Initial Edit

**Shelby and Krystal Intro :** [00:00:00] Welcome to Daily Grace. We believe the Bible is true, trustworthy and timeless, and we want to help women like you know and love God's word. The Bible shows us who God is, and who he is changes everything. My name is Shelby

And I am Krystal, and we want to invite you to come join us as we chat about the truth of God's word in our everyday

**Shelby:** Before I introduce today's topic. I do want to let you know that listener discretion is advised. We are going to discuss issues of sex and sexuality. This conversation probably isn't fit for children. And we do want to let you know that physical altercation will be mentioned briefly in a couple of places during this episode.

One of the most common topics we receive requests to cover on the podcast is pornography. We receive questions from women who are addicted to pornography and want to know how to be free from their addiction. We received messages asking why [00:01:00] pornography is wrong. We get requests to give guidance on how a marriage can heal if a spouse is addicted to pornography. And we get asked how to protect a young minds and hearts from exposure to and use of pornography. And so we have put together a four part series on pornography that we are very excited to share with you. For each episode, we're bringing in experts to teach about this topic and the freedom and healing that is possible from a biblical and gospel centered perspective.

We pray that this series is helpful to you, whether you yourself struggle with the issue of pornography, or if someone you love struggles with it, or if you just want to understand more about this topic from a biblical view. You are listening to the fourth and final episode in this series on pornography addiction and marriage. And if recovering is possible for those who experience sexual addiction and betrayal in their marriage. This episode, I will be joined by Lyschel Burket. Lyschel has been working with women since 2008, as they take steps towards healing and their [00:02:00] pursuit of God. She has facilitated support groups, specific to partners of sex addicts since 2013, both locally in Knoxville, Tennessee, and online through Vicki Tiede Ministries. Lyschel is the lead hope castor and founder of Hope Redefined. She desires to be part of something so much bigger than herself as she continues to expand the reach of support for women who are facing similar things to her own recovery story. She and her husband Garren have five kiddos.

Lyschel and Garren have been on the road to recovery since 2006. I know you'll resonate with Lyschel's story. You'll appreciate her vulnerability, and you'll really learn from her wisdom in this area. Come join me in my conversation

Hey everybody. Thank you so much for joining us for the fourth and final episode in our pornography series. So far, we've talked about pornography addiction and the hope of the gospel with Dr. Juli [00:03:00] Slattery, pornography use and addiction among women with Dr. Joy Skarka, and protecting young eyes from pornography with Chris McKenna.

And today we are going to talk about the effects of pornography use and addiction on marriage. And I am joined by Lyschel Burket, who runs Hope Redefined, an online support and coaching ministry for women who have experienced sexual betrayal. And we are so glad to have you here today Lyschell

**Lyschel:** Thanks for having me Shelby. I'm excited about this.

**Shelby:** Yeah, me too. You know, Lyschel, I'm so thankful that you're here to have this conversation with us around pornography and marriage. And here in a minute, I know that you're going to share your own personal story and also lots of wisdom that you've learned, through counseling, those who've been affected by sexual addiction in their marriages. But first I thought I just wanted to let everyone know why we specifically brought you on to talk about this topic, and just a warning here, I'm going to be a little vulnerable about my own story. But before my husband and I [00:04:00] got married, he let me know that he had been exposed to pornography at a very young age, and that exposure had led to a pornography addiction for him. And he'd been free from it for a few years when we got married. And so I thought that meant that it was going to be something that was just a part of his story, and not something that was in our marriage, but just a couple years later when we'd just been married for a couple years, I discovered that that wasn't the case. And for a number of reasons, he had relapsed in his addiction early in our marriage. And I just remember feeling devastated, blindsided, I didn't know who to tell. I didn't know what to do. I really just didn't know how to process that my husband was dealing with this addiction and what that meant for our marriage. And so there were some very difficult days, weeks, months, years after that, as we worked out what it would look like for him to get healthy for me to be healthy and for us to just rebuild trust in our marriage. And, like I said, that process has really taken years to work with. And so, although he's [00:05:00] now been free of that addiction for many years, by the grace of God and our marriage is the healthiest that it's ever been, that was a really hard experience. And it's taken a lot of time and work and process to heal. And so, I knew that because I've dealt with this firsthand, that I didn't want to bring someone on for this episode, who would just say, here's five tips to hear you heal your marriage, like do these five steps, and then you'll be great. But someone who could say I've been there, I know what you're going through. I know the loss, and the devastation, and the confusion, and the anger that you're feeling. And I can help you navigate those things and then begin to heal. And I can tell you about the hope that is available for you in God and in his word. And so when I stumbled upon your ministry and your work, I just knew that you would handle this conversation with care and also with help. So, i'm just really excited for you to be here today, talking with us about this.

**Lyschel:** Thanks Shelby.

**Shelby:** Yeah, you know, to get us started, can you just tell us a little bit about yourself, a little bit about your family, and a little bit [00:06:00] about the work that you do?

