You are not alone! I do understand, and I do believe in you. I believe that you can get through this crisis and look back in amazement at the transformation that has taken place in your whole being.

There is no quick fix for what has happened. As you walk this path toward recovery, you'll experience times of discouragement when you'll be tempted to put this book on the shelf and give up. The process I explain in this book will take

commitment on your part. It's true that you'll only get out of this process what you put into it. But the value of your work will be immeasurable!

### The Goal of This Book

*Aftershock* is for women whose husbands struggle with pornography and other actions along the spectrum of sexual sin, including physical infidelity. Although there are admittedly some differences between pornography use alone versus a complete “real-life” physical affair\*, when it comes to the psychological impact and effects on a wife, they are often virtually identical. So, for the purposes of this book, we will refer to each scenario similarly due to the overlapping emotional damage and general steps of recovery that they share. Every word of this book is designed to help you heal, grow, and recover. This book is about you and your journey, but it will also impact your spouse and your marriage. If you commit to the process I describe, you will change, your relationship with your husband will change, and your marriage will change.

It is my sincere prayer that you, your husband, and your marriage will improve dramatically. But you can only control yourself. My focus is on you! You are not the cause of your husband's poor choices, and you desperately need to believe this fact. The information in this book can certainly help your husband change, heal, and grow, but please make your own needs and well-being a priority on this journey. Helping yourself is key to helping your marriage.

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\* For remarks about the question of divorce in the face of pornography use alone, see Focus on the Family's question-and-answer “Pornography as Grounds for Divorce?” at [focusonthefamily.com/family-qa/pornography-as-grounds-for-divorce/](http://focusonthefamily.com/family-qa/pornography-as-grounds-for-divorce/).

## Helpful Tools

At the end of each chapter, you'll find a reflection, questions to answer, and a prayer. These tools are designed to help you absorb the material you've read so you can receive the most benefit from this book.

After reading the reflection, think about it for a moment and then write down your thoughts and feelings. Writing in a personal journal is a great place to start. It's generally more helpful to keep a physical journal than to make notes on a digital device. You could use any kind of notebook, but I suggest you buy a lovely blank book that makes you feel good just looking at it.

I recommend that you pray before writing in your journal. The reason is simple. Our loving God knows *everything* about you:

O LORD, you have searched me and known me!  
 You know when I sit down and when I rise up;  
     you discern my thoughts from afar.  
 You search out my path and my lying down  
     and are acquainted with all my ways.  
 Even before a word is on my tongue,  
     behold, O LORD, you know it altogether.

PSALM 139:1-4

After praying and writing about the reflection, jot down in your journal your answers to the questions. Scientific studies have shown that it's helpful to record your thoughts and feelings, so make sure to answer these questions!<sup>1</sup>

I've learned from experience that it can be difficult to

describe your emotions when you're in crisis, so search on the internet for one of the many lists that describe emotions, such as a "feelings wheel" or "emotions chart." Print one that gives you many strong and descriptive words and refer to it often, especially at the end of each chapter as you get in touch with your heart. I hope you'll utilize this approach as you work through the questions for each chapter.

Writing in a journal is for *your* benefit. Your journal is a place to record not only your thoughts and feelings but also what you're praying and hoping for. Write down anything that helps you process your journey from pain to healing. Don't worry about how you write or what you say. Just be as honest with yourself as you can. This exercise can be very healing and freeing.

Finally, each chapter ends with a prayer. You may use the prepared prayers or your own words to ask for God's help.

#### The Authors

My coauthor, Jeremy F. Keeton, and I developed the content for this book together, but each chapter is written in my voice. I'm a licensed professional counselor, as well as a registered nurse, and Jeremy is a licensed marriage and family therapist with extensive experience in Christian ministry.

Jeremy's devotion and expertise in helping men, especially with sexual recovery, has enhanced my work for numerous years. I'm highly aware that both partners in this painful situation need care and guidance. With that in mind, I asked Jeremy for his insightful input to ensure that the concepts I present and the tone I use throughout the book are compatible with a man's recovery needs and emotional journey as well.

