Bob: Meg Wilson, by the grace of God, was able to forgive her husband for his sexual sin against her; but there was still an open issue. How could she ever trust him again? Here’s Meg Wilson.

Meg: The first time he had back-to-back trips was seven years later, and it brought up a lot of fear in me. He brought a journal with him, and he wrote a love note to me every night he was gone. Now, he’s incorporated that in. Every time he leaves on a trip, he comes home; and he hands me the journal. So, that trust continues to get built. It’s a complex structure—like a bridge—so, when that’s destroyed, it takes a lot of time to rebuild.

Bob: This is FamilyLife Today. Our host is the President of FamilyLife®, Dennis Rainey, and I’m Bob Lepine. We’ll hear from Meg Wilson today about how a marriage gets put back together after there has been sexual sin in the relationship. Stay tuned.

And welcome to FamilyLife Today. Thanks for joining us. You know, I’m just curious, given the subject that we are talking about this week—and let me say, again, this may not be an appropriate subject for younger listeners—moms and dads will want to make the decision about what age group ought to be tuned in to today’s program—but if I were to stop and ask you, “What kind of sin is it that is the most pervasive sin facing marriages today?” We could take the generic subject of sin and say sin is the big problem—but if there is one area of sin, is it the one we are talking about—do you think?

Dennis: You know—my first thought was perhaps the misuse of money. My second thought was selfishness. Then, I quickly ran to what our guest, on today’s broadcast, said, “Sexual sin and sexual addiction”. Meg Wilson joins us again, here on FamilyLife Today. I’ll let our guest answer it. I’ve got a feeling I know how she is going to answer it. What do you think, Meg?

Meg: Well, I don’t want to sound like I see monsters in every closet; but the statistics that I have seen are conservative at 50-70 percent of men are wrestling, at some level, with pornography.

Dennis: In the Church?
Meg: In the Church, absolutely.

Dennis: We aren't talking about—in the culture—we’re just talking about it being a pervasive sin. If those numbers are right, then, at that point, I believe it would be a larger number than either finances—it may not be any bigger than selfishness.

Bob: Selfishness may be endemic to all of us! Meg, this is not just a men’s problem, as you’re investigating this—there is a growing segment of the pornography industry that is aimed at women; right?

Meg: Yes. *Today's Christian Woman*, a few months ago, had an article that and said that 34 percent of women, in the Church, admitted to struggling with various aspects, online, whether it’s chat rooms or pornography.

Bob: You mention chat rooms. You’re including sexual talk—

Meg: Yes.

Bob: —as pornography. We may not classify that in the standard definition of pornography; but, again, it is sexual sin to be having that kind of conversation with someone you are not married to.

Meg: Absolutely.

Dennis: We do know from your book, *Hope After Betrayal*—as well as other people whom Bob and I have interviewed, and from data that comes at us regularly, here on *FamilyLife Today*—that a number of men do get exposed to pornography between the ages of 5 and 15. It triggers something within them that sets them up to step off into this snare, on a regular basis.

I’d like you to just speak to parents, right now, just around the seriousness of protecting their sons and daughters from this sin. What would you advise a mom and a dad to do in terms of having conversations and what kind of guardrails to place in their families?

Meg: First of all, awareness is key. I’m so thankful for this broadcast; but I would tell Christian parents, in particular, that you can no longer assume that because you bring your children up in a Christian home and they go to a good Sunday school class that they are protected. Those kids don’t have to look for it. It is looking for them.

So, being aware, and knowing what your kids are going to, and having controls on the computer are all important steps; but, more importantly, as Christian parents, I see parents that want to insulate and try to protect their kids. The brutal reality is we really can’t do that. So, we need to give our kids tools. We need to teach them that this is out there and give them tools to battle it.
The first thing we need to do is to celebrate and paint a picture of what godly relations are about and not just tell our kids, “Don’t do that until you get married.” This is part of who we are. God created us. He created this physical representation of what should be happening spiritually and emotionally in a marriage. The enemy has taken it completely out of that context, and distorted it, and made it something awful. We need to be having those conversations in home, in church, and in youth groups. That is the greatest protection.

**Dennis:** I like where you started—which is God’s design. I think it is good, Bob, that we talk about this in a wholesome way with our children; but sex education is not a one birds-and-the-bees conversation. True sex education is—yes, a time when you do sit down and some things are explained—but then, you spend the rest of the adolescent years asking them: “What have you seen? What are you noticing? Have you had any, what they call, sexting on your cell phone, where they are texting and sending partially-nude or nude pictures of teenage girls or teenage guys to one another?”

