

## INTRODUCTION

*It's not what you are, it's what you don't become that hurts.*  
Oscar Levant (1906-1972)

Whore. A woman who sells sex for her living. It's a simple definition. Ask yourself, does a man who spends his life chasing one-night stands and pursuing meaningless relationships so pervert the value he places on his sexuality that, inevitably, the word wife becomes for him little more than a synonym?

A friend once told me he was amazed that his fortyish girlfriend, a lady he called "kitten", had had only three loves in her life. Of course, they were the Teamsters Union, the Chicago Bears, and the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne...I know, it's an old joke. But ask yourself, are you "kittens" equivalent? Are you so promiscuous that you're in danger of becoming a joke? Or, to the women you pursue, ...are you one already?

In life, most of us men have a common goal. To find that woman with whom we will build a loving and lifelong relationship. A marriage. And we realize that to find a woman of value, we need to build that same value in our own lives and live with self-respect, emotional courage, and moral strength. Yet today, so many men live in a way that destroys that possibility. And, that's easy for me to see, because as a younger man, that's exactly what I did. I chose the lifestyle of a playboy, a social "superman", and today that singular purpose has left me just that, a solitary man. A man with no wife, no kids, and no promise of the happiness they bring. I learned the hard way that every "superman" has his kryptonite.

Today too many men choose to travel that same path. They live and act in a manner that, while it seems fun and satisfying, goes nowhere. And one day they find themselves without a moral compass, aimlessly wandering through life, pursuing relationships with no commitment beyond the setting and the rising of the sun. Seeking accomplishment without effort and pleasure without joy. A destination where Larry Flynt or Al Bundy has replaced John Wayne, Cliff Huxtable, or Ward Cleaver as America's heroes.

As men, much of our self-image is invested in our sexuality, and one of life's hardest lessons I've learned is that a man cannot be a coward in one aspect of his life and courageous in the others. Character can't be compartmentalized. I've learned too late that a man's behavior with

his date tonight does affect who he is at work, or play, tomorrow. The man who loves his wife and respects his marriage won't spend his working life lying, cheating, and stealing his way to the top. And the man who spends his life chasing the easiest bimbo available will not be a pillar of his community, his church, or even his marriage. Ultimately, a man will live in a manner consistent with the way he expresses his sexuality.

We live in an age where we can peer into the farthest reaches of space, and yet how many of us really see the man looking back at us in our bathroom mirror? And how many of us really still like him? We live in an age of boundless information and amazing technology; a world where computers and satellites put an ever-growing wealth of knowledge and entertainment at our fingertips. Yet despite this quantum leap, we keep hearing about a search for meaning in our lives. I have friends alive today who have been cured of diseases that would have killed them fifty years ago. And I have more than a couple of friends walking around, yet dying inside from an insidious decay, a kind of moral or spiritual rot that's all too common in today's society. It's a condition that really wasn't around fifty years ago. Why do so many of us today know the price of everything and the value of nothing?

And we live in a world where image has virtually replaced substance. A world where the way a man is perceived or judged is dependent, not on what he stands for, but simply on the externals, his outward appearance, or...façade. A world where the self-absorbed who live only for money, fame, or the notice and approval of others, call them the "beautiful people", live...and are worshipped. And, where much of society shouts "hosanna" at the skirt-chasing playboy, all the while hanging a leper's bell around the neck of the man who lives with discipline, respect, and self-control.

I have a friend named Jack who is a professor of ethics. One of the assignments he gives his students is to write their own obituary. It's an effort to get them to think beyond the present moment. If you did this right now, how would you see your life from its end? That you were a devoted and loving husband and father? That you were a strong man, a leader, held in esteem by others? Or that you drifted through life, existing on a succession of one-night stands and failed relationships, both social and personal? *That you were a failure.* And that possibly your only notable accomplishment in life might be your obituary; your life on a few inches of paper and newsprint that will eventually line some birdcage in an effort to keep its occupant from staining the floor any further? Come on, you can do better than that. Can't you?