## A Word from Jeremy

Because my coauthorship is designed to go virtually unnoticed as Joann speaks to you directly, I want to take this opportunity to say hello and assure you that I care deeply about you and the journey you're on. I also want to echo Joann's confidence and hope that you can be restored to wholeness, and your marriage can not only be revived but can become all that God designed it to be.

My perspective as a male colleague working with Joann further shapes the book's tone and helps define specific motivating actions. This is *not* a book that bashes men. Joann and I want to help both you and your husband. But I'm also very aware that this book has been written to you, not your husband. You need compassion, care, and direction—yet we also hope that your recovery will ultimately help your husband, too.

You are not to blame for your husband's behavior or the pain it's causing you. No one "makes" another person act in unfaithful ways. This is not to say that your husband doesn't need compassion, care, and direction too. He does. But this is your time for healing.

My silent voice behind the words in the rest of this book reaches out too as Joann expresses what we both strongly believe. You can get through this. You are not alone. We value you, and the God who created you loves you more than words can express!

## Where Are You Now?

Next, we'll talk about what *pres shock*, *shock*, and *aftershock* mean and where you find yourself as you begin this process of restoration.

CHAPTER 1

# AFTERSHOCK

*God gave us a spirit not of fear but of  
power and love and self-control.*

2 TIMOTHY 1:7

AFTERSHOCK DESCRIBES YOUR REALITY after discovering your husband's pornography use or other sinful sexual behaviors. The marriage you thought you had has crumbled; shock consumes your thoughts and imagination; and you're grappling with how to live with the pain of betrayal soaking into every aspect of your life. You fear that more incidents of sexual unfaithfulness have happened, and more might happen in the future.

Dara's story illustrates her progression from preshock to shock and then to aftershock:

The day Dara's son turned three, everyone gathered for his birthday party. Who could've wished for more? Friends, grandparents, and a smiling toddler bustled

around the house eating cake and singing “Happy Birthday.” Timmy delighted in all the attention and the pile of presents waiting to be opened. Dara’s husband, Geoff, even grilled a few steaks. The party was a super memory. The snapshots on Facebook proved it.

The following day, though, was a day of shock. “Happy Birthday” and steaks were yesterday. Anything normal in Dara’s world was yesterday. This morning, Geoff accidentally left his phone behind when he left for work, and after a number of text messages came in, Dara decided to look at them in case she needed to call him. She didn’t know his password, but she quickly guessed it.

When Dara saw the images and words on the screen, she realized that there was a lot she didn’t know about her husband. She knew Geoff well enough to figure out his password, but apparently she didn’t know him well enough to suspect what she was now staring at.

Dara looked at the screen in disbelief! Her heart raced as she saw a photo of a scantily clad woman in a provocative pose, with words beneath the image. It was evident that Geoff had found this woman online and had recently been sexting with her.

Dara sank into a kitchen chair. She was reeling. She couldn’t move. She stared at the trappings of the birthday party that she’d been happily cleaning up only moments ago. *Did that party just happen yesterday?* she thought.

“I can’t believe it,” she said aloud. “I know he’s been online a lot, especially late at night. But I trusted him.

I thought he was playing one of the games he seems so addicted to.”

In desperation she called Geoff’s office and tried to sound calm as she asked the receptionist for his extension. The sound of Geoff’s voice mail rattled Dara. She couldn’t handle leaving a message. Her hands shook as she laid her phone on the kitchen table.

*What have I missed?* she thought. *What does he get from this that he doesn’t get from me? Aren’t I enough for him? And this woman has his cell number! Do they talk to each other? Has he met her in person?*

Dara picked up her phone and called her next-door neighbor.

“Connie, something has come up, and I need to run an errand. Could Timmy stay with you for a little while?”

Connie agreed, and Dara managed a smile when she dropped Timmy off to play with Connie’s daughter.

Dara drove to Geoff’s office building and pulled into the parking lot before dialing the number again. She asked the receptionist to tell Geoff that she had his cell phone and he needed to run down and get it from her.

By the time Geoff met her outside, Dara was standing beside the car with tears streaming down her face.

“What happened? Is Timmy okay?” Geoff yelled as he ran toward her.

“Yes! Timmy is fine!” Dara stammered. “It’s *this!*” she said with obvious anger as she handed Geoff his phone. The provocative photo was on the screen.

“Your online girlfriend has been texting all morning.”