**Lyschel:** Absolutely. so I, am, uh, the executive director and the founder of Hope Redefined. We've been a nonprofit ministry since 2018, and so we are still growing and doing exactly what God has invited me to do. And I say invited because some days I don't want the invitation because it's hard work. Right? I am a mom of five, my kids range from thirteen down to five years old. So I'm in the throws of elementary and middle school. And, my husband and I've been married almost 18 years. We've been on this journey of healing and recovery for about 16, it came out pretty early in our relationship, but we've certainly navigated it over the course of our entire marriage. So, the ministry was birthed out of my own space in need for safe community. I knew that I really needed other women to walk with me in this. And then realized what a gift it was for me to be another safe place for another woman, so over the course of time, I've gone back to school. I've become a professional coach, specifically [00:07:00] working in the arena of betrayal, trauma, and working with partners. We call them partners, but wives, working with partners and helping them heal from the impact of sexual betrayal in their story. regardless of what happens in the marriage itself.

**Shelby:** Yeah. And so you touched on this a little bit, but where does your passion to support spouses of sex addicts come from?

**Lyschel:** I think the easiest way to answer that question is just to share my a little bit of my story. So my husband and I married in 2004, we actually knew each other in high school, we've been friends for a long time. We dated for a long time while we were in college. And, it's important to note that I didn't grow up in a Christian home, so pornography was not unfamiliar to me. There was a lot of it in some of my parents usage. And so I was familiar with it, I understood what it was, I really kind of came a little bit from the narrative of boys will be boys. That's what men do kind of thing. but my husband never, ever once, did I ever see him, even as we were dating, that there was any kind of indication that was using [00:08:00] porn on a regular consistent basis. and so it was about 18 months into our marriage when this, reality came out for us, we had actually gone to a church service and, this is really kind of crazy to think about, but they had had a guy get up and share his story in our main service. And we knew the guy from our community group. And so we left church that day and I was still a new believer. I had probably been in church about two and a half years at that point. And I was just so overwhelmed by his transparency. I was like, oh my gosh, this is amazing. This guy, like, totally, just so vulnerable about a story.

And we're in the car and I have that like screeching record moment, you know, and it's like, and I just go, wait, you like, you don't struggle with porn, right? And he's like, no. And I was I I didn't think so. Like I thought I would know that

would do that. So I, I truly, I trusted him. I believed him. There was no reason for me not to. And so, later that day though, he did come back, to me that night, and he said, well, I'm struggling with it. And so maybe I shouldn't join that guy's group. That this guy was [00:09:00] talking about at church. And at that moment I was like, cheerleader, yes, go do that. You're going to be awesome, and just kick this, whatever this thing is to the curb. He didn't have the language of addiction at all. It was just, "I struggle with it." And so for the first four months of that, I was just like, I didn't think we'd had to talk about it. I didn't think we have to do anything about it. It was just, it was something he was going to handle and we were going to be great. And then four months after he went on a work trip and he had slip, at that time. And there's a distinction between slip and relapse. Like he had been sober for four months. He chose to use that, while he was gone. So we would call that a slip. And came home, and by the grace of God, he confessed. But I will tell you that at that confession, that is when I affectionately say I lost my ever loving mind. Because that is when betrayal actually set in for me. Up to that point, I was like, I can be your advocate. I can be your friend. But then it was like, when you chose to return to it, that's what really dysregulated me, could not, not think [00:10:00] about it, I couldn't. It just moved me into a space of what we would, we now know to understand as trauma. I was in a trauma response, I was incredibly hypervigilant. I was, there was so much anxiety, but my anxiety would come out as rage. I would have these moments of being completely fine one minute, he would breathe funny, and I would lose my stuff. Like it was just, there was no explanation for a lot of that. The explanation was is that I was in trauma and my reality was completely changing right in front of me. This person who was my absolute best friend, was also the person who was hurting me deeper than anything I'd ever experienced in my life. And so trying to reconcile that in my own, was very difficult. And then there, of course there was this other aspect of, my husband's a, he's a good guy. I love him and I don't want to talk about it with everybody because I didn't want people to start casting judgment. Of course there was tons of shame around me. All the broken belief systems that I had already had were just flushing to the surface. And so it was, it was a lot. And so we did manage to get, [00:11:00] my husband some sobriety. I think I found just safe community. It wasn't really healing at that point, but I did find some safe community. And then five years into our marriage, he had a major relapse. And actually was at risk of losing his job. And at this point in our story, we had three small kids. We did have some boundaries in place. And so the boundary was is that if he chose to use again, we were going to separate. And so we separated for a period of time and I really just sought the Lord being like, I have no idea what my next right thing is supposed to be. And my husband moved out for, we spent about two weeks out of home and then we did an in-home separation for about three months, just trying to heal. And shortly after that kind of started to the Lord just really started whispering that it was time for me to share my own story. And my immediate response uh, no, I'm not doing that because my, thought was is that I wasn't fixed and we weren't fixed. And so I didn't have a story to tell yet because we were still hurting and still growing and, and he was gone now I need you to be a [00:12:00] safe place for other women. And so that moved me into starting a support group at our church. And I did that for about four and a half years, and I'm kind of fast forwarding this story for everybody, so I don't take up much time. But, after the four years, then the Lord started, really whispering to me to make this a full-time thing. And then we birthed the Hope Redefined as a ministry, and I as mentioned now I have five kids, so we're a busy family. My husband has been, since that relapse, he would tell you that he shifted from sobriety to recovery. He's really sought his own work. But I still had healing to do too.

