

## Sexual Sin in the Church

By Holly Otten

I am not judging. I am weeping. I understand one of the root causes of the sexual sin that we are now seeing being exposed in the Church. The moral failure we are seeing in Christian leaders and beloved spiritual fathers is heart-breaking but necessary because Jesus is coming soon and He's coming for a pure Bride, the Church.<sup>1</sup> I am writing this piece to raise awareness on the connection between sexual sins and unhealed childhood sexual abuse wounds, and I base it on the experience I have as a 5-time survivor of childhood sexual abuse and founder of a ministry whose mission is to promote healing for survivors of sexual abuse.<sup>2</sup> I want to shout out to my sisters and brothers in the Church, "We must get to the root causes of our sexual sins!"

I have gained much experience on this topic as I have undergone thirteen years of professional Christian counseling and have been sharing with and ministering to female and male survivors of sexual abuse since 2012. From my experience, I've learned that many cases where there is repeated sexual sin, the root cause is unhealed childhood sexual abuse wounds, whether known or repressed. I will share many examples which will serve as proof of what I am stating, and I will start with me. I was saved at age sixteen but engaged in a promiscuous lifestyle for many years following. I believed that Jesus Christ was my Lord and Savior, but deep down I also believed that I was a filthy rag. When a person has such a belief about themselves, it makes it easy to engage in "dirty deeds."

I've ministered to many female survivors of childhood sexual abuse who admitted to having promiscuous lifestyles, leading some to commit adultery, engage in same-sex relationships and some ended up victims of the sex trafficking trade. Two born-again Christian women who came through our ministry's residential program later ended up selling their bodies for sex. I feel that each one was easy prey for their traffickers, as they had never undergone healing for their childhood wounds of sexual abuse. Both refused to go through the healing process. Let me explain in spiritual terms that where there has been trauma, such as childhood sexual abuse, a door gets opened to demonic spirits. To name just a few potential spirits that obtain footholds in the lives of SA victims: lust, perversity, seduction, anger, shame, low self-worth and rebellion. These spirits sometimes lay dormant, but eventually come out and tempt the wounded person to sin, especially in the area of their sexuality, but in many other areas as well.

The Church is filled with people, including pastors, who have unhealed wounds of childhood sexual abuse. Where there are wounds, there are demonic strongholds, which lead to moral failures. There are well-known Christian leaders who've been exposed for sexual sin in past years and who have publicly admitted to being sexually abused as a child. Amongst these is Frank Houston,<sup>3</sup> former pastor and father of Brian Houston, founder of Hillsong Australia. The truth came out that he was a serial pedophile, abusing boys in the church, and he admitted that he was sexually abused by his grandfather as a child. Another is Carl Lentz,<sup>4</sup> former pastor of Hillsong NYC, who's sin of adultery was exposed and this led him to open up and share that he was sexually abused as a child. Another leader in the Church who fell into sexual sin is the late Lonnie Frisbee who birthed the Jesus Revolution. He shares in his book *Not By Power Nor By Might*<sup>5</sup> that he was sexually abused as a child on multiple occasions.

I loved reading the book *Once Gay Stories*,<sup>6</sup> a compilation of testimonies from people who engaged in same-sex relationships but experienced the love of God and His healing power and which led them to leave their gay lifestyles, finding peace and happiness as heterosexuals. I mention this book because a large number of these stories included childhood sexual abuse. These testimonies, as well as many that I have heard firsthand, tell about how these SA victims became confused about their identity. It's easy for me to understand why a twelve-year-old boy who was sexually abused by his father at age three would become confused about his identity when puberty hits. All of a sudden, amongst raging hormones, he finds himself having same-sex attractions and starts to believe that he was born to be with males. He thinks that perhaps he was supposed to be a girl and then it makes sense that he has

feelings for boys. Whether he has memories of his abuse or whether they are repressed, the unhealed wounds and the demonic footholds are present. This is why it is so important that as Christians, we don't stop growing after we are saved. It is important to go deeper in our relationship with God and to allow him to take us through the sanctification or purification process. We must not stop at the thought, "I've got my ticket to heaven," or "God loves me even though I am a sinner... Even if I engage in pornography, adultery, same-sex relationships or fornication before marriage." Yes, Jesus came for the sinner,<sup>7</sup> but it doesn't mean that He is pleased with us if we continue to sin.