This is pervasive in our culture. It is the wise parent who is engaging in conversations with their children—not acting like: “You know—I covered that with them. They’re good. They’ll be able to handle it.” Well, it’s coming at them, today, like it has never come at any generation that has ever walked the face of the earth.

**Bob:** Your husband was first exposed to pornography when he was ten years old. It was in the home, and he found the stash. Actually, he wrote the last chapter in your book. He describes what happened to him, at that point, as if there was almost a chemical reaction. I was thinking, as I read that, I was exposed to pornography about the same time. I don’t know that I had the same kind of chemical reaction.

There may be some differentiator that some folks are more susceptible to this kind of a sin trap than somebody else is; but when you get that exposure at a young age, and if you are susceptible in that particular sin-pattern area, it can lead you off into the kind of behaviors that—here he was—a happily-married man. I don’t want to pry too much, but I’m assuming that your relationship was full; right?

**Meg:** Yes; yes; yes.

**Bob:** So, it wasn’t like he was a starving man, who was hungry. There was just something in him that was like Romans 7—things he hated that he ended up doing.

**Meg:** Yes, that is a really good point, on a couple of different levels. First of all, it seems logical, on some level, to think that a man would only do this if he wasn’t being satisfied at home. That is a huge lie. No matter who he married, he would have brought this with him because of what you are talking about. In fact, he describes something—when he found that material, he then went and showed a couple of his buddies; and they
laughed. It crushed him because he thought, “Wow! This had such a powerful impact on me, and they were able to laugh it off.”

So, I wonder what makes the difference. Now, after talking to so many men, I realize it is like a petri dish. If you take an empty plastic laboratory petri dish and you drop a little dab of virus in there, it will dry up and probably leave a stain; but nothing will happen. But if you take a petri dish, and it is full of fertile material—a young man, isolated and alone—who doesn’t have a safe family environment where he can go to someone if he sees material—that has this gaping hole, in his heart, of low self-esteem—or 70-plus percent of men who become addicts were abused themselves, as a child—so that is a big piece. Whatever that fertile material is—you drop a bacteria in that, and it takes off, and it grows, and that is a significant difference.

**Dennis:** I want to talk to you about a wife who may have heard us talk about this subject this week, and she has begun to wonder. She is curious. Maybe her husband stays up on the computer, late at night; and there are little things that perhaps occur that she is suspicious now. What should she do with her suspicions?

**Meg:** Excellent question. There are a lot of women in this camp because there is a wonderful Holy Spirit at work. God gives women a really good gut, and we so often discount it or explain it away. I want to say to that woman: “Explore your gut, but be careful. It’s not your job to be the policeman and the detective, but get on your knees and ask God if there is something that is hidden—to bring it out into the light. He will do that.”

**Bob:** Let me ask you about that. If you were to look back to the time, prior to your husband’s first confession, were there things, you see now, that if you had been alert, you would have been able to pick up on? Have you gone back and said, “I should have known. There were some tell-tale signs,” or was he keeping it pretty tidy?

**Meg:** He was very tidy; he was very tidy. For a lot of men, when they have this dark corner of their lives, every other area is squeaky clean. There are a high percentage of pastors that struggle with this issue because, see, “If I have this dark area—if I make the outside look really good, and being a pastor” —

**Dennis:** “I’ll remove all suspicion. Nobody would ever think I’d be off into that.”

**Meg:** That’s right; that’s right.

**Bob:** I’m thinking a wife who is listening right now is going, “Okay. I’m thinking this wouldn’t be my husband.” I don’t want to sow seeds in her heart of mistrust for her husband because he may be a righteous godly man, and this is not an issue. You don’t want to have her, all of a sudden, suspecting something when there is no reason to suspect.
**Dennis:** Here is the thing. As a man, if Barbara came to me and she said, “I’ve been in a women’s group. There have been a number of those women talking about these matters. I just need to ask you a question.” As a man, I have to say to her: “You need to know there is nothing off limits with you, Sweetie. Bring the question.” I may not like the question. I may not like that it was even being asked of me; but in a healthy relationship, that kind of question ought to be able to be asked.

Now, the question is, at that point, if you find out something, then, you have the issue of: “What are you going to do with it? How are you going to handle it?” At that point, it might be a wise wife who is not taking this on by herself but perhaps getting her pastor or, if your husband does have a best friend in the church, perhaps allow him to come and help you present what may be a confrontation, at that point, if there has been deceit because I think lying and deceit are the seeds of destruction of a marriage relationship.

