

OVERCOMERS OUTREACH CANADA INC.

Newsletter - November 2012

Those “affected ... indirectly”

Our preamble, read at every meeting, begins with the words: “Overcomers is a fellowship of men and women who have been **affected** either directly or **indirectly** by the abuse of any mood-altering chemical or compulsive behaviour.”

As our groups grow, we are finding that we are serving more people in the “indirectly affected” category. This isn’t surprising since the average alcoholic has 13 people in his circle of people affected. Similar statistics apply to other chemical abuse. This circle of people includes spouses, siblings, parents of adult children, co-workers, grandparents and friends. For porn addicts, that group is much smaller, usually just the spouse, but the impact is potentially even more profound since it strikes at the heart of the marriage. The textbook definition for those affected is “co-dependent”. This may be a slightly obtuse label, however, the fact remains that, regardless of the label, those affected risk exhibiting some decidedly un-Christlike behaviours. Common reactions are fear, anger, controlling activities, irrational submission, manipulation, resentment, self-pity and more. When challenged, the co-dependent will often react: “What do you mean? He/she is the one who has the problem! Why do you imply that I have an issue?”

For those affected, there is good news. You, too, can be helped. Come to Overcomers and participate in the same 12-Step program followed by primary addicts. You can address your problem whether or not the primary addict in your life is actively addressing theirs.

Please come.

Yours very truly,

Chris B.
President
Overcomers Outreach Canada Inc.



The Empty Chair

First, I would like to say how much I appreciate you, the leaders and regular attenders in each OO group across the country, and your commitment to serve in your church and community. Without you, there might not be help for many people who are in bondage to addiction. This reminds me of a story in the Bible. “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them – what does he do? He leaves the other ninety-nine sheep in the pasture and goes looking for the one that got lost until he finds it. When he finds it, he is so happy that he puts it on his shoulders and carries it back home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says to them, ‘I am so happy I found my lost sheep, let us celebrate!’” *Luke 15:4-6 (Good News Translation)*

As I look back on my first months in a 12-Step program 34 years ago, I am so grateful for the times, when I missed a meeting, that people had enough love for me that they would call or drop by to see if I was okay. At least twice, I would have slipped, but by the grace of God these people came to my rescue. As I reflect on this I am reminded of a quote from one of our books, Daily Reflections by AA, “When I talk with a newcomer to [OO], my past looks me straight in the face. I see the pain in those hopeful eyes, I extend my hand, and then the miracle happens: I become healed. My problems vanish as I reach out to this trembling soul.”

The more I do my Step 12 work (carrying the message to others), the more I heal. Let us remember that a lot of our Step 12 work does not happen in our meeting rooms. No, many hurting people are out there waiting for someone to reach out and extend the loving hand of JESUS CHRIST to them. On pages 23-24 of our FREED book it says, “Our eyes have been opened! We seem to see things in a different perspective, as God shines His light upon our daily path. The 12 Steps have taken us through some hard places, but have released us from bondage and restored our lives! Just when we thought we had no hope, God stepped in when we asked Him to, and did the most impossible miracles of all time! We become so excited about the changes that we are compelled to share this message of hope with others who are still struggling! And we put these principles to work in our lives, over and over again. They WORK – when we work them!”

The question is, are we going to follow through on Step 12 until all the chairs in our meeting rooms are filled?

If you have any questions or require information regarding Overcomers Outreach, feel free to call us.

Questions about sexual addictions – call Chris at 204-999-0173

Questions or information on all addictions – call Ken at 204-770-7999

Questions about Steps 4 and 5 – call Wally at 204-688-7983

Questions about books and literature – call Bev at 204-635-2063
Questions or information regarding OO (adding your group to our web site, etc.)
– call Mr. Bev T. at 204-453-3920

May God bless you all.

Ken S.
Executive Coordinator
Overcomers Outreach Canada Inc.

Testimony from Bev B.

Ten years ago my husband came to me and confessed to a porn addiction. At first I was caught off guard, not really understanding all the ramifications to our life together. I thought he was just hurting himself by this activity. However, since he had been a porn addict since before we were married, this certainly did affect how things were. I had always felt that there was something between us in our marriage and that I wasn't ever quite good enough. Sex wasn't anything very special, but maybe that was just because of the way I was raised to view sex.

