

Nick Stumbo | Season 2 Episode 3

Sexual Integrity in Disciple Making

The Opening:

Wayne: Welcome friends to the everyday disciple makers podcast. My name is Wayne Wrzesinski and I'm here with my co-host Joshua Yates.

How are you doing today?

Josh: It's great to be in the studio with you, Wayne. Again, this is fun.

Wayne: Yeah, we got the, we got the sun shining outside on this sunny Portland spring day. And I heard that yesterday, you and Eric Schmidt had a chance to get away with some ministry leaders and just spend time seeking God, being away, being up at the mountain.

Can you tell me more about that?

Josh: Yeah, it was great. One of the things we value and Sonlife is following the model of Jesus. And Jesus would often slip away to a solitary place and pray. And so in ministry, it's easy to get pulled into programs and events and Sunday's always calming or whatever you get into the tyranny of the urgent.

And so we grabbed a handful of ministry leaders and say, let's just get away. Spent some time by a beautiful creek side. Went to the mountain and we did a kind of a self guided experience of the Lord's prayer. And that's a dangerous prayer to pray. When you say your kingdom come, your will be done.

And so man, it was, it was such a refreshing day to get, to get away from the pressures of life and ministry and hear from the voice of the father.

Wayne: Yeah, man. That's so good. I know, I know for me when I don't set that intentional time aside, I won't just spend that time with God.

You know, if I say, well, when I have a totally free day on my calendar, I'll spend extra time in prayer that, that free day never happens. I think in ministry and in life, one of the areas that we aren't always intentional about is our, is our sexual purity. We just kind of hope it takes care of ourselves. You know, we love Jesus. We do the best we can.

Today we got to have a conversation with Nick. Stumbo the executive director of Pure does our ministry on really what that looks like to have our sexual integrity be part of our journey as a disciple.

Josh: Yeah, I think it's really important to, you know, we in ministry we plan and prepare. Our, our intentionality on so many things, our leadership, our spirituality, but one thing maybe we haven't thought about is the intentionality of really protecting the thing that that can bring shame and can bring guilt and, and really affect our, our ability to be ministry leaders.

And so it's the whole person. And so man Wayne, and I'm really encouraged with this conversation. And thanks for setting up this interview with Nick.

The Interview:

Wayne: With us today on the everyday disciple maker podcast, we have Nick Stumbo. Nick has been my pastor, my friend, and I think technically my boss, because I did some intern media work at the church that he was at. I'm so happy to have you today. Welcome Nick.

Nick: Yeah, glad to be a part of it. Thanks, Wayne.

Wayne: These days. Nick is the executive director of Pure Desire, a ministry that provides a safe place to find hope and healing from the effects of sexual brokenness. Nick, can you just share with us a bit of your story about how you got involved with Pure Desire?

Nick: Yeah, I'd be happy to, you know, it's not the kind of job or profession, that little boys playing basketball in their driveways dream of, you know, one day I'm going to grow up and be the director of a purity ministry. It's probably the last place you think you'll end up. But anyway, I grew up in a pastor's family really good home, great parents.

You know, we went to church all the time, but for me in my upbringing, that was a really positive thing. It's, it's where my friends were. It's where I met Jesus and always had a very active faith, but like most homes in the Christian world, it was a place where we didn't talk about things to do a sex, sexuality pornography.

Those were just kind of the taboo topic. And so like many boys around 10, 11 years old came across to pornography at a friend's house and had that internal experience of this is not something I should be doing. And I feel kind of bad about what we're seeing, but also knowing that part of my brain was lighting up, like, wow, what is this?

And the curiosity. And I really think that push pull of what happens with sexual material really can create a lot of shame that you feel like there's something wrong with me for wanting to see that. And now I can't tell mom and dad. And so for me, I grew up with the sexual side of my life being something that was just very secretive and shameful, and really internalizing that church message of just don't do this.

It's wrong, you know, save yourself for marriage and, and anything outside of that is lost it's sinful. And so as I got into teen years and continued to struggle with. Pornography and then masturbation seeing it as something that I just needed to confess it to God or to others. And if I would confess well enough, I would be free on the, I would find that that confession might help.

I could walk in purity for a time, but, but didn't really have any understanding of what was driving those behaviors, what was going on at a deeper level. And. So as is the case for so many people, I would continue to struggle right into adulthood, into my marriage and into ministry. And I, I recall I was honest with my wife during our engagement years, and I just felt like, you know, you deserve someone deserves to know the truth before they married you not after.