**Bob:** This gets to the issue of rebuilding trust after there has been a breech. It’s been eight years since your husband came to you with the second confession. You’ve seen evidence of genuine repentance in his life.

**Meg:** Yes.

**Bob:** Do you still wonder if there is something going on?

**Meg:** Well, let me talk a little bit about trust and forgiveness. Those terms get muddy in the Church, and they are misunderstood. They are not the same thing. To your question, specifically, do I have moments, sometimes, when I call him, and he’s gone, and he doesn't pick up the phone?—you betcha. That is scar tissue. That will probably remain in our marriage.

The first time he had back-to-back trips was seven years later. It brought up a lot of fear in me. He brought a journal with him. He wrote a love note to me every night he was gone. Now, he’s incorporated that in—every time he leaves on a trip, he comes home, and he hands me the journal, that he has written to me in every night. So, that trust continues to get built. It’s a complex structure, like a bridge—so, when that is destroyed, it takes a lot of time to rebuild.

There were times when I just had to say, “Okay; I’m going to forgive him, but I don’t feel like it.” It’s like this is a work that God does in us and through us. Forgiveness really has nothing to do with my husband. It has to do with me. Trust is for both of us.

**Dennis:** I think it is good to revisit what forgiveness is. Forgiveness is giving up the right to punish another person. You’ve been hurt. You’ve been wounded by their betrayal. There are feelings of having rights that have been betrayed in that relationship; but when you forgive someone, you take your hands off the scales. You say: “I could continue to punish you, but I choose not to because Christ forgave me. I am commanded to forgive you just as He forgave me.”
Bob: I don’t know if I got this from you or not but, as I have talked to groups about this, I’ve said we have this expression, where we’ll say, “Let’s bury the hatchet.” Well, what did we have a hatchet in our hand, in the first place for?—because we wanted to have a weapon and to be able to attack. Burying the hatchet is saying, “I’m putting away the tool of punishment.” You just have to be sure that you don’t bury it with the handle sticking out of the ground. [Laughter]

Dennis: That is where I was going. Make sure you bury the whole hatchet. Don’t leave it where you can grab it and pull it out. That’s a good question for you. I know you’ve said you have worked through your mistrust. Have you wanted to grab the handle of the hatchet and pull it out and punish him? Have you found yourself getting angry about matters—now, ten years later?

Meg: I’m sure that there is some residue in that. There are women, for whom anger is a bigger piece of the puzzle. It’s one of the reasons there are three stories in the book. Anger is actually a place I struggle with. I wasn’t allowed to express anger—that was disrespect in my home. So, I’ve had to process through that. For some women, that anger comes quickly, and easily, and readily. In a lot of cases, they heal more quickly. Anger is not a bad thing; it’s what we do with it. It’s often a door to sin, which is why we have the warning, “Do not sin in your anger.” But it can also be a real impetus to move a woman forward in the healing process. So, there should be some anger in this situation.

Bob: It’s possible, in a situation like the one you are in, where there has been such a grievous offense on the part of a husband toward a wife—or the other way around—wife toward a husband—where the offended party can feel like: “I’ve got in my hand now the ultimate trump card. And the next time you want to get mad at me for anything I’ve ever done, I can go, ‘Hey, wait a second, buster! I didn’t do this’”—

Dennis: Right.

Bob: “I didn’t do what you did!”

Dennis: Yes—and even feel a little self-righteousness.

Bob: Yes.

Meg: It is interesting you say that because there was a point when my husband was on the road to healing—and he began to step up, as the spiritual leader in our home. I had prayed for that for a long time; but, to be honest, as in many homes, I was kind of taking the spiritual lead with two daughters. So, he would take the lead; and he might question the way I handled something with the girls.

Let me tell you, that little ugly head of resentment would like: “Who are you, buddy? Now, all of a sudden, you’re....” I had to say: “Wait a minute. No, you’ve been praying
There was a point, in our relationship, when I said: “You know what? I’m firing myself as spiritual head of the household.” [Laughter] I needed to give that job back because, as long as I was there, I wasn’t going to enable him to do that. That was part of my healing. I needed to step back and let him do it. He may not do it the way I thought, but it’s been amazing to watch him step up in that position.

**Bob:** Tell me about the conversation you had with him when you went and said, “I think I’d like to write a book about our story.”

