



HOPE Ministries Highlights

July 2017

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Mission Statement:

HOPE Ministries seeks to help individuals explore patterns that may have developed over their lifetime and provide opportunities to allow Jesus to bring healing and HOPE to their lives in fresh ways.

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Beyond “I’m Sorry” -by Steve Swartz

Hiding sin or not allowing others to see our failures and weaknesses can be the very things that torpedo a relationship. Marriage is the closest human relationship in God’s creation. It typically suffers most when we hide things from each other. Perhaps in your journey as a married couple, you discovered things about your spouse that you didn’t know. Your spouse may have for the first time owned their wrong reactions to you and sought your forgiveness. There is amazing freedom found by bringing hidden things in our past into the light where truth lives. In those painful months of truth, a tiny seed begins to grow. For some it may be the first steps to the recovery of a broken relationship. In that new hope a tiny flower begins to grow. This may have been a first step toward the intimacy you long desired for your marriage. However the next few weeks, months, and years can hold very important steps to protect this tiny and fragile flower. A failure to understand what it needs for life, and to take the necessary steps to protect it can result in the flower fading and painfully dying a second death.

“When I sin against my spouse, the consequence is that I break trust.”

Intimacy is lost once again because of a lack of trust.

So there has to be another side to “I’m sorry.” After we repent from wrong doing, we may feel like, “OK now that I have said I’m sorry, let’s move on.” Sometimes we revert to the thinking that our spouse hasn’t truly forgiven us if we can’t move forward. In true repentance, grace covers the shame and the guilt of the sin and wrongdoing, but grace does not cover the consequences of sin. Gal. 6:7, *“If we plant, we will reap what we sow.”* Perhaps that is what was on Paul’s heart when he said, *“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?”* Rom. 6:1-2. Since reaping is a part of the sowing process, and the consequences are not covered by grace, where do we go from here?

When I sin against my spouse, the consequence is that I break trust. Trust is now replaced with mistrust. Trust is one of the requirements for a healthy relationship. When the offended spouse grants forgiveness, it may not include trust. Trust has to be earned. These kinds of situations are quite varied. Trust can be broken through pride/self focus, immorality, rebellion, bitterness,

anger, expectations that cause pressure, poor financial management, or other offenses. Any reaction toward my spouse in an unhealthy way may have caused a breakdown of trust.

The reality for the offender is that the journey to freedom and intimacy through transparency and vulnerability is both frightening and painful. This is not a place where we typically live. Once forgiveness is granted, our tendency is to want to move on and never talk about the subject again. We hate to be reminded of the fact that we failed and we can feel shame and guilt all over again. We might accuse our spouse of not totally forgiving us for the sin because they are still struggling with trust. The reality is that we lost their trust because of our sin. This sin cannot define us if we are walking in the grace of the Lord Jesus. The debt we created for ourselves has been canceled and we are now free to walk in newness of heart. In this newness, we have nothing to prove, nothing to hide, and nothing to lose, so why not live in freedom? However, the trust we lost may never be restored completely. What would happen if my focus as an offender was not so much on rebuilding trust as it was on being as emotionally close to my spouse as possible? A place where I could live with nothing to prove, nothing to hide, and

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Beyond “I’m sorry” - continued from page 1

nothing to lose. Demanding that your spouse trust you is being self-focused and damages the relationship. Why not own the distrust that we have caused in the one that we love? If we allow the distrust of our spouse to become another offence to us, we will react all over again causing more pain and distrust. We may go back into hiding, feeling justified that we have done the hard work and now deserve to be trusted. We don’t like to bring up the past or make a safe place for the wounded spouse to talk about their feelings. If either spouse identifies this as a problem, then it deserves our undivided attention.

The reality for the offended is that there can be a sense of helplessness. Once trust has been broken, we don’t soon forget, and there may always be a sense of mistrust to some degree. For example, perhaps my trust was betrayed

by a spouse with high expectations followed by outbursts of anger. Even after forgiveness, I may struggle with anxiety and hesitate coming close emotionally for fear of being hurt again. To maintain intimacy, the offending spouse has to make a safe place and resolve the damage caused by the anger. There are many areas where resolution is necessary in order for intimacy and love to grow even after forgiveness is granted. Resolution involves being consistently patient with my spouses’ mistrust and creating safe and frequent opportunities to share anxiety and fears. Let us be as equally committed to the resolution phase of reconciliation as we are to the confession.

