

Recovering Sight to the Blind

Grant Jenks
2014 Men's Conference
The River Church Community

[Smile]

[Take a deep breath.]

[Pray]

May God be gracious to us and bless us
and make his face to shine upon us,
that God's way may be known in our lives,
and his saving power in our afflictions.

May we be glad and sing for joy,
for you judge us with equity, Lord,
and guide our steps through our lives.

Our lives shall yield an increase;
God, our God, shall bless us.
God is so good to us;
let us all worship him!

Who am I?

- Work in Software
- Member of The River for a couple years
- Lead a small group
- Help with youth group

* Big surprise in the Valley: I work in software.

* Love The River and love coming here.

Grant Jenks - Married



* Married July 25, 2009.

* Coming up on 5 years, praise God.

Grant Jenks - House



- * I live in Santa Clara.
- * I know the stress of a large mortgage.
- * Oh, the joys of home ownership.

Grant Jenks - Dog



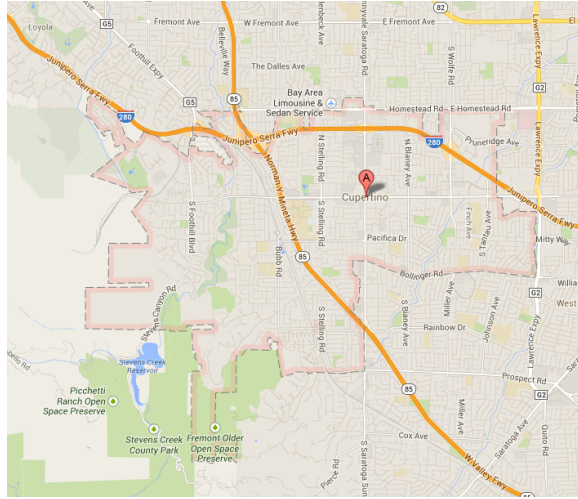
- * Have an 8 month golden retriever.
- * Named Tesla, after the scientist, not the car.

Grant Jenks - Baby



- * Baby due in September.
- * First child, very excited.
- * Don't know the gender yet.
- * Taking deep breaths.

Background - Cupertino



- * Grew up in Cupertino.
- * Went to Monta Vista, very competitive High School.
- * Well acquainted with the stress of Silicon Valley.

Background - Loving Parents



- * Dad making his favorite steaks.
- * Loving and caring parents - Jeff and Nancy.
- * Not divorced, no abuse.

Background

- C&E Family until LAUMC in 6th grade
- Participated fully in church youth choir, youth group, and leadership

* C&E Family until LAUMC in 6th grade.

* Got into church and community early.

* Mostly raised in the church.

* Was a good “church kid” - youth choir, youth group, leadership.

PORN

- * Want to share this morning about a little problem I had.
- * Started when I was young.
- * Didn't think it would be a big deal.

PORN

- * First experience of pornography: 12 years old.
- * Downloading illegal music. "Snoop Dog" became "Doggy style."
- * Hooked after first use.
- * It was like a fish taking to water.

PORN

- * Grew quickly into a habit.
- * I started structuring time to be alone.
- * I was very good at hiding it.
- * Kept thousands of files encrypted on various hard drives.
- * I thought, I'll give this up when I turn 18.

PORN

- * Became an addiction.
- * Gone through seasons looking at pornography 4-8 hours per day.
- * Often stayed up all night and to be exhausted the next day and return to it again.
- * Felt confused about my own sexuality and what was right/wrong about sex.
 - * Unrealistic expectations in sex.
 - * Violence in pornography.
 - * Confusion about gender roles.

Didn't matter...

A+

- * Didn't matter.
- * Everything outwardly looked OK.
- * World gave me an A+.
- * I was an overachiever.
- * Had friends.
- * Had girlfriends.

PORN & MASTURBATION

- * Answered success with porn and masturbation.
- * Did well, looked at porn.
- * Did badly, looked at porn.
- * Was in denial about porn as a mode of operation.

Didn't matter...



- * Didn't matter.
- * Thought things will be different in college.
- * Thought things will be different after college.
- * Thought things will be different when I move to LA.
- * Thought things will be different when I move to Washington.

- * "I'll move somewhere and my problems will stay where they were."