Four years ago we learned about Overcomers Outreach and my husband wanted to start a group in our church. I thought this would be a good idea as it would help my husband to deal with his addiction. I was surprised when he suggested I come along and also be involved. All right, I could certainly make coffee and be there if another woman came along.

These "Overcomers" years have been the best years of our marriage. My husband has been able to overcome his addiction with the strength of Jesus Christ and his working through the 12 steps. But the most significant part for me was to be able to understand a lot of things about myself. My need to control my husband and my anger were ways in which I tried to change my husband's behaviour - ways that did not work. I learned that I could let that go and Jesus would work in my husband's life. I also learned that I had some behaviour problems of my own to work on. As Jesus has been gracious and merciful to me, so I could be to my husband.

Four years later we have a stronger, happier and healthier marriage, complete with the joy of the Lord. Would we be here without Jesus and Overcomers? – No. Would we treat each other with grace and understanding? – No. Would we be a strong testimony to our family and grandchildren? – No. Only through the grace of God are we healed and whole.

Testimony from Liz J.

Two years ago, on a beautiful, hot July day, my whole world changed. I had just found out that my husband had been in a sexual relationship with another woman through texting. As I took my kids to swimming lessons that morning I couldn't think of anything else. I had two choices: firstly, I could take the kids and leave, and secondly, I could stay and we could go for counseling. I knew I wanted to stay because I still loved my husband and because the kids needed their dad. God wants families to stay together, if possible, and I wanted what God wanted. I cried out to God as I walked the kids to swimming lessons, "Please help me! I'm trying to do what You want me to do and I know You'll bless me for following You. Bless me God! I need your blessings!" I didn't know it then, but the blessings had already begun.

My cell phone rang within seconds of finishing that prayer. It was my husband who had just found out that I knew what he'd been doing. He told me he wanted to go for counseling through Overcomers Outreach, an addictions group that met at our church. He told me he thought he was a sex addict. I knew nothing about being a sex addict or what that meant but I was definitely on board with getting help for this problem. He contacted a couple who attended Overcomers. They met with us at our home that evening. I was very hurt and angry when we met with this couple and I felt like no one would understand, but as we talked I began to see that we weren't alone. They dealt with this like it was a real problem, a real addiction, not just a nice, neat label to stick on a problem to make it seem better. They also reached out to me and offered me the help and support I needed to make it through.

That night I didn't know how to start. The problem just seemed too big to tackle. How can you trust your spouse when they've been hiding a problem like this for so long? Did I do something wrong? Am I in some way responsible for this happening? They explained to me that an addiction like this seems very personal but it had nothing to do with me. An addict is an addict because they are an addict, not because there is a problem with their spouse. They also told me they would be holding my husband accountable and they would let me know if there was anything they needed to tell me. That took some of the pressure off of me, but I still didn't trust my husband and I didn't trust that the system was fool proof. That's when it hit me. I needed to trust God to take care of my husband and me! I didn't need to do it on my own! In fact, I couldn't do it on my own. It was just too big for me. As soon as I realized this, I felt the healing begin.

It's been two years since my world changed for the better. I still have moments of doubt, but when these moments threaten to take hold, I thank God for taking care of me and my family and for His many blessings. Our marriage is much better than it has ever been and we both have a much more intimate relationship with our Lord God because we let Him bless us.

Treasurer's Note

In recent meetings, we have committed to having an Overcomers Outreach presence at all of the Promise Keepers events scheduled for the 2012-2013 season. This involves a considerable amount of travel for our Executive Coordinator, Ken Sundelin, as well as others who assist him in some locations. We have the opportunity to conduct workshops at some of the Promise Keeper events. We also hold a Training Workshop the following Sunday for those who have interest in finding out more about Overcomers Outreach and how our groups work. While this initiative involves the expenditure of significant energy, time and money, it has been our most effective means of expansion and many new groups have started or are in the process of forming. We anticipate further growth this year, expecting we may have 45 or more OO groups operating by mid 2013.

In order for us to keep pace with this growth, we will also need greater resources – both in personnel and in finances. We look to the Lord to meet both of these needs, and the Lord sends His provision to us through His people! It is actually exciting to see how this happens again and again – for which we give thanks, both to the Lord and to those individuals, churches and organizations that have stood with us and participated in this ministry.