And so I was honest to say, Hey, this has been a problem in my life. And, but I mean, I'm trying really hard to stop and not do it anymore, but I just feel like you should know something I've battled with and. I remember my wife to be asking me, well, why can't you just promise me? You'll never do it again.

You know, it sounds like a logical question. Makes sense. And I remember saying, you know, I really want to make that promise and I'm going to try really hard, but I feel like I've made that same promise to God, myself and to others. And it seems to keep creeping back in. So I don't feel like I can make that promise, but I'm going to, I'm going to do my very best.

And what's interesting to me looking back is even in that confession to my wife, to be, I was using the language of addiction. Acknowledging there was something in my life that I didn't want there, that others were asking me to stop. And that I felt a sense of powerlessness to change permanently, to really be free of it.

But I didn't really do anything more about it for 10 years into our marriage. Because I'd been honest with my wife before marriage, it felt like I should keep telling her if I was struggling. And so once or twice a year, I'd get up the courage to confess and say, Hey, this is still happening. And I'm really sorry.

And it's the last time. Here's why it's the last time. But it never was. And so after 10 years of that and, and being the pastor of a church and, you know, doing well externally, I

mean, our church was growing and I think we, we looked the part of the happy young, married couple with young kids at home, but it was really destroying our marriage.

It was destroying my wife and her confidence that things were ever going to change. And we were really on the brink of separation because of the pain that I was causing her. And really up to that point, I was mostly blind too. And I kept telling her that, well, you just don't understand. It's a guy thing and it's not about you and it's not your beauty.

And, you know, the, the marriage intimacy that we had as a couple, our sex life was actually really great. But that wasn't enough to, to solve this inner battle that I was having. And, and I think her, my wife's confusion about that was why she was just ready to be done. And so, thankfully right at that time, this was about 2010.

We were introduced to pure desire ministries and got to walk through a one-year counseling program that they have for leaders got to be involved in groups for myself as the one who struggled and for my wife to be with other women whose husbands had struggled. And that year of walking through that process, that pure desire has of healing and transformation was, was so good for us.

I mean, not only did it change my behaviors, but it dealt with those inner things that were driving it, it created real change in momentum in our marriage. And then ultimately in our church, as we shared that story with our congregation. The elders had been a part of our change process had been very supportive of it, which.

I'm so thankful because I know for many pastors and leaders, they don't serve in environments where they feel like they can be honest, but God had really led us to a gracious church where early in my ministry, I'd been able to say, Hey guys, this is something I struggle with. I'm doing my very best to stop.

And I'm confessing to use that you can provide accountability and, and they'd walked with me through some of that. And, you know, they certainly didn't know the degree to which I had continued to struggle, but when it came to us, finally, having that avenue of finding help through Pure Desire, The elders walked with us through that process.

And at the end, got to be there to say, we believe in Nick, we believe in what's happened in his life and we believe this is what God has for our church. And so we watched it really over the next five or six years. And, you know, Wayne, this is some year story where you started attending. It was transformational in our church culture.

Because it, it really became a safe place where people knew you could talk about your sexual brokenness. You could bring up the struggles you were having in your marriage or

with pornography. Because if the senior pastor can be honest about his story and still be the pastor, it says to everybody else, this is a safe place.

And, and people got real in our groups, they got help. And there was, there was change happening in people's lives, which was so exciting to see. And, and really it was, it was that story of our church and our marriage. Yeah, kept us connected to pure desire and ultimately led to coming on staff as the executive director and, and taking the reins from Dr. Ted Roberts, who had founded the ministry all the way back in the nineties.

And he's now in his late seventies. And the ministry needed to go through a process of succession and they just felt like I was the right connection. So I'm in that position out to just try to take that message of hope, healing and freedom that impacted my life.

And try to make it something that others hear about, because I think that's maybe the most common issue that people face, like where I was at in my wife and I, we wanted help, but we didn't know what to do other than read more books and try harder to fix it on our own. It wasn't until we found that pathway, that things really began to change.

And so in a lot of ways, that's my mission now, as the director at pure desire is to try to get that message out into churches and. Into the Christian world so that people know when you're struggling, whether you're the betrayed side or the struggler, that there is help available, there's counseling there, if it's needed there's groups available.

And just trying to make the, something that becomes a common conversation in churches around the country. You know, what was that? Maybe the, the 10 minute overview? I mean, I could go on and on, but we'll stop there so you can ask some more questions.