**Shelby:** Yeah, absolutely. I can relate to your story so much because when my husband first shared his struggle with me before we got married, I thought the same thing, like, I'll just be your cheerleader. Like we got this, this is fine. but then later on, I think realizing that it was a deeper heart issue and recognizing it, like you said, as betrayal and not just as like, oh, this just this thing that he kind of has a hard time with. that really was a hard, hard thing. So [00:13:00] I know that you have touched on this a little bit, but I know there are probably people listening who have been in this exact situation. And I think it's helpful to just talk through. What were the first kind of weeks and months after you realized, like you said, you got to the spot where you're like I have been betrayed, this is traumatic. What were those weeks and months like for you?

**Lyschel:** Mm, well, like I kind of said, one minute, you're fine. And the next minute you're not, but to give you more specifics, there was a lot of, the word we use is hypervigilance. I went into a state of just being paranoid about everything, and some of that was rational. It was understandable. Because this person was withholding information and choosing to do things that were hurting me. But I also had a lot of physical issues. I was struggling with eating, I wasn't well at all. If I was sleeping, it was just really distressed sleep. And so all of that was impacting the way I was showing up in my every day. One of the things we talk a lot about in our community is helping to just, validate that experience for women because oftentimes we really [00:14:00] connect our physical responses to the situation around us. Part of it is just, I think that's the way we're kind of conditioned in our culture is just don't be impacted. But I was definitely impacted. there was lots of grief coming up for me ,and I had really broken belief systems around grief. I also didn't have anybody around me saying there is something to be sad about. I'll give you this, cause I think this will connect the listeners too. So this is way that we came, that God led me to the name of our ministry, Hope Redefined, came from my walk with him. And it kinda comes out in two-fold. The first was, is that, in the beginning, as my husband was confessing to all these things, he got all the resources. He had the group, he had books, there were podcasts. Now this was early 2000, so there wasn't a ton out there still yet, but he was the one getting the support. So my thought process, the way I interpreted this was okay, now I'm hurting now because you've done this to me. But my thought was, well, when you get [00:15:00] better, then I'll get better

**Shelby:** Yeah.

**Lyschel:** Because, whatever's in those books and whatever's in those groups and all the things. Are going to fix this hot mess of our relationship at this point. and that was really that was terrible thinking, because the Lord eventually began to say to me, Lyschel, "You know, your husband's name is Garren, his name is not healer." And he said," I am your healer." And so the way that we talk about our healing in our ministry is, regardless if our husband gets better, We have healing to have. Jesus died on that cross for me, and for you as individuals at the end of the day, our healing has to come from the one who can do that. And, the place that we get to surrender all of our stuff to.

**Shelby:** Yeah, that's so good while I'm, I wouldn't want to repeat my story, like if I could go back and rewrite it, I would. But I am thankful that what you just said is what I've taken out of it, that I can be okay. Even if my marriage is not okay, because I don't think, I believed that before I had to walk through a season when my marriage wasn't okay. [00:16:00] And so just kind of shifting what was anchoring me from being my husband and this strong relationship that we had and his support and love to being - no, it's the Lord who anchors me in all things. And so when my marriage, isn't okay. I am okay because the Lord is with me and, and he is my anchor so me let me just ask you this too. So at this point you had small children, what did it look like to just go through your everyday life while you're experiencing all of the emotions and trauma that you just described?

**Lyschel:** gosh, it's it's, uh, if I'm completely transparent, it's really lonely. And it's really uncertain because, I'll just explain those days following, our separation. Like I remember the night he walked out that door. And I became a puddle in our kitchen. And I was totally strong and I was holding to the boundary, but when I got to that point, and just crumbled to the floor. Because I just thought, this is it, this is over, this is done. There's nothing [00:17:00] left here. And that is when I know that the Lord met me in that space. And he was like, I got you. I know this is not how you want this to look. However I got you. And so that was the thing that I would cling to is that the Lord is still, he is still bigger than all of this.

Days following, it was just a fog. I mean, I would literally just get through what I had to get through. I had a, four-year-old ,a three-year-old, and a six month old. And so it was just, what do I need to do next? I certainly needed to lower my expectations of myself, because I was grieving. I was in a ton of pain ,and that's really hard for the world around us to understand that. Because they don't see what's going on.

I remember saying to my husband at one season, I said, you know, this would have been easier if you died. ' Cause at least if you died, I can call in sick to work. I can say, I'm not doing that thing. I can step off of stuff. I can essentially decrease all my energies out because people would have this level of empathy for me, like, oh she's has a loss. And I said, but the truth was [00:18:00] is that I had a massive loss in that season, and nobody knew it. I still had to show up for work. I still had to get my kids to the places. I still had to do the X, Y, and Z. And so it's a very lonely experience. And those days following, just trying to figure out how to do the next thing.

**Shelby:** Yeah, I can relate to that very much. So what did it look like for you to begin to work through some of these emotions? I know you just talked about the fog and the loneliness, and so I don't think that you'd say that you're still in that place now. So what did that process Look like to begin to work through that?