**Meg:** [Laughter] Oh, that was many, many conversations. The wonderful thing about healing—the wonderful thing about true healing—is that something that seems ugly and shameful is truly transformed. As I began to write the book, we had a lot of conversations: “What do we say? What do we not say?” Our families had to all know. There were so many steps in the writing process that were parallel to the healing process—so, the book holds a special meaning for all of us. My girls are proud of what their dad and I are doing—and when we speak, it touches people. Every time I get an email from a woman who says, “Your book made all the difference,”—it’s pay day, every time.

**Dennis:** You are finishing out your covenant, even though there has been disappointment. There has been betrayal. It’s been called what it is, which is sin; and you’ve made good on what you promised,”...till death do us part,”—together, as a couple.

**Bob:** And last night, I was sending an email to a friend. I quoted two verses. One is Isaiah 61:3, which talks about beauty from ashes, and the second was Joel 2, where it talks about how God restores the years that the locusts have eaten. The Bible is a redemption story—brokenness being forgiven and transformed. That is the whole message. We ought to be able to look at these situations and go, “That is a terrible thing that happened, but it’s a wonderful thing that God has done with a terrible thing that has happened.”

**Dennis:** Yes, and I want to add one verse to the two that you shared, Bob, because this also has happened. Second Corinthians, Chapter 1, verse 3, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all of our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.” That is what you have done. It goes on to say, “For we share abundantly in Christ’s sufferings so, through Christ, we share abundantly in comfort, too.”

Meg, this had to be tough to write because you had to go back—in part of it and relive it—relive it with your husband and with your daughters. Undoubtedly, this is going to bring comfort to those who have faced these dark days. I want to thank you for sharing your story, here on *FamilyLife Today.*
Meg: Thank you.

Bob: As you’ve said, this has already been used by God with a lot of women who have been down the same path you have been down. Let me encourage our listeners—if you find yourself here or if you know someone who has, go to FamilyLifeToday.com and get more information about Meg’s book. It is called Hope After Betrayal: Healing When Sexual Addiction Invades Your Marriage. The author is Meg Wilson; and the book is available in our FamilyLife Resource Center, online, at FamilyLifeToday.com.

Or you can call 1-800-FL-TODAY for more information about how to get a copy of the book. We also have additional resources that are designed to help couples in this same kind of circumstance—resources to help those who find themselves snared in the web of sexual addiction—and resources for couples to go through together, when there has been betrayal, like this, in a marriage. Again, more information, online, at FamilyLifeToday.com; or call us with any questions you have at 1-800-FL-TODAY.

If you were in a position where you were doing premarital counseling—or just having dinner with a couple that was about to get married—and they said: “What do you think are the important things that we need to remember, after we get married? What are the essentials for our marriage to thrive?” Do you know what you would tell them? Our team recently sat down with Dennis and Barbara Rainey and talked with them about these marriage essentials—and put together some laminated cards—that are kind of like a bookmark, only wider. They did it so that we would have something that we could pass along to listeners, just as a way to keep you focused on the important essentials for a strong, growing, thriving marriage relationship.

If you’d like to get a couple of these “Five Essentials for a Thriving Marriage” cards—one for you and one for your spouse—something to keep in your Bible or tape alongside your computer monitor, so you can keep your marriage at the forefront—just call us at 1-800-FL-TODAY and request the “Five Essentials” marriage card. We’d particularly like to hear from you if you are a new listener to FamilyLife Today so that we can get you introduced to the ministry, and let you know more about resources that we have available here, and how we can help strengthen your marriage and your family. Just call 1-800-FL-TODAY and ask for the “Five Essentials of a Thriving Marriage” cards. We’ll send two of them out to you. We hope you’ll find them helpful, and we hope you’ll keep listening to FamilyLife Today. Check out our website at FamilyLifeToday.com.

And with that, we’ve got to wrap things up for today. Thanks for being with us. We hope you have a great weekend. Hope you and your family can worship together this weekend in church. We’ll see you on Monday when we’re going to talk to a wife and hear her story of how she responded when she learned that her husband was dealing with ongoing patterns of sexual sin. I hope you can join us for that.
I want to thank our engineer today, Keith Lynch, and our entire broadcast production team. On behalf of our host, Dennis Rainey, I'm Bob Lepine. We'll see you back Monday for another edition of FamilyLife Today.

*FamilyLife Today* is a production of FamilyLife of Little Rock, Arkansas. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow.

We are so happy to provide these transcripts to you. However, there is a cost to produce them for our website. If you've benefited from the broadcast transcripts, would you consider donating today to help defray the costs?

Copyright © 2013 FamilyLife. All rights reserved.

www.FamilyLife.com