Geoff’s face turned scarlet as he took the phone out of her hand.

He tried to deny that he knew this woman. He fumbled and stammered his outrage that someone would send such messages and a photo to him.

“I don’t believe you!” Dara shouted between sobs. “How could you? I have to go. I left Timmy with a neighbor and need to go get him.”

Geoff tried to reach for her, but she hopped into the car and sped away before he could offer up any more lies.

Later that night Geoff came clean, or so Dara thought. His story sounded real, convincing, and pretty remorseful. He said he’d been curious and started experimenting online.

“It’s incredible what’s available on some of these sites,” he said in an innocent-sounding tone.

“I never meant to actually contact anyone. It just got out of control. This woman emailed me, and the next thing I knew, we were texting each other. I’m so sorry. It will never happen again.”

Dara wanted so desperately to believe him. One mistake was just that—one mistake. She accepted his apology, but doubt needled her. Her world was scrambled, and she didn’t know what to do. She wanted to trust Geoff, but a nagging feeling told her she couldn’t.

The next day Dara checked Geoff’s whereabouts every hour and looked through every business card he’d

emptied from his coat after his last business trip. One of the restaurants' business cards was wholly unfamiliar to her. Her heart raced as she began to panic.

That night Dara and Geoff had a big argument about his behavior and her doubts. Then he clammed up and slept downstairs. She couldn't stand it. She loved him and hated him all at the same time.

### Living in Aftershock

You may be able to identify with Dara's story. For most women who face a devastating experience like this, the details might not be exactly the same, but the results often are.

There are many women whose husbands lead secret lives of pornography use or other sexual compulsions. This appalling discovery sends a massive shock wave through a woman's life. Like a tsunami smashing into a peaceful shoreline, the unforeseen revelation of a husband's lies and sexual behavior ravages everything in its path and sweeps away any remaining illusions of a secure and happy marriage.

Unfortunately, like natural disasters, relational disasters often get worse before they get better. A tsunami isn't a single wave; it's more like a wave train. According to scientists, the aftershocks following an initial cataclysm can be equally dangerous. They're vast, unpredictable, and capable of collapsing damaged buildings that survived the original shock.

In the same way, some husbands wait weeks or months after the initial shocking revelation before admitting to other sordid behavior. After years of shameful self-talk, many men cope by minimizing and suppressing their sexual history, even deceiving themselves. As a result, they don't initially understand or

remember all of the things they need to confess. Or in spite of their best cover-up efforts, new evidence comes to light and exposes them.

Some men who commit to a recovery process make a full confession quickly and clearly, but for most men, it takes weeks to grapple with reality and gain the skills to fully disclose their secrets. But staggered disclosures are usually more hurtful to wives than getting the whole truth up front.

### Staggered Disclosures

It's important to understand the phenomenon of staggered disclosures because your husband may divulge more details about his behavior over time. This is also why it's useful to get professional help early on, though couples rarely do. The vast majority stumble through the early weeks of their crisis as the wife tries to extract all the details of her husband's bad behaviors, and the husband struggles with how to reveal more to his wife. Such interactions are so emotionally charged and complex that objective guidance from a well-trained professional is virtually essential to wade through the muck. If you are still new in your process, do all you can to get help at the earliest stage of disclosure.

My heart goes out to the many faithful wives who struggle to save their marriages but get knocked down again and again as the aftershocks keep coming. Being aware that there may be more to your husband's story can help lessen the shock if additional betrayals are revealed.

Knowing about staggered disclosures may motivate you and your husband to seek help sooner rather than trying to unravel the tangled web of your complicated relationship on your own.

The following examples of staggered disclosures may seem surprising or extreme to you. Yet they're situations described by women who suffered through their husbands' staggered disclosures. (The husbands' names have been changed.)