**Lyschel:** So a huge part of my story and healing. I ended up having to do a little bit on my own. Because I didn't have other people there just wasn't community like there is like what we have with Hope Redefined. And so part of it was just, the best I could do was hit play and take a shower. And so I would turn on worship music and I would just listen to the songs and just do my best to try and connect with the Lord because he was my strength and I had nothing left. I [00:19:00] did have, like I said, a few safe friends, so I just asked them to be praying for me, but when I began to even, I mean, I would tell you that I've even, you know, continued to heal even as an executive director, like having women around you that get it. And don't, you don't have to explain yourself. You can literally just shoot out a text or put a message on our board and we get it. And so that opportunity to have people come in and validate your experience, that's a game changer. And it starts to move you from being in a place of feeling foggy and stuck ,to moving into the forward motion of the next thing.

**Shelby:** Yeah. So let's say someone is in a situation where maybe there's been a sexual betrayal in their marriage, maybe specifically pornography use or addiction or something different. And their spouse, maybe isn't interested in healing, maybe that step of them getting the help or accountability or counseling that they need. Just, isn't something they're willing to take right now. How can we begin to heal if our spouse doesn't want to?

**Lyschel:** Well, our healing is completely separate [00:20:00] from what our person does or doesn't do. The reality is, is that sex addiction or porn addiction is an individual problem that impacts a marriage. But so often you will see a woman, when this hits there, you know, that collision happens in their relationship, and they want to rush to marriage counseling. Because the thought is, oh, it's a marriage problem. And it's not a marriage problem. It's an individual problem that impacts the marriage. And so helping you kind of shift your perspective and see, okay, this is what this is. And I can go get help for myself. I can heal and I need to heal and healing doesn't require him checking all the boxes. I can still heal.

**Shelby:** Yeah. Can you talk a little bit more, like what could some healthy boundaries look like in a marriage where there's been sexual betrayal?

**Lyschel:** Well, you know, boundaries are such a tricksy thing, especially for Christian women. There's this really bad teaching, thinking that boundaries are mean, or they're rude, or something. They're [00:21:00] an unbiblical they're unchristian whatever. and so I'm just going to start, if I could talk about that for a second, the the word of God is loaded with boundaries .And we just don't recognize them for what they are. When God created the earth, he told the ocean to go here and then the land was going to start here. The bird goes here, right? There's, that's a boundary, that's spatial boundaries. But even as you get begin to watch, Jesus's walk on Earth, he was a very boundaried person. I know the one that we often will pull in as the way when he would retreat, right? He needed space, so he would set a boundary and say, I need to go take to be with my father. But there's other ways that like he did not entertain abusive conversations with Pharisees. He would remove himself from the space. And I think that's important for us to be able to see that because that's what healthy boundaries looks like, is having a value system that you believe in and honor. So we in, our ministry, the way we talk about boundaries is they're value based, so we help women figure out what is important to you. So I would say to you that, what's important [00:22:00] for me is honesty and integrity. Those are musts, absolute musts. So if my husband's lying to me all the time, he is directly impacting a value that is super important to me. So my boundary is, what am I going to do in response to somebody trying to violate my value? Does that make sense?

**Shelby:** Yeah, that makes total sense.

**Lyschel:** So we build boundaries based on what is important to us. But here's the thing is that most of us have never been asked what's important to you. It's not a class you get in high school. No one's going, Hey, what are your, like, you can get business values, but personal values and being like, okay. And then if somebody bumps into those values for you, what are you going to do about that? And we just, we don't have those tools. And so to extend grace to women, like this is like new stuff for you. This is not something that you should already know or should have been doing a long time ago. So that's how we approach boundaries and begin to look at, so sobriety, if that's a boundary, if she's like having a sober husband, a clean sober husband is [00:23:00] important to me and that's a value, then she's going to build a boundary, around that.

**Shelby:** Hmm, yeah. So, let's maybe talk just like, even a little bit more practically, because I remember when we were discussing with those boundaries would be in our marriage and I was terrified. I understood the importance of them. I understood, that I needed to put them in place. I wanted to put them in place, but actually having that conversation with my husband just seemed really scary. Like I did love him. He's my, like you said, my best friend gentle, loving man, you know? And so just struggled with the idea of having that conversation with him. What would you say to someone who maybe is just worried about having that conversation with with. their spouse?

**Lyschel:** Well, can I ask you a question back?

**Shelby:** Yeah.

**Lyschel:** I want to ask you, what were you afraid of?

**Shelby:** I think I was afraid that my boundary could damage the relationship in some way, because it had already been damaged, you know, deeply. And so the last thing I wanted to do was add to that. And so I think that was my fear and setting it that somehow it would wound him or hurt [00:24:00] him.

