

Bill and Susan Case Study

Bill and Susan have been married for eight years. They are in a young couples small group and are members of the church. They appear to be growing Christians.

Bill was saved 10 years ago. Before he came to Christ he had a history of promiscuity. His wife did not know about this past. Bill saw it as "before Christ" information. He emphasized that he was proud of the fact that he has never cheated on his wife.

He began viewing porn at age 12. He tried to stop various times but it would increase while in "partying mode" or after break ups with girlfriends. After he was saved, his addiction subsided some but he never overcame the temptation. In the last two years he has spiraled downward. His wife noticed him shutting down the computer screen often when she would come into the room.

He recently started a long distance internet relationship with a woman he met online. Everything blew up between Bill and Susan when Susan caught him looking at porn one month ago. He admitted his longstanding problem and in counseling he revealed he had had inappropriate non-sexual contact with a woman. He seems repentant. His wife is upset and he is embarrassed.

He did confess "a problem with lust" with his small group. But he is reluctant to have a group member come with him as an advocate for fear of how he will be viewed by the group. He came to counseling ashamed, but still underestimating the dangers and effects of his sin.

In your review of your Personal Data Inventory and Life Story you were able to discern some patterns. Bill has significant family of origin problems. He is still estranged from his father. In his hopes of winning approval from his dad, he made attempts to perform well in school and sports. He becomes animated and even angry when he talks about how "nothing was ever good enough."

Bill says he was never abused in any way, but that his dad would verbally put him down. He learned later that his dad had had an affair. He found out his mom suspected this for years but never confronted her husband.

Bill escaped into relationships with girls but never let anyone too close. He lived hard in college and had several "one night stands." He met Susan his senior year and gave everything up for her.

Susan was the first person Bill "let in" to his life. He did feel insecure and intimidated around her because he felt he could not "measure up to her goodness." He jokingly said things like "it's hard to live with a saint" and called her, "Miss Goody Two-shoes."

Susan had an "event-free" childhood and idolized her father. Bill sometimes feels Susan is subtly comparing him to her father.

The recent crisis has Susan feeling stunned and embarrassed that she didn't see this coming. She sees her dreams of a good marriage fading in the distance. She is "clinging to faith" but doesn't know if she can "ever trust Bill again."