

4-1987

## Portrait of an Adulterer

Ronald E. Hawkins

*Liberty University*, [rehawkin@liberty.edu](mailto:rehawkin@liberty.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/ccfs\\_fac\\_pubs](https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/ccfs_fac_pubs)

---

### Recommended Citation

Hawkins, Ronald E., "Portrait of an Adulterer" (1987). *Faculty Publications and Presentations*. 26.  
[https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/ccfs\\_fac\\_pubs/26](https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/ccfs_fac_pubs/26)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Department for Counselor Education and Family Studies at Scholars Crossing. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications and Presentations by an authorized administrator of Scholars Crossing. For more information, please contact [scholarlycommunications@liberty.edu](mailto:scholarlycommunications@liberty.edu).

by Ronald E. Hawkins

**T**he following excerpts are from a mixture of counseling sessions I have held. They do not represent one client, but represent a composite attitude held by unfaithful partners I have counseled over the years. The excerpts are arranged to reveal the utter darkness and narcissism that often are companions to the act of adultery. Let me introduce you to John, a persistent adulterer. The tragic truth is that so many who give themselves to acts of adultery never stop. They go on and on and become a scourge in the life of Christ's church.

**Dr. Hawkins:** John, I understand that you have recently had an affair and are here at the recommendation of your board of deacons. Is this the first time you have experienced a situation like this?

**John:** No, this is not the first time. I have been unfaithful to my wife several other times across our 20 years of marriage. I sometimes think this problem is like a disease, like alcoholism or gambling. I travel a lot. Every chance I get, I look at porn magazines and watch X-rated movies in my motel room.

**Dr. Hawkins:** Can you tell me a little bit about how and when this sin began to be a permanent part of your lifestyle?

**John:** It started back when I was an adolescent. I had an unbelievable appetite for porn. I spent hours looking at pornographic material. As I grew older, I got into the X-rated movies every chance I

decided to become a minister.

**Dr. Hawkins:** Did any other sins seem to be companions to this sin of infidelity?

**John:** I became an adept liar. I could lie so well that I actually convinced myself that what I said was true—whether it was or not. To this day my wife and many of my friends believe that I was never responsible for beginning any of the problems I've had with women. I've convinced them that it was the women's fault. In fact, I believe that myself, most of the time. Only in my most depressed times do I admit to myself that it has been all my fault. I'll tell you the truth. I wouldn't want others to know this, but I lie better than any person I have ever known.

**Dr. Hawkins:** I understand that these sins were already prominent in your life when you made the decision to become a pastor. Did that give you any reason to wonder whether you were making the right career choice?

**John:** I hoped that being a pastor and being around the Word of God would somehow help me deal with this problem. I loved to study the Bible, but my study was always an academic exercise. I loved to preach, but it was always like I was preparing something that would really impress people. When I preached, it was like I was preaching outside of myself and watching what it was doing to people, to see how I could use it to my advantage. The longer I ministered, the more suc-

# PORTRAIT

## of an Adulterer

had. In high school and college I was fascinated with women. When I got their approval, I manipulated them into situations where I could exploit them sexually. I enjoyed using them, and I desperately needed their applause. Somehow my sense of self-worth was tied up with being applauded and appreciated by these women. I became a master at manipulation. I was especially good at manipulating adolescent girls and women who were in the church. They often seemed naive of my real intentions. Somewhere in this whole process, I

cessful I became. On the dark side, I guess the reason I decided to go into the pastorate was that I was so good at manipulating people. I found that Christians are particularly gullible. So many Christian husbands don't take care to build good relationships with their wives. They provided me with an unlimited pool of available victims. The better I got at speaking, the more women came to me. The problem never went away. It got worse and worse. I never really prayed, and I never stayed in a situation where I could be held accountable by someone.

er sins  
sin of

ar. I could  
aced myself  
ther it was  
d many of  
ever  
f the  
.. I've con-  
men's  
self, most  
depressed  
it has  
he truth. I  
this, but I  
ve ever

d that these  
your life  
become a  
eason to  
ing the

pastor and  
would  
is problem.  
my study  
se. I loved  
e I was  
I really  
ied, it was  
myself and  
people, to  
dvantage.  
ore suc-

T

erer

side, I  
go into the  
od at  
at Chris-  
o many  
care to  
eir wives.  
mited pool  
I got at  
ne to me.  
It got  
y prayed,  
n where I  
omeone.