- “My husband, Connor, emphatically claimed he only viewed pornography and nothing more. But following a routine gynecology exam, the doctor said I had an STD [sexually transmitted disease].”
- “My husband was still on probation for viewing pornography on his workplace computer when his employer found new evidence. He was immediately fired, and we lost everything we saved for.”
- “I was offended when Cooper confessed to going to strip bars, but he assured me that he had stopped years earlier. He was supposed to be on a business trip, but then he had a heart attack at the home of his secretary just twenty miles away.”
- “Ever since we got married seventeen years ago, my husband and I have argued because he flirts with every female in sight, even though he denies it. Our senior pastor knocked on the door last night to report that a woman in the congregation had accused my husband of fondling her.”
- “When my husband was in seminary, I was proud of him for getting help for his pornography addiction; he said he was cured. We are pastoring our third church, and his assistant found pornography on the church computer. She told the elders, and now everybody in church knows.”

- “I never, ever got over the humiliation of Brayden’s affair during our honeymoon in Hawaii. I got a call Saturday that he was seriously injured, so I rushed to the emergency room. His girlfriend was crying by his bedside.”
- “I agreed to watch porn with my husband the first year we were married, but Jeb finally agreed with me that it was wrong. On our fifth anniversary, he announced with a smile that he’d bought a membership for a couples’ swinger club—like I should be happy.”
- “I was sick to my stomach when I found my husband’s regular [heterosexual] pornography. But then I found his homosexual porn. He later said that he didn’t think it was necessary to talk about his childhood sexual play with other little boys; he considered it in his past.”
- “Miles got abusive whenever I asked him to stop watching adult movies on TV. But I got a call from the police this weekend; he was arrested for being a Peeping Tom.”

### Take Hold of Your Imagination

These examples of staggered disclosure aren’t intended to throw your emotions into a tailspin or cause your imagination to run rampant. You need to be well informed, but don’t grab on to every example as something that will happen to you.

Your husband’s response might be completely different from the stories these women shared. You may be blessed with a husband who chose to tell you immediately when he realized how out-of-control his behaviors were. Or perhaps as soon as his sexual compulsions were exposed, he told you the entire truth, with no secrets withheld. Some husbands are truly repentant

and remorseful with a godly sorrow, eager to mend their ways, and ready to cooperate and seek treatment.

If that describes the man in your life, your road to recovery won't be nearly so rough. So don't leap to extreme conclusions about your husband's sexual compulsions, but also understand that you're living in the aftershock of one crashing wave of destruction.

Chapter 7 will provide specific guidelines to follow, whether your husband is motivated to work toward inner transformation or is resistant to change. But right now, while your emotions are raging or numb, just hang on. Even if you fear there is no hope for your marriage, take a deep breath. Try to believe that you've taken a valuable step forward by opening this book.

#### You Are Not Alone!

If you're feeling isolated, I want to assure you that you aren't reading the words of a woman who has lived an unscathed, victorious life floating above the clouds. I walked through my own valley of pain a number of years ago. I've been wounded by my own bad choices and the offensive behavior of others in my life. In addition to my professional credentials, I come to you with the experiences of my own hurtful past.

I've also worked with hundreds of couples over the past two decades who were in circumstances similar to yours. I understand what you're going through, and I want to help by coming alongside you as a sister and a fellow sharer in your difficult journey. The Bible tells us that God comforts and encourages us in every trouble so that we will be able to comfort and encourage others with the comfort we've received from Him (2 Corinthians 1:3-4). I now know that working

through my heartaches leads to peace, joy, and healing. My earnest prayer is that you will also benefit from facing and working through your pain so that you can experience God's wonderful healing.

A Large Sisterhood

Here's another story about a cell phone:

Hannah hadn't told anyone, not a single person, about her troubled marriage. On the contrary, for fifteen years she'd been wearing a smile and telling everybody that she and her husband, Noah, had a great relationship. If only folks could have taken a look behind closed doors or seen the pain and questions in her heart!

In reality, Hannah and Noah's marriage was filled with a multitude of problems. When she vocalized her frustration, he invariably shut down and withdrew. Neither of them knew how to resolve conflict in a healthy way, so no argument ended well. Their ongoing resentment spilled into the bedroom, resulting in an entirely unsatisfactory sex life, especially for her. But Hannah told herself that this was due to their crazy schedule and the fatigue that comes from raising three active children—factors that did make it difficult for them to find time for one another. Still, she couldn't shake a nagging feeling that something was wrong at a much deeper level.