PORN & MASTURBATION

- * Things were different but porn and masturbation were not.
- * If anything they got even more intense and more confusing.
- * Fewer people to support me.
- * Fewer people I felt comfortable talking to.
- * Tried running from my problems but they followed after me.

Confused Sexuality

How do I care for my body?

- * Got really confused.
- * Started asking a lot of questions about my body.

- * Should I be hung like a horse?
- * I'll have to be thin to be desirable.
- * Being short makes me unattractive.
- * Hated the way I looked and blamed it for my limitations.
- * If only I were tall, then I would be whole or powerful or worthy.

PORN & MASTURBATION

- * Answered with porn and masturbation.
- * Wasn't a mindful explicit answer. But it was my daily medicine.
- * Never saw where my poisonous thinking was coming from.
- * Assumed I could separate realities well enough.
- * Assumed I had to live in different worlds.

Confused Sexuality

What does it mean to be a man?

- * Wondered all kinds of things about masculinity.
- * What is real masculinity?
- * Can men be trusted?

- * Believed all kinds of lies.
- * Men don't cry.
- * Men should always be competitive.
- * Men don't need or ask for help.
- * Men are violent, even in sex.
- * Men are constantly sexual creatures.
- * A man is defined by his penis.

PORN & MASTURBATION

- * Continued dosing with porn and masturbation.
- * Couldn't see what was the root of my inward focus.
- * Assumed the images I saw in porn defined a man.
- * Believed a man's role was defined by what he did in sex.

Confused Sexuality

How should I treat women?

- * How should I treat women?
- * What does the perfect woman look like?
- * What does the perfect woman do?

PORN & MASTURBATION

- * Still answered all my questions with porn and masturbation.
- * Thought women were objects of my sexual desired.
- * Assumed the perfect woman was constantly sexually available.
- * Perfect woman: thin, blond, white, huge breasts
- * Assumed “chivalry” was an old and meaningless word.
- * Proverbs 31 was my standard for women and my standard for myself was David with Bathsheba.

Kept Rationalizing

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I became an expert.

* Read pros and cons.

* Could argue for and against.

* Knew everything about it.

* But I didn't know how to be free.

* Had crazy justifications: Ecclesiastes 9:10 "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might..." I thought, life-verse!

* Didn't keep reading: "for in the realm of the dead, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom."

PORN & MASTURBATION

Still answered all my questions with porn and masturbation.

Kept Numbing



Alcohol was the standard.

I used marijuana depending on the friends.

But I kept getting high grades.

But I kept getting better jobs at bigger companies.

Sometimes these went hand-in-hand.

I could be the life of the party after a few drinks.

Didn't realize that everyone around me was sick too.

Didn't realize that I was leading folks astray.

PORN & MASTURBATION

But I just kept coming back to porn and masturbation.

It was more constant than my faith, than my devotion to any person.

Kept it a Secret



- * Couldn't tell anyone.
- * A secret I'd have to take to the grave.
- * I felt so guilty. I could never tell another man or woman about this.
- * I built walls to protect myself behind layers of repressed memories, justification and loneliness.

Only as sick as our secrets.

* Rick Warren from Celebrate Recovery at Saddleback church: "We are only as sick as our secrets."

Man, that pierces to my heart.

* What secrets are you keeping today?

* Maybe your secret is just that you're Not Ok.

Gave Up

This is as good as it gets.

Tried and failed and tried and failed and tried and failed and failed.

Looked around me and gave up for a couple years. I figured:

- * all the broken relationships
- * all the mistreatment of women
- * all the ridiculous fantasies
- * all the secrets and lies and frustrations

This is all just par for the course, right?

Everyone goes through this.

My standard is pretty good.

If God is grading on a curve, I'm sure to get in.

**God whispers to us in our pleasures,
speaks in our conscience,
but shouts in our pains:
it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world.**

C.S. Lewis

C.S. Lewis:

God whispers to us in our pleasures,
speaks in our conscience,
but shouts in our pains:
it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world.

- * No matter how I tried to numb myself, God would get through to me.
- * He wasn't screaming at me. He was calling me back.
- * He wasn't angry. He wanted me to come home.

Kept Making Promises



My mind became a broken record of promise making over and over and over again.

- * I'll give it up at such-and-such time.
- * It's not that big a deal.
- * I don't do it that often.