Eventually the man whose life is adrift reaches a crossroads. He realizes that to find lasting happiness, he must make a change. If you are reading this and you feel that your life is going nowhere, that your relationships are a mile wide and an inch deep, and that life holds little promise of finding that beautiful bride you seek, ask yourself...

...Is it time to put your pants on and take your blinders off?

I believe that it is difficult to understand white until you know black. In my past, I've traveled a very crooked path, and on the desktop of my life is a file marked "lessons learned." The contents of that file have been emptied onto the following pages.

Music and sports both play their part, in my life and in the words that follow. At one time, I was a golf professional, and in days gone by, I've played several other sports at some level or another. There are numerous parallels in athletics and everyday life, and for me, it's a comfortable frame of reference. And I like songs with lyrics that stick with you. Especially "oldies but goodies." Artists from Seger to Sinatra, Morrison to McCartney, Dylan to Donovan, and so many others have not only entertained us, but also made us think. I sometimes find myself wondering if the answer to many of life's problems is just a golden oldie away?

And a Christian perspective colors the thoughts and words that follow. That belief structure is central to my life now, and I make no apologies; it would be easier to breathe without my lungs. But fire and brimstone isn't aren't style, so no pious harangue or beating anyone over the head with the Bible, I promise. After all, morality is not the exclusive province of any one religious faith. In fact, morality isn't confined to the sphere of organized religion. The atheist and the agnostic also perceive man as having an innate dignity and abhor the devaluation of men and women.

So, even if you are not what you'd consider a religious person, a jock, or a devotee of that old time rock and roll, I invite you to come along.

...And I have one more question for you. Have you ever been somewhere, a nightclub, a bar, or a restaurant, and sat next to someone who talked all night about sex? No? Well, here's your chance. This evening's story opens with a fellow named Joey sitting at a bar in a nightclub that has virtually been his second home for over half his life. Joey has always loved the ladies, and tomorrow he has a date with a captivating young blonde. But tonight he's free. Tonight he's waiting for his nephews who have come into the city for a wedding tomorrow. Fiftyish, tall, and strong with a trace of soft in the middle and his hairline in a full-blown retreat, Joey sits nursing a beer and listening to the music playing in the background that he's loved since his youth. He'd prefer three fingers of "Gentleman Jack", but about five years ago, he resigned himself to the half-taste of lite beer and the half-life of those toxic beer nuts. He takes a sip, pops a couple of cashews, then checks his watch. A couple minutes go by. So does a stunning brunette and her equally stunning red-headed friend. The mellow sound of Marvin Gaye washes over him, sinking into his soul, whispering of a special kind of healing. His mood softens, and a warm, yet tired smile wanders across Joey's face; after all, the sounds and the scenery have always been the high points of this sanctuary of his. Another sip, another couple of cashews, another check of his watch. Joey has a lot on his mind that he wants to share with the boys. Boys? Actually these guys are officially men now -- they turned twenty-one last August. Richard first, then Dave, six minutes later.

Pay close attention to Joey's thoughts as he reveals them to his sister's sons. Joey has a lot to say about girls and sex, sex and girls, and some drugs and rock and roll thrown in for good measure. Have fun eavesdropping! Then read on. The second part of each chapter is for you to listen to yourself. What do you think about what Joey has said? What choices are you going to make, and how many of Joey's mistakes will you avoid – or repeat? You might want to consider this evening in this nightclub as though it were your uncle talking to you, drawing on his experience, his hindsight, and his care and concern for you.

As Joey would say, “thinkaboutit.”

Oh, one last thing. If you happen to be too young to remember life before home computers, cell phones, the Internet, rap music, *American Idol*, dvds, or cd-roms, you might be a little lost in a world of jukeboxes, *American Bandstand*, the Village People, Uncle Fester, and Ward Cleaver. You might want to find an “old-timer,” maybe your mom or dad, or someone with some gray around the temples, and have them take you on a trip down memory lane... or a stroll through ancient history. Maybe someone like Uncle Joey...just don’t roll your eyes and laugh behind their backs....