An excellent film that I feel every Christian man and woman should watch is *The Heart of Man*,<sup>8</sup> streamed on Amazon Prime and YouTube. The film features both drama and interviews with Christian men and women who overcame sexual sin by allowing God to heal their brokenness, in which most stories include childhood sexual abuse. One interview is with William Paul Young, the author of the NY Times best-selling novel *The Shack*. Young shares how his wife caught him in an affair with her best friend and how this led him to embark on a healing journey in which he allowed God to show him that he had unhealed wounds from childhood sexual abuse. Another interview is with the author and poet Jackie Hill Perry who engaged in same sex relationships, but after receiving salvation and walking with God, she no longer felt those unhealthy attractions. Perry openly shares that she was sexually abused as a child and from that early age and on, felt urges to engage in sexual activities. This film is profoundly eye-opening, inspirational and heart-warming, as the drama that weaves throughout portrays the love of the Father for His son, who allows himself to be seduced by a woman, which creates a separation between them. It depicts the Father's sorrow caused by this separation and His efforts to help His son turn from his sinful ways and back toward Him and their life together.

God is exposing the sexual sin in the Church. He is shining His light on the secret sins that have been hiding in darkness.<sup>9</sup> What we are seeing in the media surrounding well-known and well-loved Christian leaders is ugly. It's painful. But it's necessary! Jesus is coming soon and He cares more about our souls than our reputations. Jesus desires that His Bride be pure and spotless and that she have no other loves. I exhort my Christian brothers and sisters to allow God to take you through a journey of deep self-examination. Are there secrets of sexual sin? Are there secrets related to sexual abuse? I wrote a piece entitled, *No More Secrets*,<sup>10</sup> and I encourage you to listen to it on our ministry's YouTube channel. As long as we keep our sexual sins secret or the instances of sexual abuse we experienced secret, the enemy has a foothold. Freedom comes to the sinner and to the victim of abuse when things are brought out into the light.

I am extremely proud of the women who have come forward publicly of late who've shared that they were sexually abused by Christian leaders. Amongst these are, Cindy Clemishire who admitted to being sexually abused by Pastor Robert Morris starting at age twelve through age sixteen;<sup>11</sup> Lori Anne Thompson admitted that the late world-renowned apologist Ravi Zacharias engaged in sexual misconduct with her;<sup>12</sup> Tammy Woods admitted to being sexually abused by Mike Bickle from the age of fourteen through college-age.<sup>13</sup> I applaud these women. I too brought out the truth of my abuse decades ago while going through my inner healing journey. I said yes to God when He asked to take me through the healing process. It was one of the hardest things I've ever done but it brought me freedom, healing and wholeness, and it allowed me to learn to love myself, as well as equip me to help other survivors get healed.

I exhort my Christian brothers and sisters to ask God to purify you and prepare you to meet Jesus. You never know when that day will be. It could be tomorrow. Are there secret sexual sins that you have been engaging in or unconfessed sins from years ago? Are you keeping secret the time or times when you were sexually abused as a child? If so, I encourage you to ask God to take you through the healing journey. Ask Him to lead you to someone who is experienced with helping others heal from sexual abuse. If you think that you may have been abused as a child but aren't sure, ask God. Seek the truth with all of your heart and He will show you. If you were abused and have repressed memories, God will most likely begin to bring memories from your past to the forefront of your mind. But don't be

afraid, Jesus is a gentle surgeon! And He will never leave you as you walk through your healing journey. He will lead you from victim to victorious survivor. Once a SA survivor experiences healing, the demonic spirits that came through that open door of trauma will go right back out that door. They no longer have a basis for staying and therefore they no longer have power over the survivor in the area of his or her sexuality.

Jesus is coming for a pure Bride. Will you let Him prepare you for that day? Jesus is coming back for His Bride, the Church. Will you commit to pray that “She” be holy and pure as He is holy and pure?

Thank you for letting me share my heart with you. It is weeping and breaking. Not judging.