Wayne: No, that's a great overview. And some of the things that I appreciate so much like you said, our stories intersected you're, you're the guy I came to when you were the lead pastor with my struggles, I've walked through the Pure Desire. And one of the things about it was I was at churches before who, like I knew I was volunteering youth ministry, and I knew if I talked to anybody at the church, it would mean. You're done being involved in ministry until you're healed until you get better until you don't struggle with this.

And I always wrestled with, well, how do I, like, how do I really get better if I can't share this with anybody? Because I don't want to give up what I'm doing for God, which, which I understand is a poor attitude.

I think being healthy and seeking out for myself should have been my priority, but I was at a place where like, I don't want to. I don't want to not volunteer in ministry while I go fix

this problem. So just that culture of, of being able to talk honestly and authentically and, and walk through that process with people as a part of a church family was so very, very valuable.

So, so thank you again, just for creating that culture at the church and, and in your ministry now. I think some pastors, some ministry leaders might. Might hear your story and think, well, that's, that's really cool, Nick. I'm glad that you're able to serve folks in that way. But as I lead my church, as I lead my ministry why should I be concerned about people's sexual integrity?

I just, I just want to make disciples. I just want to help people live more like Jesus, can you kind of share some of the stats and the numbers about how widespread this issue of sexual addiction and pornography is in our culture and in our churches.

Nick: Yeah. You know, I think before sharing, you know, just stats and data, the point that you brought up about, we just want to do the work of discipleship, right? We just want to help people follow Christ. And we can kind of see sexuality as like this peripheral issue. But I really believe that that understanding our sexuality and what God is up to in that place is key to us being disciplined.

You know, if you think about it, it's in Genesis one. The God says, let us make them in our image. And so male and female, he created them. So the first time we hear about the gender distinction, which let's be honest, gender distinction is primarily sexual in nature, you know, related to body parts and sexual function and brain chemistry.

That's all about our sexuality. So where God said, I see my image is in yeah. Our sexuality. And so that's for all of us, like the first one thing that's ever known about us before we're even given a name. God assigns to us, a gender were male were female. And so then our parents decide to name. But what that means to me is that everything else in our life is downstream of our understanding of our sexuality.

And so it makes sense to me why the enemy attacks us there, because if he can create a twisted lie or twisted thinking there about who we are as a man or a woman, our sexuality, and what we do with it, everything is impacted negatively by the lies that are there. And so I, I think the enemy goes after that and he isolates people and he gets them wounded in their sexuality because then their ability to be disciplined is greatly hampered.

I mean, that's one of the things I realized as a pastor. It's like, I could, I could spend all week trying to help people learn to read their Bible and pray and enter into this like life of spiritual disciplines and, and follow Christ into the world. But, but if they're underneath story was one of shame and sexual brokenness.

All of those other things were just going to be window dressing because there was going to be a voice inside saying, yeah, but this is all just for show. If they really knew who you were, the kind of choices you've made, like you, you wouldn't even belong here. And so are they really praying? Are they really being disciplined or are they just learning to go through the motions where under the surface, there's this unaddressed shame and brokenness.

So I see this work in our, the area of our sexuality as being absolutely crucial to discipleship and. Just like, we need to disciple people in prayer and disciple people in following Christ. I think people need to be disciplined in their sexuality. We need to learn how to mature and how to grow in this area to be more like Christ because unfortunately too many churches kind of assume that, well, if we just teach all the other stuff, sexual maturing will just happen. And the truth is, as we see and now talk about stats. It, it doesn't just happen.

We've done a lot of research through the years at pure desire. And we routinely find that as high as 68 to 70% of men in the church would say that they're struggling with some kind of unwanted sexual behavior in their life.

Now that doesn't mean they're all addicts. That doesn't mean that they're, you know, looking at hours of pornography every day. But it would say that if you ask them, is there something in your life that you wish wasn't there and it keeps happening. And whether that's once a month or a few times a month, or, you know, daily.

68 to 70% of men in the church say, yeah, I've got unresolved issues there. And on the other, yeah, aside, we find that as many as 25 to 30% of women would say the same thing, because this isn't just a man's issue. And that's a mistake we can make as we just try to speak to the men because Hey, all you, men are sexual.

And somehow we forget that women are also sexual beings made in the image of God to, to be a sexual being like they struggle too. And so we find that maybe that rate isn't as high. But 25 to 30% of women. And then if you look at a report that came out that was done by covenant eyes and Josh McDowell ministries in partnership with the Barna Institute there's some research called the porn phenomenon.

