

Calendar of Events

April 8-9, 2005
Kettering, OH—*Being There* Conference
Hosted by Polly's Place Network
(for abuse survivors, all types)
* We are attending, but are not speaking.

June 29-July 9, 2005
St. Louis, MO—General Conference Session
(Exhibit)
* Possible *Hope & Healing* conference.

August 3-6, 2005
Sacramento, CA—ASI Convention (Exhibit)
* Possible *Hope & Healing* conference.

We are continually scheduling church, victim/survivor and pastoral conferences throughout the U.S. If you'd like to schedule or sponsor a conference in your area, please call (618) 983-6434.

Please check our web site for the most up-to-date conference information and schedule.

www.TheHopeOfSurvivors.com

Current Needs...

- ◆ Educational DVD replication for upcoming conferences and conventions.
- ◆ Qualified volunteers to help with administrative tasks such as bookkeeping, research, mailings, grant writing, etc.
- ◆ The development and printing of topical Bible studies for victims.
- ◆ The production and duplication of a general introductory video on clergy sexual abuse and the work of The Hope of Survivors.
- ◆ Operational expenses (phone, postage, etc.)

Donations are the primary source of funds that make it possible for The Hope of Survivors to maintain its ministry. Since The Hope of Survivors receives no denominational subsidies, your gifts are vitally important. Thank you for considering a tax-deductible donation to further the work of this ministry and bring hope and

THE **Hope** of Survivors
P.O. Box 16, Thompsonville, IL 62890

HopeSPEAK

Dear Readers:

What incredible changes have taken place since I last wrote to you! As many of you know, Samantha and I sold our home in California and moved to southern Illinois in February. The relocation has not been without its challenges, as Samantha will share with you in the following article, but we are greatly encouraged by how the Lord has worked everything out for our best good, according to His will and His Word (Romans 8:28).

Just prior to leaving California, we had the privilege and blessing of being interviewed by anchorman George Warren from KXTV-10 in Sacramento. While we were *en route* to Illinois, KXTV-10 and its sister station WKYC-3 in Cleveland, OH aired portions of our interview during a segment on clergy sexual abuse. (You may view the video clips of the news segments from our web site News & Notes page.) The exposure was a blessing and the response was tremendous! I'd like to share with you just a few of the comments we received during this time.

"I thought I knew how much I relied on you and your ministry until you were out of reach. Then it really struck home how much your ministry has meant."

"I wish to thank you very much for your web site on abuse. I am not a Christian; until recently, I had lost all faith in God, but your site really gives me hope."

"Thank you for your messages of today and yesterday...they have been inspiring and a blessing. I need all the help I can get right now..."

"I really want to thank you for your web site...I wish I had looked for it a long time ago. Your site really hit the nail on the head concerning the fact that an affair happens between equals, NOT between a clergyman and a parishioner, no matter what....Until I found your site, I felt so very alone in this....What you're doing with your web site is truly God's work. I know that that is what Jesus had in mind for His Church."

We praise God for His Truth and for the opportunity He gives us to encourage and strengthen hurting people each day. We also thank Him for the blessing of being able to reach out to church leaders and encourage them to remain faithful to their calling. We acknowledge that there is nothing within us that qualifies us for this work. For it is only by His Spirit, working in and through us, that are we able bring hope and healing to the lives of others. Zechariah 4:6, *"...Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts."*

Now, for some updates and recent news...

- ◆ We have learned that the article in the U.K. *Marie Claire* magazine (with a circulation of 400,000-500,000) is scheduled for publication in May/June.
- ◆ The *Issues & Answers* programs we taped at 3ABN in December are scheduled to air sometime in June. May ends with program #144 and ours are #148-#150.
- ◆ We have been invited to interview for 3ABN Radio's *Crossroads* program. This program will be taped in May and will air at a later date.

As we look forward to what lies ahead, we are inspired with the hope that others will find truth, comfort and healing because God has so miraculously opened these doors for us. Please pray for us as we work to bring truth to the hurting.

In His care,
Steve Nelson

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The Hope of Survivors
P.O. Box 16
Thompsonville, IL 62890

Phone: (618) 983-6434 or (866) 260-8958
Email: Help@TheHopeOfSurvivors.com
Web site: www.TheHopeOfSurvivors.com

The Hope of Survivors is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization funded by individuals who support the mission and goals of the organization; survivors of clergy sexual abuse who are now thriving and desire to use their means to help others; and by grants from private foundations whose values are similar to those of The Hope of Survivors. All contributions are tax-deductible. Your support is greatly appreciated.

The Power of a Lie

“Lying lips are abomination to the LORD: but they that deal truly are his delight.” Proverbs 12:22

Have you ever wondered about the power of a lie? About the impact a lie, or an intentional neglect to tell the truth, may have on others? The intent to deceive is still a lie. So often we don't think about the far-reaching effects of a single lie. I'd like to explore the effects—the high cost—of a lie with you today.