This article was used by permission. Steve Swartz is director and counselor at Haven of Hope Ministry, a Caring for the Heart office in Odessa, MI.

Upcoming Events

October 1-5, 2017—CFTH conference

Heartland Alliance Church
Sherwood Park, Alberta, Canada
For more info see www.caringfortheheart.com

November 2-4, 2017—Two Hearts, One Flame Marriage Retreat

Maple City Chapel
Goshen, IN
For additional dates and info see www.havenofhopes.com/events

(This event will provide opportunity to understand your relationship better as well as provide follow up for those who have already had counseling.)

Coming Up

Plans are being made for HOPE Ministries to present a seminar in the local community of Hutchinson, KS, March 2-4, 2018. Mark this date on your calendars. More details will follow in the next newsletter.

Announcing...



HOPE Ministries is delighted to announce that Julian Nisly has completed his training and has joined our counseling staff. We welcome him into this new role.

**HOPE Ministries
office hours
Mondays and Fridays:
9:00-1:00**

Testimony—cont’d from p.3

I am so glad I didn’t do all the crazy things I felt like doing with my life. My life is a living testimony that God cares about people even if they aren’t serving Him. One of the best things that happened in my life is that I am now happily married to the girl of my dreams. We got married with the blessing of God, the church, and our parents. During the “dark” years we didn’t have the blessing from anyone to continue even seeing each other, but with God at work in our hearts even when I wasn’t in connection with Him, we miraculously waited and feel so blessed that we did.

We chose to do Premarital Counseling with HOPE Ministries to lay a stronger foundation for our marriage. We are so glad we did. We use these tools every day. It was a wise step for us and we strongly recommend it.

This testimony is not what “I” did and didn’t do, but what God worked in a sinner like me. Every day is worth living because of His work in my life. What I have to share is only because of a loving, caring God.

In the last 3 months HOPE Ministries has had:

- 5 new couple cases
- 10 new single cases
- 4 follow-up couple cases
- 9 follow-up single cases

**Helping
Overcome with
Purpose and
Encouragement**

Testimony of God's work—anonymous

My life growing up was based on a performance life. Without knowing it I adopted this as a way of life. I viewed God as a God that punished me as soon as I stepped over the line. At age 14 I committed my life to God and tried my best to live a life that pleased God and also my church leaders. My view of God was one that made me want to perform to look like a Christian without inviting and accepting God in my life. It was a constant battle to make others believe I was a Christian.

My view of church leaders was very similar. I lived with a fear of leaders in general, thinking all leaders were out to prove their authority and deal out consequences when I didn't perform to their

liking. During my teenage years I developed the mindset that leaders and those in authority were not to be trusted and confided in. My bitterness and hard shell grew deeper with every experience I had, not realizing that really they didn't know how to take care of my heart like I needed.

In my lower 20's, I started dating a girl. On the surface it all looked good and I pretended all was well, but inside I was an absolute mess. Being involved in porn since early teens and never having victory over it made it even worse with dating. We went through our share of good times and bad times, but grew to be very fond of each other. Due to some issues, after 6 months we were forced apart. My dad was diagnosed with cancer just a few weeks before this took place and that time was one of the darkest moments of my life. With all the uncertainty in life and

things out of my control, I looked for the only satisfaction I knew of, which was back into moral chaos. The next year had its ups and downs like anyone's life does. I was still groping for answers and I didn't know where to find them. My dad passed away a year later which left me even in a darker gloom. With mom and 8 kids still at home, I was the one to provide for her. I buried all my troubles in work and felt better than I had in a while. As long as my business was

being profitable I felt needed and like I was worth something. After a while I knew it was time to do something else in life because I was getting burned out working to bury my problems. I decided to make a move to another community with a promise to go through counseling. Little did I know how well God works in a sinner's life and how all these years he was shaping me to be a servant for him. During all this time I had minimal contact with the girl I dated earlier, but we had enough contact to fall into moral failure with each other.