And in there they report that 57% of senior pastors admit to having a current or past struggle with pornography. And what I think is significant about that is they ask those pastors, whether they're struggling currently or in their past, they said, does anyone in your church know your story? And less than 1% said, their church knew. And so if a majority of pastors have, or have had the struggle in their life, but their church doesn't know for them, I see that as an area of of secretiveness or hiddenness where they can't

be wholly real about their story. And. I think as we would all say, if there are parts of your story, you can't be real about, there's going to be a sense of I'm I'm kind of in a performance mode, I'm, I'm trying to hide these things.

And I just don't think that's really how God intended us to lead or to live. And that doesn't mean, you know, the last thing I'll say is this as that doesn't mean everybody needs to know everything, but I think part of our healing and freedom means that, that I can share my story. I can be real about what God has done in my life.

And even if my brokenness is in the past, if I still can't share it with you, then, then there's something there that's actually keeping me kind of bound up. So I think those numbers are significant and we need to realize that on any given Sunday, we're, we're likely preaching to a crowd where more than half of the audience is battling within the last month, some kind of unwanted sexual behavior in their life.

And then the problem is they come to church and it's like the great taboo topic. Like it's the one thing we can't talk about, which I think honestly, just really limits ministry effectiveness.

Wayne: Yeah. So many good things you said there.

Here's here's I guess a follow-up question what are some ways that as ministry leaders, we can share our story in an appropriate way as we walk alongside people that we're discipling.

Nick: Yeah, I think some of that begs the question, are we in a place of health and freedom as leaders? Because I mean, the truth is if we're not, if we're still caught up in our own struggle and don't feel safe to share that or to, to face it. Well, we're not going to be able to walk alongside other people very well.

And so that would be my encouragement to any ministry leader or pastor like it's, it's challenging, but you've got to face your stuff. And, and I would say from my story, and now hundreds of pastors and leaders that I've worked with and heard from this, this work is, is so good in the outcome. Like what God does in your life and your ability to minister to others.

And, and that might mean, you know, if the context you're in, it's not safe to like publicly address that that might mean privately finding a counselor, privately finding like at pure Desire.org, we have online groups that are created just for pastors to be in a safe, confidential, online community and walk through this process.

So, you know, to me, that's the starting place Wayne of, of facing that double bind. And, you know, you shared it in your own story. If we feel like man, if I share my story, I could

lose my job. And so I don't share it, but because I'm not sharing, I continue to struggle. And I think that's just where a lot of people are at.

And until we really face down that double bind, we're going to stay in that place of not much openness. Now on the flip side, if, if it's not been our issue. And I think there's many leaders that they'd say this, I've got my own struggles, but this isn't one of them praise Jesus. Or maybe their struggle is in the past.

I do think there's a level of vulnerability that can be so freeing to other people. And you're able to say, you know, This has been something I struggled with in my life. And here's what I've had to do to lean on Christ, to find help from others, to reach out, to learn something new or to walk in a new way.

And, and it really is so often when we open the door, you know, I, I call it the gift of going first. You know, I think that's what starts to create a change in culture. When the leaders themselves are the ones that are serving by going first with their story. And again, I, that doesn't mean that everyone needs to know everything all the time.

I think, you know, what, what I would share publicly from the pulpit, isn't maybe the same as I would share with you over a cup of coffee and that, that should be. But I think far too many leaders right now are just erring on the side of, of not sharing enough of their own life, because we think somehow it's my professionalism or my perfectionism that makes me a leader.

And I just found over and over in ministry, the exact opposite to be true, that the more vulnerable I got. The more real I was as a leader about my own journey and the things I was needing to learn and places I was failing, I feel like ironically, God actually used that to create more influence.

I mean, I feel like I led people out of my weakness far better than I ever did out of my strengths. And so there's kind of a leadership principle there, I think for all of us that, that we think it's, you know, our gifts and our skills that will lead the way and grow the ministry. When so often it's our humility and our authenticity that people go, I can relate to that and I can hear what's happening in their life, and I want that in my life too. And so there's influence there. But yeah, it's, it's something we've got to be willing to address our story so that we move through the shame enough that we can then walk alongside of others.

Wayne: That's so good. Thanks for kind of differentiating that, that, that we need to be healthy before we share. And also the different levels of how we share.

I know one thing for Pure Desire is these groups for the men it's called Seven Pillars for betrayed spouses, it's Betrayal and Beyond, and these groups are 10 months to a year long and they're, they're pretty, pretty intense. Can you kind of share some of the differences between.

What a, maybe a traditional accountability group at a church might be. And these groups that a Pure Desire offers in their process.

