

The breaking of the Fellowship.

Dear Member,

It has been a little while since I last wrote for this program and the reason is simple - I fell. I had followed all my guides and 'lived' my crosses for the love of God. But still I succumbed to cross dressing and then the internet pornography. 'That night', I felt truly awful and couldn't sleep because I was petrified I would die before getting to confession. The short term pleasure of sin wasn't even that great...so why did I still do it? With everything I knew - why?

I fell because I wanted to. In fact, if you read a previous unit, you will see that I planned it. I wrote *Another Lenten Resolution* a week before Easter Sunday; just eight days before I chose to sin. I put the idea into my own head. I knew my past failures and I knew the end of Lent was an Achilles heel for me. Where was my armour and weapons of defence to that? These questions are not new to us - we ask them every time we fall. So how do I change something so obvious.

Even as I write this I am aware that several of the fellowship have 'dropped off the radar'. In my experience this happens for just two reasons - holidays or sin. Shame stops us from maintaining daily contact. After all, how can I send you a text reassuring you of my daily prayers when I know I haven't done any...or I have...but they hold no spiritual value because I am not in a state of Grace. Far easier to just stay silent...

I don't write this to make others feel bad. I write it because we all need to recognise the truth. I believe the success of this fellowship requires daily support and encouragement from us all. I am not in charge and I am not invincible. I will always be an addict and I will always be vulnerable to self deception and lies. However, my fall could have been averted if someone else in the fellowship had recognised the need to make a 'daily check' call. This is part of looking 'outwards' rather than in - an important aspect of recovery for us all.



This will come across badly because you may feel I am trying to pass the blame - I'm not. We have to start working together and we have to start looking out for each other. To begin watching for *those signs* in each other's behaviour...those signs of weakness and self-deception. (Much more about this in the second stage of the program)

I will continue to use my own failures and deceptions as an example to others. Trust and communication is paramount before we can move any further in this program - or this fellowship. I didn't trust you enough to call out before I chose to sin, but equally, you didn't stay in contact or ask me about *that* article. You unknowingly, helped me build my isolation and you unwittingly, helped me feel alone.

Ultimately, however, I failed myself and that is entirely my responsibility. NOT yours. I chose to sin.

HOW WE FAIL EACH OTHER:

- I fail you when my prayers are of no spiritual value in *your* fight against temptation.
- I fail you when I decide not to send a text asking how you are getting on.
- I fail you when I make no effort to respond to your articles or see if you are in trouble.



- We ALL fail each other when we find reasons not to engage in chat sessions, when we decide not to donate prayers and when we show no desire to share our own stories and feelings or comment.

The approach I am taking in this unit is risky with today's society. In a world where we are entitled to believe that all our problems are down to someone else or something else - then why change?

We live with a generation that fails to understand they are responsible for their own mistakes...that it is not always up to others to make adjustments. That it is someone else's fault if things go wrong! This attitude feeds into an addicts need for blame, denial and deflection.

MY ENTITLEMENTS - IT'S MY RIGHT TO THINK THIS WAY!

- I cross dress because I was abused when I was young - it's not my fault
- Everyone else says I can wear dresses - it's not my fault
- I look at pornography and masturbate because my parents didn't do a good enough job protecting me from filthy magazines and inappropriate TV content - it's not my fault.
- I struggle with emotional maturity and tell stupid lies because I was allowed to when I was young - that would be my parents fault too!
- I sin daily - definitely not my fault. Just look at my traumatic history!
- I sin daily because I can't get regular Mass or see a priest - that's the Church's fault.

This pattern of blame shifting plagues many aspects of an addicts life. Hard to accept but true. Doesn't it make life easier knowing you are so 'horrible' because of someone else's actions...and not because of your own? Can I really continue to blame the past (and others) because I don't have the moral strength to look beyond the causes and so make changes? Only I can look at the past and recognise it as 'just that' - the past. Yes, external causes may have defined why I grew up as I did, but surely I cannot let that hold me prisoner forever?

Unless of course I am happy to embrace a regime that encourages the richness of diversity and the rights for us to express ourselves freely and without fear of ridicule...a haven for permission givers. (more of that in a later unit)

Where is God in all this modernistic tripe?

Now that I have made my personal view clear to you all I challenge you to reply. We are all different and I have no right to impress upon you views that you cannot accept. If you feel that way, then let me know - perhaps aspects of this program need to be changed.

This unit is really all about trust, communication and dealing with blame. We all must find a way in which we can accept responsibility for changing aspects of our lives that we did not cause...if that makes sense?



By the way, I think this program is going to work for me - eventually. I looked back over the previous units and have examined the reason for my sin. (See Unit 1.2 - Surviving the Siege). The issues I have highlighted below demonstrate how I am analysing and managing aspects of this fall from Grace to ensure it isn't repeated:

- I recognise I set myself an unrealistic target - knowing I have fallen to that approach in the past
- I didn't let others know that this was a weakness for me - you could have helped me
- I didn't speak to my spiritual director about my fears - he could have helped me
- I became secretive about my internet usage by using another search engine
- I fell into despair for 4 days (my next available confession) and sinned again...and again
- I have written this article to help me deal with shame and dishonesty. This will be seen by family and others who know me AND can help me in the future
- I have altered my internet usage policy (subject of the next unit)

To complete this unit:

1. Make a determined effort to maintain daily contact with the Fellowship
2. Try to share your experiences - good and bad
3. Honestly challenge your falls from Grace and seek effective remedies
4. Make a firm resolution to trust and challenge others to do the same
5. Make the time for regular crypt chat sessions - this is how the bond of trust develops
6. Take personal responsibility for bringing about change in yourself and others
7. Visit Men of Hope daily and challenge yourself to comment on articles
8. Offer up daily prayers and actively donate them during your visit to the site.
9. Commit yourself to being a part of a new apostolate that helps others fight addiction.