I didn't realize how God was working in my life to put me in the right connections, but He put me in contact with the most understand-

ing and helpful man I ever knew, and he was a leader of the church I had started to attend. After spending many hours discussing problems and struggles, I started seeing a part of God I never knew. I decided to go

through HOPE Ministries which was one of the best things I did with my life. It totally changed my view and course in life as I asked Him to be the personal, loving Lord of my life. I realized at that point God cares about me and loves me for who I am. I had never felt that love like I experienced then. There was so much of my life that was hidden and buried that I never let anyone see until that week. I felt a lift of my burdens and a will to live and freedom I never knew existed. I felt my heart being taken care of and experiencing freedom from my past pain. Something that was very different than I expected going to HOPE Ministries was the fact that they gave me tools to find my own answers that I can work with and not a "you did this and you did that wrong, YOU need to change" attitude. There was no pressure to change, just a caring that showed how God is. That made me want to change. Past pain has so much effect on life that it is almost scary to think about. With the right tools to deal with my past in the right way, I experienced forgiveness and love. He has worked miracles in my life in ways I didn't dare hope.

Looking back over the few dark years of my life, I realized how much God had to take me through so I would recognize my need of having Him in my life. As the quote says, "There is always light at the end of the tunnel," I didn't know if I would ever see that light. Because of Christ's work in my life, I see that light every day of my life.

"My view of God was one that made me want to perform to look like a Christian without inviting and accepting God into my life."

"Past pain has so much effect on life that it is almost scary to think about it."

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FROM A BOARD MEMBER:



Arlen and Gloria Mast
Kendal, Tyler, Shanae, Becca

DISAPPOINTMENT

I'm writing this as we are cruising along in a tour bus. Our family joined the Kansas Youth Chorus on their tour as ministerial reps this year. Today was the day that we were scheduled to go see Niagara Falls. But, due to mechanical problems with our bus, we were delayed about five hours which was about the time that we had allowed for sightseeing. If it goes as planned, we should make our next program, but the beauty of the falls will not be enjoyed by our group.

How do we deal with this? It was nice to spend a little more time with our hosts, but this is a real disappointment. Our children had been

looking forward to this for weeks and now when we are several hours away, we need to change course. How do we explain this to them? Or maybe more importantly, how will I respond?

Disappointment is something that we all experience and yet we never ask for it. It just shows up without our permission. The thing that I have to come back to in getting past disappointment, is that God is good. His goodness is not dependent on my circumstances or how I am feeling.

David experienced a lot of hardships in his life and he records some of his trials. But we also see his ability to see past his trials to the goodness of God. Psalm 33:5 states *“the earth is full of the goodness of the LORD.”* In Psalm 27:13, David says, *“I would have lost heart, unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.”*

David had faith and believed that he would see the goodness of God in his present situation. Charles Spurgeon said, *“We must believe to see, not see to believe.”* This is a challenge for me to look back at God's faithfulness in the past, look forward to what He wants to do in

the future, and allow that to shape my present responses.

We may never know what catastrophes we were spared with our detour. We also have a lot to be thankful for as far as timing is concerned. If there had to be a breakdown, this was a good time to have it.

The Message paraphrase of James 1:2-4 says – *“Consider it a sheer gift, friends, when tests and challenges come at you from all sides. You know that under pressure, your faith-life is forced into the open and shows its true colors. So don't try to get out of anything prematurely. Let it do its work so you become mature and well developed, not deficient in any way.”*

We all want to become mature and well developed and yet we don't always enjoy the way that God gets us there. So, when trials and disappointments come, let's believe in God's goodness. We trust, not because of what we are feeling, but because of what we know is true.

Arlen serves as pastor at the Arlington Amish Mennonite Church. He and his wife Gloria have been HOPE Ministries board members since the fall of 2010. They have four children Kendal, Tyler, Shanae, and Becca.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION:

Our desire is that no one will be excluded from opportunity for sessions because of finances. All counseling is done on a donation basis, and this plus the gifts of God's people, allow us to be full time in this ministry. We are grateful for all who have stood with us in so many ways and do trust in God's continuing provision. As a 501(c)(3) organization, we are accountable to our board for the finances and the operation of HOPE Ministries. If you wish to know more details about our finances, please contact Julian Nisly, our treasurer, at 620-664-5304. As God leads you to think about HOPE Ministries, please pray for us, and if He prompts you to join in our financial support, donations can be made in several ways as stated below. Tax deductible receipts will automatically be issued for checks of \$50 or more.

Donations can be done in various ways:

Send to:

HOPE Ministries

Box 103

Partridge, KS 67566

Call 620-259-9390 to use Credit Card

Go to our website and use the donation button through Paypal.



HOPE Ministries Board Members:

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Arlen & Gloria Mast—Vice Chairman
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