Nick: Yeah. Well, if you think about the way that most traditional accountability groups work. We come together, we go around the circle and we share, you know, did we struggle this week? Did we mess up? And you know, someone says, no, I didn't know. I had a good week. And someone says, yeah, I, I struggled. I had a bad week.

I looked at porn or I acted out and we all go, man, that's, that's too bad. And we pray for you and you'll do better this week. And it really can become kind of a glorified performance group. Where really what we're focusing on is just the outcome. The behavior itself and did I perform well or not? And so if I had a good week, I performed well and if not, then I get prayed for and go try harder.

And really what we find is that just becomes a form of behavior modification. And that's not going to work long-term, especially when we're talking about a struggle that takes place, not just in the world around us. And it's not just something about, well, you know, I've got eyes and I'm a male.

And so people are attractive. There are much deeper things going on in our brain. That have to do with, you know, the release of neurochemicals that are as powerful as things that we go to ingest like cocaine and, and that, that system through time has been created and reinforced. And so that's what, when it comes to the behavior itself, that that's just the tip of the iceberg.

Nevermind. Why we're reaching out to those things, because there's usually deeper stuff going on. Like unaddressed shame or some wounds from our past lies. We believe about our core beliefs about who we are and. So in, in the typical accountability group, none of that really gets talked about. It's more just, you know, what are you going to do this week to avoid looking at pornography?

And, and then what we do in that traditional accountability group is we'll say to someone, you know, Wayne, I give you permission this week to check up on me any time and ask me how I'm doing. Like, you can call me morning, noon, or night and just ask me how I'm doing. And that sounds noble. But what I've just done is I've given you responsibility for my change.

Because now whose responsibility is it to make a phone call yours or mine,

It's yours, you know, and whose fault is it? If you forget it's yours and whose fault is it, if you call at a time when I'm busy and I couldn't answer the phone it's, it's great for me as the struggle because I'm off the hook.

And so that's several things that just make it a difference between that traditional accountability group. And that's not to say that all groups that meet in churches are that, but, but some are, I mean, I was in groups like that for years. Thinking, that's what it looked like to be accountable, but in a pure desire group, we really flip around that system that I'm taking responsibility for my change.

And so that means I take responsibility to reach out and check in with you. I check in with group members several times a week to let them know what I'm working on that week towards purity. And then the other side of it is we're, we're actually working through a process and through some curriculum that, that goes beyond just the behavior, which is the tip of the iceberg.

And it looks deeper into like, what are the core beliefs that are driving this? And what's the pain or the wounds in my life that I'm using pornography to medicate or escape my reality. And when we start to look into those deeper things, then the behaviors change. Not just because we're focused on the behavior, but because we're unmasking the whole system.

And so it does take time. It's a, it's a process of change, but know, that's what we have found about lasting life change and transformation. It can't happen. You know, quickly that, that there is a pattern and a process of our brain changing and staying changed that as we agree with what Jesus is doing in our life and as we're vulnerable and real with other people, that transformation is happening. You know, it's really what I believe Paul is writing about in Romans 12:2, when he says, be transformed, how by the renewing of your mind and the words there, aren't just like a one-time, you know, stop and think differently.

It's this ongoing daily process of learning to view ourselves and our story differently. So that over time we're transformed. And and that's just what we see happening. When people enter into a group process like this.

Wayne: Yeah. And like, like I mentioned, like I've, I've been through the 10 months group I've I've co-led I've led. And one of the things that I really valued in the Pure Desire process is the honesty about the work and the timeframe that it will take for, for restoration to find that healing.

So what are, what are some of the expectations of folks when they enter into a pure desire group?

Nick: We've already talked about a couple of them, but you know that it's going to be a nine or 10 month process and that's the length of time it takes to get through the material. But that's also going to give you enough time to really cement these changes that you're making. And that's what we find for a lot of people.

Like if they go to an intensive on purity or, you know, a weekend seminar, or maybe when they go away for a week to some kind of change thing, you're, you're removed from your environment. And when you come back man for a while, it's great. Right? But there's all these old patterns and pathways in our brain.

And our thinking that over time will tend to come back in. And so having that nine or 10 month group where you're consistently week-in and week-out doing the work will make these changes more lasting. Then it's also, you know, the group meeting itself because you're really walking through a deep process.

It takes about two hours, you know, it's not just a check-in meeting of how'd you do this week. It's like it's sharing our stories. It's, it's walking through the word of God and applying it to our personal life. And then, each week, a big part of it is making a commitment to change to say this week, here's the priority.

