

## Tom Bailey's Full Testimony

While I grew up in a loving home where a relationship with God was emphasized, my relationship with God began in fear. I remember my dad finding me in our church bathroom crying, because I was scared I would go to hell. I accepted Jesus right then and there as my dad led me in the sinner's prayer, giving my heart to God. I knew God loved me and would forgive me when I sinned. Unfortunately, this view of God gradually became a get-out-of-jail free card. When I sinned, I felt bad about it, would express sorrow to God, hoping to feel better, and continue without any consequences. I found my fear of people's perceptions of me took precedence over what God thought about me.

This fear of people led to the habit of lying. It began with me morphing stories slightly to make them sound more interesting. This escalated into my hiding mistakes from people to create the perception that I had it altogether. Trapped in an identity crisis, I was living a double life. This manifested in two ways: hiding my financial failures and a pornography addiction that I developed early in my marriage. I carried tremendous shame. My relationship with my wife and God became more and more distant.

My wife and I started attending Catholic Mass at Holy Apostles in 2018. I observed her take communion and be transformed. I longed for what she had with God. So, I started to learn more about the Catholic Faith. I knew that I was holding back from God and was scared of what a true deep relationship could mean. I would have to stop hiding my true self, and I didn't know if I was ready to acknowledge my sins to my wife and ask for forgiveness. My fear ruled me. I ended up getting caught in my addictions by my wife. This was a painful yet freeing experience. One that still holds wounds that God is healing today. During this time, I started HA's RCIA process, which included "Come and See" sessions. There I was able to connect with people that lived in joy-filled relationships with God. They shared their experiences freely and were truly genuine. Witnessing this instilled the desire to draw closer to God even more. As they walked alongside me, I learned more about God and the amazing relationship I could experience with Him through the sacraments.

This is when I finally was able to experience the Sacrament of Reconciliation. I went into it so fearful and came out feeling so free. I found healing in the sacraments in finally accepting God's forgiveness and not having to care about what people thought about me. Only caring about what God thinks about me. It truly changed my life. I still struggle with fear of people's perceptions of me from time to time, but I am no longer living a double life in shame and fear. God has truly freed me and is continually healing my brokenness when I bring it to Him. My relationship with God has valleys and peaks, but He is present and has loved me through all of it. I am still a sinner with wounds that God is healing and in need of His mercy daily. Allowing God to truly know me and sharing that relationship that I have found with Him with others is part of who God has called me to be.

God wants to know you deeply and He wants your relationships with others to mirror that. There is definitely pain and hurt that comes with living in the light. There are consequences when we sin, but there is also joy and freedom in giving them to God. I choose joy and freedom in Christ.

*Note: If you or someone you know struggles with pornography addiction, check out additional resources [here](#).*