**Lyschel:** That's great. I think that your response is a very normal response. Like I hear that often, it's like, it's going to break something or it's going to push it off the edge. And a part of me would say to you, you don't have that much control over the relationship, as much as you think you do. Right? However, the other piece to it is, until a woman can start to feel safe in her relationship, trust can not be rebuilt. And so what boundaries are doing is allowing to create safety. So I'll give you an example of one of mine. When we came back into the house and we had an in-home separation, one of my boundaries that I asked of him was, as I said, please do not hug me, without asking me first. Because his physical presence was so triggering for me at that point. Like I was just so unsettled, and plus my brain was in 9,000 directions, cause I'm trying to take care of kids and do life and all these things. And then by the way, this person who I, my brain is still telling me he's an enemy, right. Even though my heart is really trying to get to a place of saying, he's not an enemy, my brain is still saying that is [00:25:00] danger because that person has caused this danger. And so I had to really discern what's going on with me. I discovered, okay, I'm being triggered every time he touches me, which means I'm like my body's cinching up. I can't process. I'm like just flooded with emotions. So I said to him, I need you to ask me before you hug me. So that's a boundary, right? It is a request. Some people would say, well, that's a request. It is a request, but it was also a boundary. It was like, I'm asking you not to just freely come at me and hug me. And when my husband respected that boundary-

**Shelby:** yeah.

**Lyschel:** - It began to rebuild trust with me because suddenly he actually was listening to my words. He was respecting what I was asking of him. And that was a game changer. I mean, when you can start to establish safety in a relationship, that's where trust is going to come from.

**Shelby:** Yeah. I love what you're saying, that the boundaries help reestablish trust, and I can totally vouch for that being the case in our marriage as well. And, you know, I'll just add to that, that even years and years removed, like [00:26:00] there will be a time when I'm seeking that same, just like safety, you know, just wanting to know for my husband. And so I found it so helpful to just go to him and be like, Hey, just wanted to let you know that, like, I don't know why, but this week, like I I'm just struggling. I'm struggling. I'm, I'm feeling like you're lying to me. Like I can't even place my finger on why. but can we just talk through a few things .And I'll just like ask the questions that I need to ask, and get the answers that I need to get. But we'll pray together, you know, but just, I totally, I totally just relate to that so much. And it has been so helpful, to just be open and honest with my husband. Or hey, I know that, like this hasn't been an issue for so long, but like I'm just struggling this week and, here's what I would love to And been really, really helpful for our, relationship. You know, I'm wondering, in your healing journey, did you make mistakes? Is there anything that you'd do differently, if you could go back and and do it again.

**Lyschel:** The only thing I would do differently is to get into safe community with people who [00:27:00] understand and get this. That's probably the, one of the biggest things I would have done differently. It hadn't been available to me. But I think there's a lot of grace when it comes to looking over our mistakes and being like I was doing the best I could with where I was.

**Shelby:** Yeah, amen to that. So, I want to ask this question too, because I know this is a part of your story, but so people who struggle with an addiction, is it normal for them to relapse? I know you said your husband was sober for a number of years and then relapsed again. How should a spouse respond when they find out that their, spouses relapsed in this addiction?

**Lyschel:** Okay, let me answer the spouse part first and then I'll answer the addict part. Okay. There is a reality that relapses possible, and slips are possible. I think it is unrealistic for us to think, oh, on Tuesday I was looking at porn and by Thursday, I'm never going to look at it again, right? Because if you really, maybe I am answering in the order, you asked it. When you begin to unpack this addiction and understand that it [00:28:00] is an avoidance, it's an emotional and relational issue. They do not know how to navigate their emotions. And so they check out that's their checkout space, right? So until they begin to learn new tools about how to manage anxiety, fear, feeling out of control, insecurities, all the things that are driving them to this, they're going to try and go back to their old behaviors. This is true for me too. Like I don't, I use this because I think women can connect to it, but I know that it's not on the same caliber of impact. I do this with food, right? Food is an emotional support thing. When I don't want to feel something, I go and grab some sort of sugary something, right? So then if it's like on Tuesday, I say, okay, I'm never, I'm never going to touch sugar again, especially not for my emotions. And then all of a sudden on Thursday, I have this massive explosion of life and my face. It's going to be really tempting to want to go back to my old behaviors, cause I haven't found something new that helps me cope. And I'm not coping, right? So then oftentimes what you'll see in addicts or guys who are struggling, if [00:29:00] they have not found new coping skills, the next major thing that comes out as anger and they morph into just a state of being very frustrated with life. Very, depression can be really common in that space, but anxiety too, because they've not found the thing that's going to help them actually combat or be able to, to navigate this and the self care, that's the word I'm looking for. The self care that they need in order to move through hard things. Okay. So what is expected of us, of a partner of a spouse? When the relapse happens, we have a thing called a relapse plan. And actually if he's in any kind of recovery community, he will most likely create a relapse plan as well. Which means what do I do if a, B and C happen? And so I really encourage women to have their own relapse plan, which means, think about this situation before it happens. So you don't have to make it from a state of emotional. And you can just feel like, okay, I've, I've done my work. I have a plan . It's one of the biggest gifts we can give each other as women, especially is being able to prep, because I think that's a [00:30:00] lot of what plays into the anxiety for us is what if this rug gets pulled out from underneath me again. I have no plan. And so when you can help a woman start to plan and do something like that now, is it foolproof? Like, is it gonna be executed exactly? No, but it does give her something to say, should this happen, I know what I'm going to do. And then even if you're in a relationship where the husband is in recovery, then we advocate for doing a couples relapse plan. Like you guys would begin to talk about that what's going to happen. And so that was what was going on in our marriage. So when he, when he came home and confessed that he had relapsed at work, he already knew the plan, because we had worked on that plan together. Now he was, I know he would tell you now he was hoping I would not execute the plan. But when I said, well, we know what our plan is. And he went, I do. And so he went and packed his bag and we separated. So...