Here's my priority that I'm working on to walk in freedom and then making a phone calls during the week to check in with group members and share how we're doing on that commitment to change. So those are the pieces of it that, you know, a weekly group that needs to be a priority. And then that outside of group contact where I'm continuing to stay in that rhythm of what am I working on?

What am I taking responsibility for? And, and really engaging with my group because that's what we find is so valuable. It's, it's not just about showing up to group, you know, that that's kind of the 12 step model. And I think there's a lot of good things about 12 steps. But what I hear from so many people is it's kind of it's group centric.

And like, if I don't go to a group, I don't really have tools to do on my own. I just going to group is what I do in Pure Desire. The group is just like the pinnacle of your week. That is the outcome or overflow of all this other stuff I've been working on. And so I go to group to share those things. And I think that mindset of it's not just what happens in group, it's the stuff I'm doing in between groups.

That's what really leads to kind of that deep heart level change that we're talking about.

Wayne: Yeah, I love that. So you mentioned a commitment to change. So this is something that, that my groups have historically been on Thursday nights. I'm not sure if there's a reason they all have been. If you guys just love Thursday nights more than other nights, but I've been a lot on Thursday night groups and the commitment to change something that I'm going to write down. I'm going to work on that. I'm going to write down the names of three guys in my group that I'm going to call during the week to let them know how I'm doing on it.

Could you maybe share just a little more about, about that process and why, why is that so valuable through this, through this change process?

Nick: Yeah. You know, I think it's CS Lewis that writes about, you know, if we've got a complicated math problem and we got the wrong answer, you can't just like, guess at a new answer that you have to go back through and and you have to work out all the way through the problem where the mistake was made and then work it forward.

And to me, that's, that's kind of what we're talking about when we've got unwanted sexual struggles in our life is too often. We make it a simple problem. Like, well, if I just stop it or don't do that anymore. It's like what the truth is. This is a complex issue that's related to temptation in our world triggers from my past unwanted beliefs about who I am and where my identity comes from.

Places of temptation that I haven't responded to well. And so all of this kind of gets meshed into our struggle and that weekly commitment to change is a way that we can look at the next seven days and say, okay, what is the greatest need for me to walk in freedom in the next seven days? And it could be something like I'm going on a business trip and I'll be in a hotel room by myself.

Well, that's a huge threat. And so I've got to make a commitment. How am I going to navigate that? But maybe someone looks at their week and they realize their biggest hurdle is there's a lot of dysfunction in their marriage and they need to prioritize, reconnecting with their spouse. And so they're making a commitment there.

Maybe someone else sees it's their sleep patterns. And that they're always exhausted because they're staying up way too late. And so they're making that. And the truth is that any one of us, as we walk through a week, those things are going to change weekend and week out. But what it's doing is it's, it's really giving us in the presence of other men who are doing the same thing, that willingness to face our pain, to face our battles and lean into them.

And as we start to find that we can do it, we find progress and growth and there's lasting change. Versus really our unwanted sexual struggles are rooted in pain, avoidance. It's

rooted in the things that we don't want to do. You know, I found out in my story that so much of my behavior was rooted in procrastination.

That is I would avoid hard work. Then I'd be wasting time online. I'd be triggered by things I see. And over time, and that could be over a period of days or even weeks. I would find, you know, my brain edging further and further towards inappropriate things. Well, in the past, where would I battle it? So I got to stop and not, not go look at those bad things. But in the pure desire process, I learned that no, actually all of this starts in procrastination. And so if I've got a big project that I'm procrastinating on, if I make a commitment to change, to lean in, you know, to spend an hour or two each day on that project, well, suddenly I don't go down that old pathway because now I'm facing pain rather than avoiding it. And so that's what so much with the commitment to change is about, is training us in healthy ways to deal with life and to not avoid pain or uncomfortable situations.

Because now we've got other resources. We've got other people, even on our side that are helping us take those steps. And when we're doing that consistently, then relapses really aren't there, they're off the table because now we're walking in the right way.

Wayne: Yeah, I love that. Just looking ahead. I know that at two in the morning in front of a computer is a time that I'm going to most often make a poor decision. But if I know how I'm feeling during the day, I can make that decision to go to bed when my wife goes to bed too, to make those decisions. When I am thinking clearly, when I am thinking through consequences and make those decisions, instead of waiting until I'm triggered and, and hoping that I prayed enough that day or hoping I have enough willpower for that day.