Then it happened. Hannah's suspicions led her to pick up Noah's cell phone while he was in the shower. She quickly scrolled through his text messages and

discovered he had been texting suggestive messages and images to an old high-school girlfriend. In one fell swoop, all of her worst fears seemed to be confirmed. Suddenly that nagging feeling made sense. Apparently there was something more to their lack of intimacy than mere busyness and fatigue.

Hannah was waiting for Noah when he came out of the bathroom, wrapped in a towel and scrambling around looking for his phone.

“Have you seen my phone?” he asked. “I need to make a quick call.”

When she confronted Noah with the disturbing intimate messages she’d found, he scolded her, accused her of snooping, and dismissed her like a naughty child. He was just a normal male having a little fun that had started with high-school companions on social media, he argued.

“What’s the big deal about chatting with an old friend? Besides,” he told Hannah, “I will never meet up with her in person. Don’t make a federal case out of this. It’s not like adultery, so just drop it.”

Wounded and confused, Hannah added to her own pain by putting herself down and feeling guilty for being suspicious in the first place. Life slipped back into its normal frantic routine, but as the days passed, it became obvious that she and Noah were drifting further and further apart. He approached her less and less often for any kind of intimacy. And when she took the initiative, he simply brushed her off.

After numerous attempts to get Noah to change,

Hannah finally took the risk of sharing her secret with someone else. That someone was me.

### A Troubling Reality

When I was pregnant with my firstborn, and later as I raised her, the women I knew shared their parenting knowledge—helpful information they had gathered by trial and error. Moms coached other moms, and we all learned from one another.

Sexual compulsions, on the other hand, aren't usually a topic women discuss when they get together, and stories like Hannah's are all too prevalent. She finally did talk to me in a professional setting, but she told none of her friends or family. Shock and pain reverberated inside her as she longed for answers on how to cope with the aftershock of her husband's behavior. Hannah was unprepared for the kind of shock that washed over her.

*I never thought this would happen to me*, you might be saying to yourself.

You've probably been aware of the widespread use of pornography but never really thought about having to deal with such a hurtful issue in your own life.

The sad truth is that pornography use and other compulsive sexual behaviors are extremely common in contemporary society. The problem is extensive, both inside and outside the church. The reasons for this are obvious: declining morals, universal internet access, sexual objectification of other human beings, salacious imagery on TV and smartphones, and increasing cultural pressure to tolerate deviant behavior.

Compulsive sexual behaviors may be common, but that doesn't make them any less painful and destructive. All anyone has to do is google the words *pornography addiction* to find

countless statistics about its use and equal quantities of advice on what to do if you're a victim of its damaging effects.

*Please do not google* any aspects of this topic! Information found online and in some books gives terribly conflicting advice to the undiscerning reader, such as “Learn to be a better lover, don't tell anyone, watch pornography with him, and join a couples' swingers club” to the opposite advice: “Kick him out of the house, expose him in front of the family, or find the best lawyer you can afford.”

Who can answer your haunting questions or provide appropriate coaching? Unfortunately, good and healthy input is hard to come by. If you somehow find the courage to ask your friends, you may receive encouraging words of comfort but not really any helpful advice.

A friend may have sufficient suggestions for potty training, but when your marriage, family, and entire future are at stake, you want to be sure to get appropriate professional advice, along with any comfort or well-meaning encouragement your friends can offer. You need well-researched information to fill in the gaps. You need comfort, hope, realism, and some practical direction. Hopefully that is how this book will help.

#### A Critical Turning Point

Nearly every couple I've worked with through the years whose marriage survived looks back and credits the wife's response and her choices for redemptive hope as the critical turning point for the damaged relationship.

The wives in these situations committed to heal and grow personally in the hopes that their husbands would do the same. They faced a choice: They could close the door to a continued

relationship or leave it open just enough for their husbands to step through it toward healing.

You may struggle with the thought of even wanting a restored relationship with your husband. Your trust may be so shattered that you're at the point of despair. Right now, you might harbor so much disappointment that you've literally slammed doors shut to gain distance from your husband. I understand. I really do.

Giving a second chance to someone who might not deserve it is often beyond our human ability. But extending hope, grace, and an honorable “fight” for your marriage is more than a feeling; it's a God thing. It's strength that comes from beyond you, strength that you can willfully access as part of Christ's ongoing work in your life.