**Shelby:** Yeah. So maybe just like some practical tips, like what, what might that relapse plan look like for some [00:31:00] people?

**Lyschel:** Sure. Well, I think that some of the practical things that go into it is, talking about like what will happen instantaneously. The first part of the plan needs to be a definition on what is a slip and what is a relapse, because nine times out of ten, her definition of a slip or relapse is different than his definition of a slip or relapse. And you really need to come to a common definition because that's a place where I see couples get in a really messy space where she's like you full-blown relapsed. And so she wants to implement the relapse things, and he's going, this is crap. This is actually a slip and he's arguing about it because he's trying his space. And so being able to really help equip them in that way is great. But usually it's something about what are the definitions. The next thing I would probably say is, then begin to talk about what's going to happen in the aftermath. So, and when I say that is, is not just the separation, but what are the support things that need to be back in place if they're missing? [00:32:00] So is it getting an accountability partner? Is it getting back into weekly counseling? Is it getting back in your group? And same for her, like, okay, we've had a relapse. I need to get back in my community. I got to get a coach. I need to get my therapist, so on and so forth, and really helping them find that support system that they need in order for them to then begin to look at the milestones in order to say, okay this has been a relapse, and these are the things we need to get back in place in order for us to start to heal again from this.

**Shelby:** Yeah, those are really, really helpful things to think through. I wish I would've had like all this information

**Lyschel:** Yeah

**Shelby:** So many years ago. As you were mentioning, there wasn't a lot out there. I remember Googling it, just like trying to find like any help for me. I'm like you said, it was almost all geared towards the towards men. I found just a couple of things, but I'm so thankful that resources are becoming more available. So, you know we've talked a lot about like the practical side of this and almost like the psychological side of this. But I just want to talk about the faith aspect of it for a minute. And I know you have a story about the promises of God, and writing those in your room. So I'm wondering if you can share with [00:33:00] us a little a little bit about, where was God in the midst of all of this for you guys. And if you're willing to share that story too, I think that'd be really cool.

**Lyschel:** Oh, yeah, it's a great story, I'll brag on God all day long. I don't mind it at all. Okay, I'll start with the promises of God. So that story came from, it was, it was during our season of separation. It actually had been like maybe day three or four after my husband had left the house.

And so I was home with my three littles. That particular morning, I had taken my two big girls, who were four and three, to mom's stay out and I'd come back. And it was time for the baby to take a nap. And I put him down for a nap and I went to my room and I grabbed a notebook and I said, Lord, I don't know what I need right now, but what I do need is I need to remember that you're still here and that your promises matter. So I go to my bedroom, I cry out to the Lord. I'm like, I really need something here to just carry me through. And so I think I'm going to sit there with this pad of paper and I'm going to start writing out whatever I hear the Lord whispered to [00:34:00] me. And the next thing I know, I hear the Lord say, nah, we're actually going to go bigger. was like, bigger?. Okay, what does this mean? And the next thing I know, I found a piece of chalk out of my kids' playroom and I am in my bedroom and I literally graffiti my entire bedroom walls with pieces of chalk writing out the promises of God. And it the most unreal thing, I had worship music playing, so a lot of it was just lyrics that were like, just amplifying for me. I didn't have the clarity of mind yet to really be sitting in the word. I kept reading my Bible, but it was just foggy. It didn't land anywhere. So the best I could do was worship, and I just started claiming everything I could. I mean, it was our main confident in this, I will see the goodness of the Lord. He breaks every chain in every stronghold. He makes the promise of making things, all things new. And so I'm just writing all these things all over my walls, and I won't lie, at one point, I thought my mother is going to kill me. And then [00:35:00] I realized that I was like late thirties. I'm like, oh, wait, it's my adult bedroom. I'm fine. Uh, and so I did it and it became a sanctuary for me. It was my safe place. And the funnier parts of this story is that I ,didn't tell my husband, I did that. Right? And so he's out of the house and he comes back two weeks later and comes upstairs to use our bathroom, to go take a shower. And I forget that I've done this. And I walk in there and he's standing in the middle of the room and he's just reading all the words that were, I mean, it was on every wall. And he's like just standing there and I I'm waiting for the conflict. Right? I was like, oh, you better? He's going to bring it. And I just said, well, and he goes, this is the most amazing thing I've ever seen. Later what I understood to be true was that the Lord was helping me take back stolen territory. And so me walking around that room claiming the promises of God, that was changing things. And I didn't know it in the moment, but it was something I was holding onto. [00:36:00] And so every morning I would get up and read these things on my walls and we kept those, those words on our walls for three years. For three years. And then there was finally a season where I felt like the Lord said it's time to change it. I captured all the words on the wall, but we repainted our room and it was like, it was just a transactional, it was a visual, transactional moment of like, you guys are healing. And so we, we painted our room blue because it was very relaxing and it felt like rest and all these things. And so that's my promises of God. And that's the way he works. Here's the thing I will say to him so often in our groups is that we have to come to an understanding. As as difficult, and as excruciating as this story is for us, he loves us too much to leave us where we were. And there were days where I was like, I wish this never happened. I wish I never knew about it. I wish we could just go back to denial, like act like it's not happening because I missed that quote simpler life. Right? And yet, if you think about God's commitment to us and loving us the way he does, he's going to take us through hard [00:37:00] things because he loves us that much. And that has been just such an anthem over my, my whole journey of being like, this hurts. And he's going, I know, and I love you so much, and we just keep growing.