Our particular financial needs are in these areas:

- 1) Executive Coordinator's support (Ken Sundelin's salary and expense)
- 2) Travel and Conference expense (cross-Canada expansion)
- 3) General operating expenses (telephone, website, office, etc.)
- 4) Funds to add an additional worker for follow-up/support work with groups

We encourage you to support this ministry, as the Lord leads you, so that help may flow out to many others who are in need.

Donations can be made by cheque, and some have supplied us with a series of monthly post-dated cheques. We are also able to take donations online through [Paypal](#) – just click on the Donate link on our website. Please add a note to designate the area of ministry you wish to support, and provide us with a mailing address for receipting purposes.

God bless you.

Leo Jansens
Treasurer

Testimony from Randy F.

Life since February has been full of changes for me. God has been chipping away at a lot of my past and removing relationships from my present. As I type this testimony, with tears running down my face, I think that I finally understand the verse in the Bible that speaks about experiencing Godly sorrow about my past and present life.

As God has changed so many relationships in my life over the last 5 months, I have had to face some of my greatest fears. I have spent years trying to get other people to "find me acceptable" so that I "would find **me** acceptable" - it does not work that way. I was not able to reconcile my relationship with my dad before he died; my children have asked me to not have any contact with them; the woman, with whom I had hoped to have a future, got tired of waiting and moved on; my divorce is still not settled and now I realize that there is not one truly intimate relationship (I am not speaking of sexual intimacy, but personal intimacy) in my life, including my relationship with Jesus.

I have started to clean up old paperwork and get rid of the past, but then I come across things - letters, cards, e-mails, etc - that held so much promise for my future and recall how I have managed to mess things up – sometimes by anger, sometimes by not being honest (with myself and others), but mostly due to the fact that I have stood still for so long and existed with the false hope that "it will all work out in the end". God cannot work if I am standing still, shaking in my boots, being afraid to live and hoping that I would just die so that the pain would stop, while at the same time not wanting to die "just in case God actually does have something better for me". It has been a hard way to live and I have attached myself to so many things and people, that have given me a false sense of peace. I have hidden in relationships, work, doing things for the church, doing things for other people, and in books, movies, internet pornography or whatever else would take my mind off of the reality of my life, as it was. I know that true peace only comes through my relationship with my Lord and Saviour, Jesus, and I believe that God has removed all those other situations in my life so that I have no choice but to trust in, and pursue Him!

I have often thought about my last conversation with Ken S. and how right he was when he said that anger has a root of fear. I have come to the realization that most of my fears are self-centered and have become part of a flawed, but deeply entrenched, thought life. I am only a victim if I stand still, and even then the only one who is "victimizing" me, is me. Starting over at my age (almost 50) is not what I had envisioned my life would be, but it is NOT the end of my life. The time that I have spent with the guys on Tuesday nights has started a healing process in me. It has taken a long time for me to get to this point, and I know without a doubt, that I could not have done it alone.

“...anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!”
2 Corinthians 5:17 (NLT)

I also know, without a doubt, that God's hand is all over my finding, and attending the Overcomers group in Edmonton. I attended a seminar by Ken S. at Promise Keepers last year where Chris B. pursued me and told me about the Edmonton group and now there have been many Tuesday nights where I have had men speak into my life with honesty and prayer. As I have started to heal emotionally, spiritually and physically, I have become more open to the "honest rebuking" of a few trusted people in my life. I have started to attend a CODA 12-Step meeting as well, and that has helped me to understand why my relationships have failed in the past.

I used to think of the word "overcomer" as an adjective, but I now believe it to be a verb due to the fact that becoming an overcomer involves a series of steps, some backwards, but far more forwards! I will continue to be an overcomer, one step at a time, and every one of those steps forward is a testament to the God of the Bible, Who does not turn His back on the broken, but offers the broken a way back. Praise God!

Testimony from Alice

Hi, my name is Alice and I am 52 years of age. It has been a long journey to where I am today. When I was in grade 1, I failed twice. They tested me and told my parents that the test showed I was mentally retarded. They explained to my parents that I could never get married, have kids or have a job, and that my parents would have to take care of me for the rest of my life. From then on I was in special classes.