## Footnotes

1. *Ephesians 5:25-27* “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her to sanctify her, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to Himself as a glorious church, without stain or wrinkle or any such blemish, but holy and blameless.”
2. *Tin Man Ministries Website*. <https://www.tinmanministries.com/>
3. *Frank Houston*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/dec/19/frank-houston-committed-child-sexual-abuse-at-a-time-when-he-felt-emotionally-low-court-hears>
4. *Carl Lentz* [https://youtu.be/Vo\\_i24Dgecl?si=Lyt2Z6pIDsdRqjE6](https://youtu.be/Vo_i24Dgecl?si=Lyt2Z6pIDsdRqjE6)
5. *Lonnie Frisbee’s book: Not By Power Nor By Might*  
[https://www.amazon.com/Not-Might-Nor-Power-Revolution/dp/0978543335/ref=sr\\_1\\_4?crid=1L7M9W35LFYP6&dib=eyJ2IjoiMSJ9.qY7DUD9NrLGiOgkgEARmjleYVHdjptAaBlIgt5bMg2rYJmJDtA18nWfk5VS4tQVvN4M3uKdF--9EVOaILWW3u2aOy9DVNMKHq7UaVlAdVfxJNBwQuDZFh4FN-iBIned7fDxkG9YH9ZDBtwkv4mppPeFEddRZ4Q9AouF7XWdnnDl3WFT9YqpT3X2is3eLkkMoasBuhWcCo1G7xTWd5Ks4yy11UfEaR5PVOowm5\\_KAk.X2Ez9Z2KfdXrP7uRIIo66y\\_LNfnMVbwoM1MFpYG-](https://www.amazon.com/Not-Might-Nor-Power-Revolution/dp/0978543335/ref=sr_1_4?crid=1L7M9W35LFYP6&dib=eyJ2IjoiMSJ9.qY7DUD9NrLGiOgkgEARmjleYVHdjptAaBlIgt5bMg2rYJmJDtA18nWfk5VS4tQVvN4M3uKdF--9EVOaILWW3u2aOy9DVNMKHq7UaVlAdVfxJNBwQuDZFh4FN-iBIned7fDxkG9YH9ZDBtwkv4mppPeFEddRZ4Q9AouF7XWdnnDl3WFT9YqpT3X2is3eLkkMoasBuhWcCo1G7xTWd5Ks4yy11UfEaR5PVOowm5_KAk.X2Ez9Z2KfdXrP7uRIIo66y_LNfnMVbwoM1MFpYG-)
6. *Once Gay Stories*. <https://changedmovement.com/changed-book>
7. Mark 2:17 “Jesus said to them, “It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”
8. *The Heart of Man Website*. <http://heartofmanmovie.com/about/>
9. *1 Corinthians 4:5* “He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men’s hearts.”
10. *No More Secrets*. <https://youtu.be/L-GP3akSJ8Y>
11. *Cindy Clemishire*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4eHjs4dCiDo&t=29s>
12. *Lori Anne Thompson*. <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2021/february/ravi-zacharias-rzim-investigation-sexual-abuse-sexting-rape.html>
13. *Tammy Woods*. <https://julieroys.com/exclusive-open-letter-to-mike-bickle-from-alleged-victim-tammy-woods/>

## Resources

1. *Video: No More Secrets*. <https://youtu.be/L-GP3akSJ8Y>
2. *Video: Prayer for Pastors*. <https://youtu.be/NL7QoRPYBGM?si=Oolin49HU11JS9fA>
3. *Video: Prayer for the Church*. [https://youtu.be/wSEEozHmCTs?si=U3CplZYij\\_x96jUl](https://youtu.be/wSEEozHmCTs?si=U3CplZYij_x96jUl)
4. *Video: Prayer That Breaks Pornography & Sexual Strongholds-Jennifer LeClaire Ministries*  
<https://www.youtube.com/live/U9usPtULiDY?si=nR7Thu9nZBo1Dmk5>
5. *Video: The Heart of Man film-Free*  
<https://youtu.be/eN2wU9DNscA?si=K61g7rCY79BDOvh>

6. *Video: Interview with journalist Julie Roys on sexual misconduct in the Church-* Remnant Radio <https://youtu.be/eN2wU9DNscA?si=K61g7rCY79BDoOvh>
7. Be Broken Ministries <https://www.bebroken.org/>
8. Nathan Project <https://nathanproject.net/>

### **Scriptures Related to This Topic**

1. *James 5:16* “Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.”
2. *Psalm 32:5* “Then I acknowledged my sin to You and did not hide my iniquity. I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,” and You forgave the guilt of my sin.”
3. *Mark 4:22* “For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be brought to light.”
4. *Ephesians 5:11-13* “Have no fellowship with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for everything that is illuminated becomes a light itself.”
5. *Luke 12:3* “What you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the housetops.”
6. *Acts 26:18* “To open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.”
7. *Colossians 3:5* “Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.”
8. *1 John 1:9* “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”
9. *1 Thessalonians 4:3* “It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality.”
10. *1 Thessalonians 5:23* “May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

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