**Shelby:** Yeah, I love that. I love everything you just said. That God's promises and his word are true, despite maybe the hardship of our circumstances. And, unfortunately I think we don't learn that until we're walking through that really just hard, hard stuff, and so I love that story. It made me want to just like write those things all over my room, just because, um. But, I'm wondering, you know, we've talked a lot about the hard parts of your marriage. I'm wondering, can you just talk to us about your marriage now? What does it look like to be so many years after this? And has there been healing? Just how are you guys doing now?

**Lyschel:** Yeah, that's a great question. So marriage is hard, right? All by itself, it's hard.

**Shelby:** Yeah.

**Lyschel:** We are healing. We have a marriage that I don't think either one of us ever imagined it would look like. [00:38:00] You know, I think both of us came into marriage with just very skewed images of what it was going to look like. He had parents who were still married. I came from a lot of divorce. And so we came from very different backgrounds in the value of marriage. We both committed that it was gonna look different, but we didn't really know what that meant. I would tell you that our relationship is very safe for me. But that has come with a lot of work on both our parts. I had to discover what I needed for safety. My husband had to be, have some sense of willingness to say, I want to be a safe person for you. I had to take ownership for the things that didn't go so well on my part too, you know, like me raging and beating my husband up is not the kind of person I want to be. And I had to own that, right? That I had to repent for those types of things in order to say, I'm working on me too. And I, I want to be a safe person, but that didn't come until after. I mean, just to put that in perspective, like, I don't want women to rush and be like, oh, I just gotta become safe and then he'll get better.

**Shelby:** Yeah.

**Lyschel:** Please keep hearing me say he had to do his own work. And he had to get well [00:39:00] because he wanted to get well. He couldn't get well for me. Right? was I would've just been a temporary assignment .And this is why I think so many women feel and it does feel it's a personal violation, but there's women who are like, am I not worth loving to stop doing this? And the answer is yes, because Jesus loves you, right? But you're also putting this expectation that he's going to heal for you instead of, because of who God wants him to be. And, it's a, it's a misalignment. So we're doing well. We have good seasons and we have hard seasons. And, you know, my husband has stayed sober for nine years and in recovery for nine years, he walks with his own community of men and does what he does. And really is such an advocate for what I do as a ministry leader. He's part of our board. And clearly he takes care of my five children when we're, and I'm out doing other things. So I'll never say it's perfect. . But I don't even know if it's intended to be perfect this side of [00:40:00] heaven.

**Shelby:** Absolutely. Thank you for sharing that. You know, up here minutes, but I'm wondering if you can just give some advice and I'm going to give you kind of like three different situations, three types of people who might be listening and some advice for them. So, the first is someone who is married to a spouse who has a pornography addiction, maybe the spouse will wants to change, but they're, they're really just having a hard time doing that. What advice would you give to that person?

**Lyschel:** I would say that - I would encourage her to really advocate for him to get help. Oftentimes those guys are not willing to step into a group. They're not actually doing the things to be known. So I would say consider, and I know that it kind of sounds counter to what I've been talking about being like, hey, you matter, but then I would also say to her, you've got to get support and community. Because it's, when you stay isolated like that, it's still just the two of you and he's struggling. It is really hard to heal. And so getting into safe community with other women is going to be a game changer.

**Shelby:** Yeah,

**Lyschel:** So...

**Shelby:** I think a lot of times women feel they have to keep it a [00:41:00] secret for their husband, and you've that so many times, but even in just my own personal story, I remember going to him and saying, hey, I need someone to talk to. Here's the people I'm going to talk to. And I'm not going to tell everyone, but I'm going to tell these people, everything that I need to, and that was so helpful, for me to be in that community for sure. So what tips might you have for someone who's married to a spouse who's addicted to pornography and the spouse has shown no no willingness to change. You know unfortunately, even a lot of times maybe the spouse is wanting them to join in, in viewing pornography and consuming it with them. So what might advice would you have for them?

**Lyschel:** Yeah. Again, I, I would probably want to encourage her to look at her value system and see how is this relationship aligning with her value system? Because my guess is, is that she didn't sign up. She didn't say I do to a marriage with someone who was not going to be willing to change. And that's a really hard decision to make for any woman. So my encouragement would be, is to seek out [00:42:00] professional support, especially someone who understands betrayal, trauma. There's an organization called APSATS, A-P-S-A-T-S..org. a T , and they are all trained professionals. Many of them are Christians, but being able to seek out that type of support from a professional, like that is going to really help her make decisions and maybe even have to hold to really hard, tough boundaries. If that's not something he's wanting to explore.