When I was 9 years of age I was being groped by a friend of the family. I went to school with his daughter. I first got raped at 10 years of age and it went on until 16 years of age. He said that if I told anyone, nobody would believe me, and that he'd kill me or my family, or my family would send me away and I'd never see them again. When I was 14 years of age, the school counselor wanted to know what was going on because I wasn't doing my work - I would daydream and I'd skip some classes. The counselor wanted to get to the bottom of it. He wouldn't let me leave his office until I told him what was going on. I told him I couldn't tell because I'd be in big trouble. He had to promise me that he wouldn't tell my parents. He said he wouldn't. The psychologist took me to Mount Carmel Clinic to get a check up, but when I had to go back for the results, the counselor said I'd have to go on my own. He said if anybody would find out, they'd be in trouble because they never told my parents. So I never got the results of the checkup. The counselor also told me to stay away from the man and not to speak about it again.

After all the sexual abuse was over at 16, I took thread and needle and sewed up my private parts. I was not going to let any man go there or touch me there ever again.

At 16, I was taking 25 to 35 pills a day, like Gravalol®, Tylenol® and Aspirin®, so I could escape my secret and my emotional feelings. I also was smoking. My mom had a suspicion that I was smoking so she searched my bedroom. She found the Mount Carmel Clinic card. At this time I was 18. I came home from school and she wanted to know why I had this card. I said I got it at school, people came and showed us films. But my mom did not believe me and I finally told her. My mom beat me up and I peed my pants. I thought she was going to kill me. My dad was standing in the doorway and he was laughing. He thought it was funny. My mom said she had to walk away because she was going to kill me. She also said, “how could you do this to me”. My mom dialed the phone of the friend who raped me and said to the wife that I had something to tell her. I said to her, “your husband raped me”. She didn’t believe me, she called me a liar. I was crying. I said to my mom “she doesn’t believe me”. My mom took the phone and said, “he did it” and hung up on her. My mom said she never wanted to talk about it or hear about it again, to keep my mouth shut and not to tell anybody about it.

At 18 we moved to Winnipeg Beach. We had a doctor out there. Every time I had to go to the doctor, I didn’t feel comfortable with him and I would cry. So one day he asked my mom what was going on with me. My mom told the doctor and he put me on nerve pills. I started to add the nerve pills to my other pills I was taking, to numb myself.

At 24 years of age I was working in Selkirk and met my husband. I got married when I was 28 years old. We drank a lot in the 4 years we were going out. I was still taking all kinds of pills. I would stock pile them and the doctor would keep giving them to me. I’d drink while taking my pills. I felt guilty. I felt everything was my fault. I felt ashamed and dirty. I didn’t love myself. I asked God to stop the rape. He did, but I struggled for years with all the feelings I had and asked God to take these feelings away from me. It took years. I just wanted to be dead. God put different people in my life, but I still hated myself so much. I’ve gone for help to counselors, psychologists, and psychiatrists and went to many support groups, but it never did anything for me. Finally God put a person in my life 3 years ago who helped me a lot, and still is. I thank God for this person. This person told me about Overcomers. I went and I thank the Lord for Overcomers. I’ve been going to Overcomers for a year now. This is the place for me, where I can be honest, open and willing for God to help me so I don’t go back to the old me. God is an awesome God. Each day is God’s gift to me. I respect the good, the beauty, and even the pain that I have known. Thanks.

Growth of Overcomers Outreach Canada

Growth of the Overcomers Outreach 12-Step Christian recovery program has brought us to the point where there are between 30-35 groups operating in Canada. About half of that number are in Manitoba.

Executive Coordinator Ken S., who conducts OO workshops at Promise Keepers conferences, began his journey in October, and when he finishes in May of 2013, he will have attended 15 PK events. Launch of new groups is usually at its peak during this period.

In recent weeks, a sprinkling of groups have started, including ones in both Kenora and Goderich, ON. The woman, who launched the group in Goderich, hopes to start another coed group in neighbouring Clinton. Other groups have either started, or are close to launching, in Halifax, Lloydminster, PEI, Burnaby, and Kentville, NS.

Mr. Bev T.
Communications Coordinator

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