But that, that looking ahead and seeing what might be coming, or you kind of alluded to this earlier, but what are some of the reasons that, that pastors and ministry leaders should be concerned about sexual integrity in disciple-making?

Why should we focus on this in our ministries, in our churches?

Nick: Yeah. You know, like I said, I really think this is one of those core issues that affects everything else good or bad. And that was my story. You know, I went into Pure Desire because I had this problem with pornography and it was ruining my marriage and I felt horrible about it. And, but what I found out as I got into that process pornography was not the problem.

Pornography was the symptom of the deeper problems. And, and once we started to get set right there and like, I really found my identity rooted and grounded in Christ and saw the ways that trauma and pain for my past to create those lies, you know, everything

started to be impacted for the good. And so when there was sexual health and integrity in my life, you know, I honestly became a better husband.

I became a better dad. I became a better leader and friend. Because I wasn't living in the lies and the shame or the secrecy anymore. And so I, I think that's why it has to be a priority because when we don't address this, people just feel like they have to fake it.

And and they're, they're not going to go to the levels of growth they can until there's that integrity. From inside to out. So I think it's such a game changer, really within ministries when, when this work happens.

Wayne: That's good. So one final question, where can people connect with you and with Pure Desire and then what might be a good first step for someone who wants to learn more about what you guys provide and what you guys do there?

Nick: Yeah. Yeah. Great question. People can go to puredesire.org. That's our website, where we have, you know, all of our resources on a pure desire store page, our group materials, people can find out about groups that are meeting near them in a local church or joining an online group. And, and some great places to start.

You know, I, I tried to share my experiences in a book called Setting Us Free. Setting Us Free I tell people was meant to be my journey through the program because I went into it really skeptical. You know, I thought counseling was only for people that were like really off the deep end and needed lots of help.

And yet I found so much freedom through that process. So I just try to walk through where I see these principles also are in God's word. And how they apply to our lives. And so that, that could just help them process whether their own journey or someone else's. We also do a weekly podcast there where we're just trying to have the conversations that we feel like no one else is having or rarely are happening.

And so if you're in a situation that this is kind of the taboo topic, and you don't really know what to say or how to lead well listening to that podcast can be a great introduction. And then the one other thing I'd mentioned, we realized that for communities, for churches, for groups, it can be hard to start this process.

So it's like, where do we start? So we created a video series called Sexual Integrity 101 it's like start here. Right? It's the one-on-one. And it's meant to be watched by anyone and everyone. You know, it's so it's not just for people who struggle. It's meant to be an equipping tool for churches, for small groups, for married couples to just understand.

Why this area is can be so addictive, what's going on in the brain and what is healing and freedom for the long haul? What does it look like? So I'd highly recommend that video

series it's on our website and you can get it on DVD or streaming right through the website there. So check that out.

It's called Sexual Integrity 101 and you know, like the name suggests start here with the 101. Awesome.

Wayne: Awesome, well, thank you again so much for your time, Nick, and we will talk to you soon.

The Close:

Josh: Well, Wayne, it was great having you step in and lead that interview with Nick. That was very It was very insightful.

It was very real, very raw. And I appreciate just the transparency and willingness to kind of bring a very, a very challenging subject for us in our disciple-making efforts. I'm reminded of first Thessalonians.

I think it kept hitting me first Thessalonians 2:8, which says, you know, we care for you so much that we are pleased to share with you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives because you have come so dear to us. And, and thinking about, sometimes we think about the first part of the, Hey, we're delighted to show you the gospel, right. But actually it's our very lives.

And what Paul, the apostle Paul here is getting, I think too, is that, you know, he, he was clean. He was honest, he was straightforward. He was, he was doing whatever it took to allow his life and the transformative work of Christ to be front and center. Yeah. And I think we gotta be able to willing to push through these doors and to do something that is actually it's healthy and it's transformative.

And that is vulnerability. And I think in ministry leaders, oftentimes we lead in security and we lead other areas in our lives that maybe we just don't know how to, how to communicate so how to share the things that are on our lives. So what are some of the things that maybe you've learned that really helped this up making process with a subject as a sexual purity?

Wayne: Yeah, I know for me going through this process has just helped me to, to honestly be able to slow down and look at this and how this affects every area of my life. When it was something I was struggling with it was kind of in its own box. Like this is an issue, but this is my life. So looking at this is really part of.

An integral part of, of who I am and how I'm following Christ. So walking through that, I've, I've had the chance, like I said, to, to lead groups and just to, to meet with guys one-on-one and walk through this process. Because I've shared my story.