As some of you may know, on February 4, we left our home and families in California to move into a home we believed the Lord had prepared for us in Illinois. It was a major move for two native-born Californians, but we knew the Lord had called us to move and so we went forward, strengthened by His grace. My prayers and petitions had been for the Lord to help us find a home right away, one we could move directly into, as I struggled to see how the ministry could function well from a motel room for several weeks until we could find a home. It appeared as an answer to prayer when we found a place online and spoke directly to the owner. He needed to move closer to town, and we needed to be in a house as soon as possible. It seemed like a mutually beneficial arrangement, based on his description of the property, for us to make an offer and move right in, paying rent until closing.

We arrived in Illinois February 10, after a week of hauling a dog, two cats and all our necessary items in and out of a motel room every night. We were exhausted! The only thing that kept us going was the eager anticipation of seeing our new home, a home that was supposed to be in great shape. As we walked into the house, our hearts sank as we noticed that it was not as it was reported to have been, however, we encouraged ourselves and tried to look on the bright side.

Within a few days, it became very clear that the seller had been less than forthright in his description of the “great shape,” “excellent quality” home. I'll spare you the details of everything that was wrong but, suffice it to say, the seller knowingly failed to disclose some very important information about the condition of the home. He outright lied to us when questioned about things and, now, he calls us the liars. Had we known about these things beforehand, we'd never have made an offer on the home or moved

into it. We based our decision on what we were told, however, we were not told the truth. It makes a difference, don't you think? We are comforted by Psalm 31:18, *“Let the lying lips be put to silence; which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous.”*

So, what is the power of a lie? A lie has the power to disrupt lives, to cause people to make unwise decisions, to create additional moving expenses, to further exhaust an already weary couple and their four-legged children, to tarnish characters and reputations by false accusations.

Now, what does this have to do with clergy sexual misconduct? Let me elaborate. What happens when a pastor, a dearly beloved, seemingly godly man, tells a lie? What happens when a woman seeks counsel from her pastor and he pursues a sexual relationship with her? What happens when he uses, or twists, Scripture to make his point and obtain his objective? “I love you,” he says. “God told me we were meant to be together.” “I'm like David...a ‘man after God's own heart’...David stayed with Bathsheba and we'll stay together, too.” These are some of the lies that offending pastors tell their unsuspecting prey. I know...it's hard for some of you to comprehend this. What does the Bible say? Proverbs 30:6 says, *“Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.”* What vulnerable woman, seeking spiritual counsel from her trusted pastor, is able to fend off the “biblical” support the pastor is giving her? Few, very few, are able to do so. What about the congregation? Few of them are able to accept the fact that their pastor is capable of lying, much less of sexual misconduct. *(Now again, please bear in mind that we are talking about offending pastors here, not truly godly men who serve the Lord with their whole hearts and to whom we should be much appreciative of their devoted service.)*

Jeremiah 23:14 says of offending pastors (prophets), *“I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none doth return from his wickedness; they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah.”* Strong language, don't you think? How then should a pastor be? Proverbs 14:25 reveals that, *“A true witness delivereth souls: but a deceitful witness speaketh lies.”* How does God view a pastor who lies to suit his own lustful desires? Jeremiah 23:32, *“Behold, I am against*

them that prophesy false dreams, saith the LORD, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the LORD.” [This is, of course, not in the context of clergy sexual abuse, but the principle still applies. God is against those who tell lies and cause His people to err.] Truth makes a difference, wouldn't you agree?

So, I ask again, what is the power of a lie? A lie has the power to create other lies (one must continually lie to cover up one's lies), to destroy trust and faith (in people and in God), to break apart marriages, to split congregations, to damage the character of Christ, to cause much pain, heartache and tears. A lie has the power to destroy.

Let's broaden our perspective now and take a look at the original lie...the one that *really* had far-reaching impact!

In Genesis 3:1 we read the account of the barely discernable lie Satan (in the form of a serpent) told Eve, *“Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?”* Then in verse 4 it reads, *“And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:”* The lie was so subtle that it confused Eve and she was deceived. This was the beginning of death for mankind. This is where lying—and liars—originated (on earth) according to John 8:44, *“Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.”*

What, then, is the ultimate power of a lie? A lie has the power to destroy life, even—at times—eternal life. *“He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight.”* Psalm 101:7

The bottom line is this: What may seem like a small lie, even a so-called white lie, is still a lie, and has the ability to impact many lives. Sin never takes place in a vacuum. Someone is always affected by our sins and by our lies. A lie is a very powerful thing but, praise God, truth is more powerful! Truth matters. When we know and follow truth, we are made free. (John 8:32)

I would like to encourage our pastors, teachers, church leaders and others who are in positions of spiritual authority to follow the command given in 1 Samuel 12:24, *“Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you.”*

And, I would encourage you, dear reader, to join me in following the injunction in Ephesians 4:25, *“Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.”*

I leave you with this statement from Joshua 24:14, *“Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth...”*

May God bless you and keep you in His never-failing love.

—Samantha Nelson



Steve and Samantha Nelson are co-founders of The Hope of Survivors. Together, they share how God brought them through the devastation of clergy sexual abuse. By God's grace, they seek to bring hope and healing to those who have been affected by this trauma.

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*“The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth. He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them.”*

—Psalm 145:18, 19