You will need support from others as you decide to fight for your marriage. Surround yourself with *wise* advice. Some people would have you roll over in passivity, while others might justifiably be so angry for you that they'd pay your lawyer bill today!

The decision to invest in giving your marriage a chance isn't a guarantee of success, but it's *right*, and it reflects God's heart and hope. He always aims to repair broken things and make them even *better* than they were before.

The following promises that God gave to the Israelites can be encouraging truths for you as well:

Behold, I am doing a new thing;  
 now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?  
 I will make a way in the wilderness  
 and rivers in the desert.

ISAIAH 43:19

Instead of your shame there shall be a double portion;  
instead of dishonor they shall rejoice in their lot;  
therefore in their land they shall possess a double portion;  
they shall have everlasting joy.

ISAIAH 61:7

### The Spiritual Light of Christ

Satan wants to kill your marriage. While plenty has already been done to threaten it, don't succumb further to his death lies and schemes. Don't cope by going into denial about the painful truth of what's been occurring, but *do* strain to see the light of Christ rising on you in the midst of the storm.

Your world might seem quite dark to you now. I imagine you've had nights when, like me, you cried until you didn't think you could cry anymore. But then you did! King David could empathize with us. He wrote, "I am weary with my moaning; every night I flood my bed with tears; I drench my couch with my weeping" (Psalm 6:6).

The popular phrase "The darkest hour is just before dawn" is true! But we can be encouraged to know that even though "weeping may tarry for the night . . . joy comes with the morning" (Psalm 30:5).

Your trial is time limited. The dawn *is* coming. Joy is on the horizon. I can make that claim with full confidence because I have witnessed desperate and broken people being restored. For dozens of years, I have counseled women married to men with out-of-control sexual compulsions. When I first meet these women, they often fear there is no hope for them or their marriages. They are living in a darkness that clouds their vision and prevents them from seeing the light ahead.

But they make a commitment to move forward, step by step, regardless of their situations. They learn about healthy boundaries and self-care, which give them better footing and a sustainable self-respecting pace through this trial. You can make that commitment too. I encourage you to read on and keep going, even when times are difficult and you want to give up.

Difficulties *will* come. The burden you presently carry along with the normal busyness of life may wear you out physically, emotionally, and spiritually. You might wonder how you can possibly find time to keep reading and doing the necessary work for healing to occur.

I'm praying that you will hit the Pause button, take a deep breath, and choose *not* to act on those negative thoughts and raw nerves.

I hope you'll take advantage of the tools in the following chapters. You'll be learning about yourself, the betrayal process, and how your husband likely developed his destructive behaviors. You'll also learn about the dynamics of your marital relationship—the good and the bad—and how you got to the place you are today.

And you'll have the opportunity to make choices that have proved effective in restoring and transforming shattered marriages while still taking care of your own heart as well.

Don't give up!

## REFLECTION

Call upon me in the day of trouble;

I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.

PSALM 50:15

## AFTERSHOCK

The floods have lifted up, O LORD,  
the floods have lifted up their voice;  
the floods lift up their roaring.  
Mightier than the thunders of many waters,  
mightier than the waves of the sea,  
the LORD on high is mighty!

PSALM 93:3-4

## QUESTIONS

1. Do you have a special journal for recording your thoughts and prayers as you move through this journey? You'll need one. If you don't have one yet, ask yourself, *What's keeping me from getting a journal and taking a step to write, express, and sort out my feelings on paper? How can I remedy that and invest in what's recommended?*
2. What do the verses from Psalms 50 and 93 say to you today? When or in what circumstances each day do you most need to remember these truths? Post these verses where you're most likely to be at those moments of your day.
3. Psalm 50:15 reminds us that we can honor God even when we're going through something *deeply* troubling. What does honoring God and feeling the fulfillment of obedience and integrity look like for you in this moment?

## PRAYER

Lord, the “floods” of my problems and my husband’s problems have lifted up, and I feel waves of aftershock pounding against

## AFTERSHOCK

me. I'm calling on You, trusting You. And I will honor You. Enable me to do this every day as I'm reading this book, seeking Your deliverance through the comfort of Your Word, and relying on Your help to take the practical steps I'm just beginning to learn about. In Jesus' name, amen.