Made excuses when I failed:

- * This season is too stressful to give that up.
- * I failed because of what that girl was wearing.
- * If God didn't want this then he would've changed me by now.

At one point I tried to journal every time I messed up in any way.
I had to go back and write in the journal so often that after just two days, I gave up.

Kept “Turning the Corner”



- * Journal is mostly boring for these years.
- * Over and over again asking forgiveness.
- * Over and over again going up for prayer.
- * Never really confessing, never bringing my sin to the light, never asking for specific help.
- * I spoke vaguely in generalities. I needed help but I wouldn't name it.

- * Tactics vs. Strategy
- * Tactics: stay busy, exercise, use internet filtering, put the computer in a public place
- * Strategy: Meditate on women as sisters in Christ, created in God's image. Have a prayer life that really brings life.

I had beat myself up and tried and failed and beat myself up.
But God was simply good to me.

I imagined him disciplining me. Taking from me the things I wanted.

But if ever this happened, I did more to forfeit his good gifts.

God was like the pushy Jewish mother insisting that I eat cake while I stuffed my face with mudpies.

Reached the limits of my mind to deliver me.

- * Had tried so much and for so long.
- * Got worse and better and changed: pictures, videos, stories, pictures, videos.
- * Outwardly I had so much.
- * But inwardly I was like a dead man.
- * I knew nothing of being totally free in life.

I reached the limits of my mind to deliver me.
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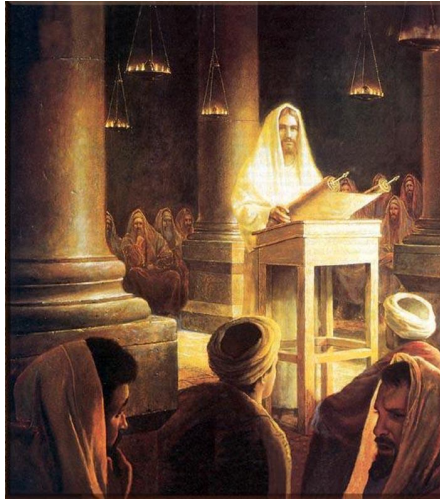
**Jesus came,
not to make bad men good,
but to make dead men live.**

Jesus came,
not to make bad men good,
but to make dead men live.

As for me, I was dead in my transgressions and sins.
How I longed to be counted among the living.

But Christ demonstrated His love for me in this: While I was still a sinner, He died for me.

Luke 4



* In Luke 4, it says Jesus got up one day to read the scriptures in his church and proclaimed:

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

- * I started to seek Christ himself.
- * Pornography is a blindness of the mind and soul.
- * Jesus was sent to proclaim recovery of sight for the blind.

JESUS?

- * Started a long process of surrender.
- * Had to interact with this character.
- * If porn and masturbation had bludgeoned my soul like a mallet, then Jesus was like a potter expertly bringing clay to use.
- * This was coming to Jesus.

Surrender



- * Came to church, listened to pastors.
- * Didn't like what they had to say.
- * These people weren't scary but I was terrified.
- * I began to hear the witness of men who had the deepest regrets.
- * Kept coming back.

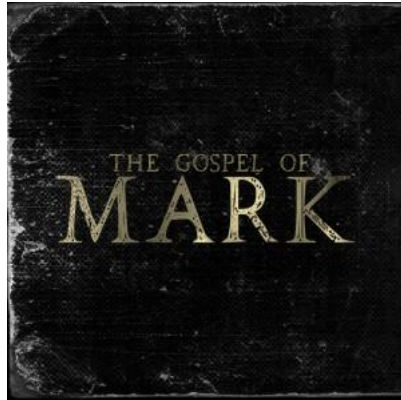
JESUS...

They had a relationship with Christ and were convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, would be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Is pornography greater than those things?

I wasn't sure.

Surrender



Came to scripture.

Wasn't sure it was true.

Started believing the gospel of Mark.

Was fascinated by this Jesus character: his love, his purpose, his determination.

JESUS!

- * Started getting excited about Jesus.
- * This man surprised me at every turn.

- * Could this be what a man was supposed to be?
- * Could this be how I was supposed to treat women?

- * I wanted to be free, I desired healing, but it didn't come immediately.
- * It was a process.

Surrender



- * Came to an accountability partner.
- * Finally broke the silence.
- * Chose someone who was already brave enough to be asking for help.
- * Started meeting weekly in 2005.
- * Would eventually each be the best-man in each other's weddings.