**Shelby:** And then there's one more just group of people that I think maybe could use some advice. And that's someone who, like you and I, pornography addiction is something that's been a part of their marriage story, but their spouse has been sober for quite a while now, but there are still hard times. There's still things to work through. What advice would you give to them?

**Lyschel:** Yeah. it's important to understand that your healing journey and your husband's healing journey is very different. And so he may have been very sober, but one of the misses that we see consistently in recovery is that addicts don't know how to repair. They don't know how to repair the relationship. And if she's never been given [00:43:00] permission to grieve, if she's never been given the opportunity to identify what she needs to rebuild trust, if she's never been able to sit in the truth of her story. It's very hard for her to heal. And let me just say this, and we try really hard. And we try to get to forgiveness and make it authentic forgiveness. And then there's that moment where something just tips us over and then we start questioning everything. Did I actually forgive him? I thought I forgave him, but now I'm upset all over again. And I don't understand. And then you rush you know, you bump into the, how can you be mad at me? You said you forgave me so on and so forth. And it's like, it's, it's a lot. And so I think it's important for women to understand that there's not a timeline. Women will ask me all the time when we do intro calls, how long is this going to take? And my response is it's going to take as long as it takes, because there's a lot that goes into our own healing, right? There's just so much there, and I don't say that to make it sound overwhelming. I say it to say it's an invitation. We have women all the time. Our median age in [00:44:00] our ministry is between 37 and 57, but I have women who are in their seventies and eighties. Their husbands have been clean and sober for 20 years and she is still struggling to heal. She's still struggling to trust him and forgive him and all the things. And that's what her, heart desires is to have a life of peace. And so we get to walk together. And let her start having a space to actually talk about what's going on. And that in and of itself just, you know, starts catapult healing journey.

**Shelby:** Yeah, absolutely. So let me just ask you this, we have one question that we ask every guest that I'll ask in just a second, but just to kind of wrap up our conversation. Can a marriage impacted by pornography addiction

**Lyschel:** Yes. Yes, it can. It's not going to look the way it did before all of this came out. It's going to be a lot of hard work. Maybe I should say, instead of the word hard, I should use the word intentional. It's going to be intentional,

**Shelby:** Yeah.

**Lyschel:** But is can heal. I have not just my marriage, I don't base that just off my story. I have many friends, and I call them friends, you know, like that, [00:45:00] I get to walk with and ministry partners who are, who have a testimony of saying, we healed. We are healing. We are healing.

**Shelby:** Yeah. Amen. Well just my final question for you, lyschel, is a question that we ask every guest and, you know, at the Daily Grace Co, we always say that the gospel changes everything. And so I am wondering what has the gospel changed for you?

**Lyschel:** Ah, Everything. It has changed everything. But the gospel has changed that I am worthy of love. I'm worthy of integrity. I have been chosen by a God who loves me so much. And I think the other parts of the gospel that has changed for me is that knowing that Jesus is my healer and not my husband, that that's a game changer.

**Shelby:** Yeah,

**Lyschel:** So...,

**Shelby:** thank you so much, Lyschel, for sharing your story and your wisdom with us today. I know that this conversation was vulnerable and honest, and I really hope that it encouraged many people listening who may have walked through similar [00:46:00] things. And so I'm just wondering before we sign off, is there anything else that you wanted to share with our audience today?

**Lyschel:** Well, I'd love to, just take an opportunity just to tell you how we support women walking this journey. Cause

**Shelby:** Yeah, absolutely.

**Lyschel:** It's one thing to, it's one thing to talk about. It's another thing to step in. And so as an organization in ministry, we offer online support groups for women, that follow them through their journey. We also have one-to-one coaching support with trained coaches. We do retreats twice a year, and we host those outside of Gatlinburg, Tennessee. We also have a scholarship fund that we work as a nonprofit to consistently try and fund that out for women who are in financial need financial support in order to get help. And so it's, like the support is there. So whether you choose to work with Hope Redefined, or seek out community there or other countless amazing organizations. I just want to say that you don't have to do this by yourself. You can find safe people who get it, and are going to help you take the next [00:47:00] step for your own healing.

**Shelby:** Hmm. Yeah. What a gift. I'm sure your ministry is so many who are just in seasons of struggling and in confusion. And so I'm so thankful for the work that you guys do and that you've dedicated, just your time and,

**Lyschel:** Yeah.

**Shelby:** And your emotions, and your care and your heart to this, definitely.

**Lyschel:** You bet..

**Shelby:** Well guys, remember remember this this is the fourth and final episode of our four part pornography series. And so if you haven't yet be sure to go back and listen to those first three episodes. You know, we really wanted to tackle this topic holistically. And so the entire series will be helpful to you, whether you yourself struggle with pornography, or if someone, you know does, or if you just want to learn how to navigate this topic biblically, and don't forget to subscribe to our weekly newsletter to receive free resources related to the podcast. Today, we'll be sending you all of the links so that you can connect with Lyschel and her ministry, Hope Redefined, and you can click on the link in the show notes to subscribe to that. Until next week, we hope you will join us as we [00:48:00] continue this conversation over on our Instagram at Daily Grace Podcast, but we'll see you next time.