I was on staff at a church and I was able to share my story in a video. And at that smaller church had had three or four guys come up to me afterwards and thank me for sharing my story and a couple of those guys that ended up meeting with and being able to walk with them through this process, because I was willing to share about something that I had walked through that God had done in my life.

And I was able to open doors for me to minister and help these other men find freedom with an issue that they hadn't talked to anybody about before. One of the guys. Is in his early fifties has struggled off and on since high school and has never talked to anybody, but me being willing to share my story made him feel comfortable coming to me and having those conversations so that he could start walking toward freedom as well.

Josh: Great. What would you, what would you say to our listeners, Wayne? What would be the, the next step? Where do guys go from here. Guys, where maybe I could imagine that the stress, the strain, the isolation. All of the, the fatigue the exhaustion that COVID has presented I'm curious to know what the stats will be as a result of, of COVID and sexual temptation.

What has, what has been the result of this I imagine? The numbers are going to be higher, significant, higher, but what would you, what would you encourage our listeners, the next steps, maybe where they, where do they begin?

Wayne: Yeah like we I've used Pure Desire. I believe in that process is biblical based and backed by brain science.

They've done their homework. They do a great job, but there are many ministries that, that can help you walk through this. So find a ministry, find a friend you trust. If, if you're in ministry, like Nick talked about can be hard to go to your elders, your people who can fire you. So just find some that you can trust to talk through this with.

Really the sin and the shame of this keep it secret. And it was really hard, I would probably say impossible to find healing if it's a secret. So, so find somebody you can trust and take that next step to, to start talking about this issue.

Josh: Yeah. Well we want to help you lead and become everyday disciple maker. And so please listen to their next piece of the show, our everyday disciple maker a moment.

Disciple Making Moment:

Val: Hi everyone, I'm Val O'Brien. I'm the area coordinator out of Cleveland Ohio for Sonlife and this is my disciple making moment. Um, It actually starts with a confession.

I met with a student the other day who I've been discipling for a good number of years, and my attitude was horrible. My attitude bottomed out. She already made me mad before I even got there. She changed our meeting time. I drove half an hour to meet with her. She was running late. She didn't tell. Me my attitude was horrible. I'm sitting there and good old Panera, waiting just on my phone, thinking about texting one of my friends in ministry, telling them how frustrated I am and why do I even do this?

I'm thinking about all the other things that I could be doing, as opposed to sitting there waiting for her. Rehearsing in my head what I'm going to say to her when she gets there and planning on leaving early so that she knows that my time is valuable and it's important, and I got to get back to other things.

This is my attitude. And then I go right from that. Yeah. To feeling guilty, to kind of spiraling into feeling guilty and thinking, Oh man, my job is to help encourage other people in disciple-making. And here I am sitting in Panera with a worst attitude in the world, thinking about discipling this young woman.

And thankfully she was even later than I thought she was going to be, because I had to spend a little bit of time with the Lord sitting there to get myself in order a little bit. I felt from the spirit in that moment, kind of going from self-righteousness and self-importance, to then guilt and some shame.

Found the spirit, meeting me in that place and reminding me that it is the kindness of the Lord that leads us to repentance. And then instead of coming down hard on this girl for how frustrated she was making me that I needed to respond like Jesus with kindness to her and to lead with that. And that kindness doesn't come from me, He was very very easily reminded me of that, but that kindness that he shows that comes from his spirit.

That kindness that can flow out of me as a direct result of the kindness that Jesus has shown to me when I have been at my worst. So here's my point that when we're disciple-making we don't always get it right. But the only possible way we can point somebody else to Jesus is when we have experienced Jesus so deeply ourselves, and that pours out of us.

That the spirit inside of me is what enables me to lead somebody else to Jesus. And we need to not forget that. And we never outgrow that. We never outgrow a deep need and

dependence on the spirit. We've never outgrown needing to preach the gospel to ourselves. And then only there from that humble posture are we able to minister to other people and to lead them to Jesus as well?

And in that moment in that moment of confession and the, in the Lord telling me that it's his kindness that has led me to repentance. It is kindness. I need to extend to this young woman. He, I also asked him to, to just give us some Holy moments in the time that we were going to have together. And he did.

And, and it was a great meeting, a meeting that by the end, she had to remind me like, Hey Val, don't you have somewhere else, you need to be? Like, Oh yeah, no, I got to go. Lost track of time, had a wonderful meeting with her. And just thankful for the spirit that God gives us that enables us to do this work