JESUS.

- * Unwavering, uncompromising. This Jesus character wanted all my faith.
- * I became willing to give it.
- * What have I to lose?

John 9



John 9 (abbreviated)

As Jesus went along, he saw a man blind from birth.

[So doing the last thing that you or I would do,]

Jesus spat on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes.

"Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means "Sent").

So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.

His neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, "Isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg?"

Some claimed that he was.

Others said, "No, he only looks like him."

But he himself insisted, "I am the man."

"How then were your eyes opened?" they asked.

He replied, "The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes.

He told me to go to Siloam and wash.

So I went and washed, and then I could see."

They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind.

Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath.

[Which was a big no-no in those days. Jesus couldn't heal on the Sabbath.]

Therefore the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight.
“He put mud on my eyes,” the man replied, “and I washed, and now I see.”

Some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.”

But others asked, “How can a sinner perform such signs?” So they were divided.

Then they turned again to the blind man, “What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened.”

The man replied, “He is a prophet.”

They still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man’s parents.

“Is this your son?” they asked the parents.

“Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?”

“We know he is our son,” the parents answered, “and we know he was born blind. But how he can see now, or who opened his eyes, we don’t know.”

A second time they summoned the man who had been blind.

“Give glory to God by telling the truth,” they said. “We know Jesus is a sinner.”

He replied, “Whether he is a sinner or not, I don’t know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!”

* My Own Story:

I still wasn’t sure who Jesus was.

But I was willing to obey him.

I was listening to pastors and believing in the word.

I was breaking secrecy and silence.

I thought maybe spiritual disciplines had some power outside of Christ.

Whether he was just a good psychologist or not, I didn’t know.

What I knew was that the more I followed him,

The more I believed he was really God,

The more I was healed.

Received



Teased one day for choosing salad over chili.
Food tasted different.

Something physiologically was changing.

Sensitivities came back to me.
An awareness was returning to me.

Received



I gained guy-friends bonded not by machismo but by love and respect.
Men that I could be vulnerable with.

And people started to come out from hiding.

In our fellowship there were men going into debt for their addiction.
There were men who had seen prostitutes and were racked with guilt.
There were men sleeping around afraid they would contract a disease..

We started confessing to one another and learned we were not alone.

Received



Received: freedom.

Freedom to *make* a choice.

Hadn't realized before that as a slave I had no choice.

I thought I was in control but I was deceived.

I don't believe we can escape a master.

Even if we master ourselves, I think we find we are a cruel task master.

I know I was.

Jesus has a light yoke and in him I found freedom.

Received



Images from my mind began to be erased.
Washed white as snow.
Took years and hundreds of journal pages.
But it was, oh, so worth it.

Participated in a 12-step program.
Didn't want to be one of "those" people.
But I was one of "those" people.

Rule of thumb: for each year in, count on a year out.
The hard work is worth it.

The Great Divorce by C. S. Lewis



[C.S. Lewis writes in the first person as a man visiting a place like hell.]
[He witnesses ghosts carrying heavy burdens and angels trying to free them.]
[In this scene he sees a ghost carrying a red lizard on its shoulder.]
[The lizard represents a kind of twisted nature. An angel offers to kill it.]

[Angel] "I cannot kill it against your will. It is impossible. Do I have your permission?"

The Angel's hands were almost closed on the Lizard, but not quite. Then the Lizard began chattering to the Ghost so loud that even I could hear what it was saying.

[Lizard] "Be careful," said the Lizard. "He can do what he says. He can kill me. One word from you and he will! Then you'll be without me for ever and ever. It's not natural. How could you live? You'd be only a sort of ghost, not a real man as you are now. He doesn't understand. It may be natural for him, but it isn't for us. Yes, yes. I know there are no real pleasures now, only dreams. But aren't they better than nothing? And I'll be good. I admit I've sometimes gone too far in the past, but I promise I won't do it again. I'll give you nothing but really nice dreams—all sweet and fresh and almost innocent."

[Angel] "Have I your permission to kill it?"

[Ghost] "I'm afraid it will kill me if you do so."

[Angel] "It won't. But supposing it did?"

[Ghost] "You're right. It would be better to be dead than to live with this creature."

[Angel] "So I may?"

[Ghost] "Damn it! Go on! Get it over. Do what you like," cried the Ghost: He ended, whimpering, "God help me. God help me."

Next moment the Ghost gave a scream of agony such as I have never heard on Earth. The Angel closed his grip on the reptile: twisted it, while it bit and writhed, and then flung it, broken backed, on the turf.

For a moment I could see nothing. Then I saw the man growing every moment solid. Brighter still and stronger, the arms and legs and hands formed. Next moment there was the actual completing of a human — an immense man.

At the same moment something seemed to be happening to the lizard. I thought something had gone wrong. Far from dying, the creature was struggling and growing bigger as it struggled. As it grew it changed. Its hinder parts grew rounder. Suddenly I started back, rubbing my eyes. What stood before me was the greatest horse I have ever seen, brilliant white but with mane and tail of gold. It was smooth and shining, rippled with swells of flesh and muscle.

The new-made man turned and clapped the new horse's neck. Horse and master breathed into each other's nostrils. The man turned from it, flung himself at the feet of the angel, and embraced him. When he rose I thought his face shone with tears. I had not long to think about it though. In joyous haste the young man leaped upon the horse's back. Turning in his seat he waved a farewell, then nudged the stallion with his heels. They were off. I could barely follow them with my eyes; they were quickly like a shooting star far off on the green plain, and soon among the foothills of the mountains. I saw them winding up, scaling what seemed impossible steeps, and quicker every moment, so high that I had to strain my neck to see them, they vanished, bright themselves, into the everlasting morning.

Received



Did you hear the lizard's lies?

- * It's not natural.
- * You wouldn't be a real man.
- * He doesn't understand.
- * Isn't this better than nothing?

God didn't desire to take away my sexuality.
He had designed for me something so good it was beyond my ability to imagine.
I had settled for a lizard and he wanted me to have a stallion.

God is not an undoer but a renewer.
He does not rewrite history.
The resurrection presents us no re-written history.
Christ died. Christ rose. Victory in Christ looks forward.

From Revelation 19:11-14, the apostle John writes:
I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True.
With justice he judges and wages war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns.
He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself.
He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God.
The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean.

Brothers, can you imagine to ride with Christ? To be part of the armies of heaven, white and clean?

God's desire for us is so great. Let us receive the good gifts he has for us. Let us join at Christ's side in the battle.

Received

WITNESS

Great! I was healed.

Who did I want to tell now? Nobody.

This isn't the testimony that I wanted.

I hoped to share about God making me tall or rich or powerful.

But I didn't really get a choice.

God is glorified in my weakness. His power is made perfect there.

Lent

- A season of confession and repentance.

* Why am I here?

* Lent: What are my words and where do they come from?

* Landed me here.

* Prayer (variation on Psalm 51)

Have mercy on us, O God,
according to your unfailing love;
according to your great compassion
blot out our transgressions.

Wash away all our iniquity
and cleanse us from our sins.
Cleanse us with hyssop, and we will be clean;
wash us, and we will be whiter than snow.

Create in us a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within us.
Let us hear joy and gladness;
let the spirit within us rejoice.

Do not cast us from your presence
or take your Holy Spirit from us.
Our sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit;

a broken and contrite heart
you, God, will not despise.

Restore to us the joy of your salvation
and grant us a willing spirit, to sustain us.
Open our lips, Lord,
that our mouths would declare your praise.

May it please you to prosper us, Lord,
to bless us with life everlasting.

JESUS

My journey out of the bondage of pornography is a story of rising from death to life. I know Jesus as a healer. And I can bear witness that he restores, ten, twenty, a hundredfold what we have lost.

Eventually there came a day where the impulse to look at pornography never came to me.

Eventually there came a day where I didn't look at a single woman with lust in my eyes.

Eventually there came a day where death's grip by lust had been lost on me.

Are you counted among the living?

Are you tired and weary?

Are you ready to begin the process of surrender?

**Jesus came,
not to make bad men good,
but to make dead men live.**

My biggest step was coming into the light. I needed a community for healing.
Would you consider a step like that today?

- * Finding an accountability partner.
- * Joining brothers who can share about their own struggles.
- * Participating in healing prayer.
- * Going to the Word in community.
- * A 12-step program.
- * Counseling.

Jesus came,
not to make bad men good,
but to make dead men live.

Amen.