**Dr. Hawkins:** So, whenever you got caught, you simply relocated.

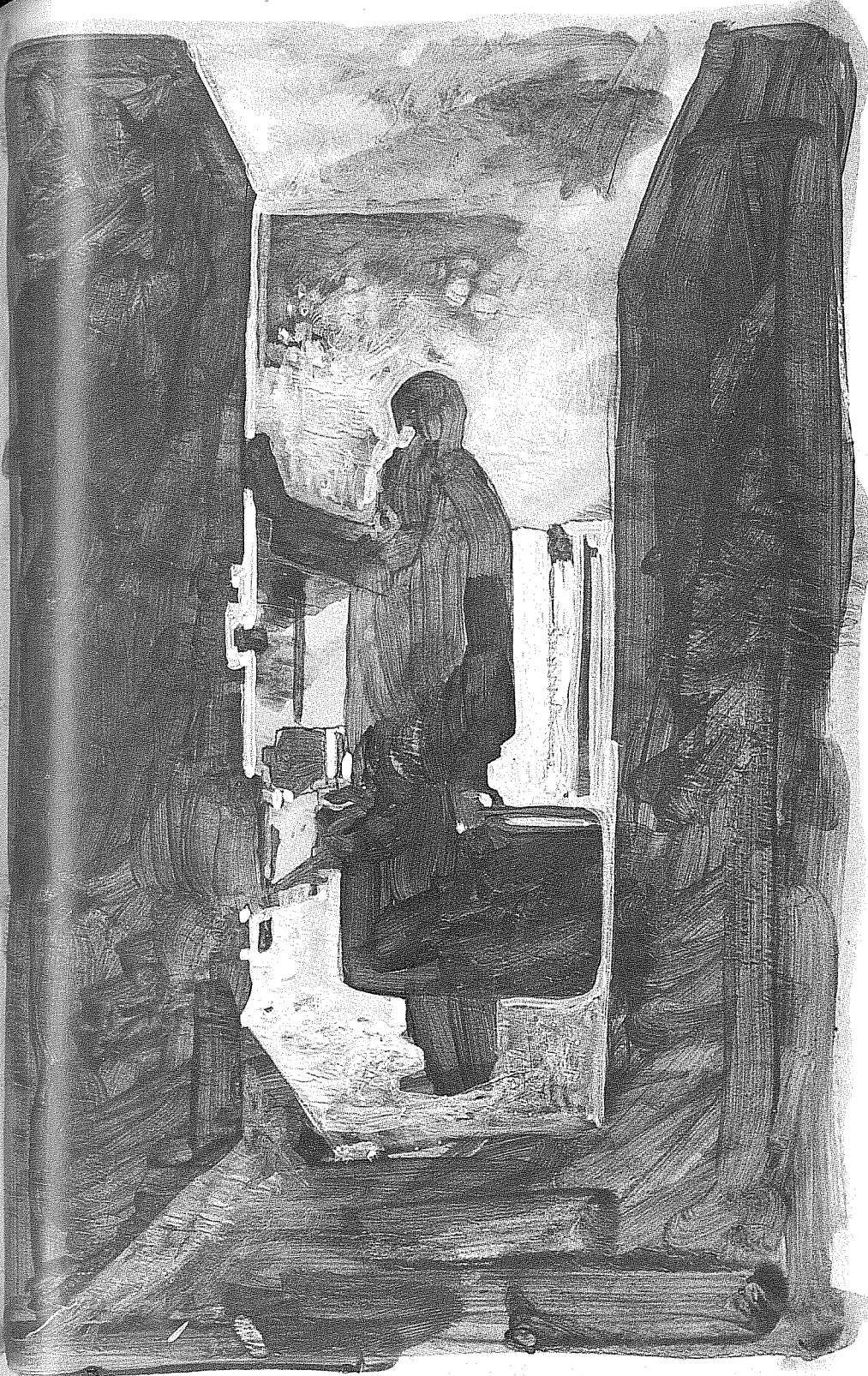
**John:** Yes, we had to move around a lot. I always got caught sooner or later.

**Dr. Hawkins:** How has your wife handled your consistent involvement in infidelity over all these years?

**John:** My wife has been real sweet

about the whole thing. She gets upset, but she hangs in there. If she had ever left me, I would have been in real trouble. Keeping the family together has allowed me to stay in one form of ministry or another. I have always worked very hard to keep the image, or appearance, of success surrounding me. Christians like suc-

Only  
in my  
most  
depressed  
times  
do I  
admit  
to myself  
that it  
has been  
all my fault.





**I would  
hate to have  
my children  
turn out  
like me.**

cessful men who dress for success. You know what I mean! I am in love with appearances. In some ways, I think I'm a joke! I must be a very shallow person, but my ability to project an image has given me great power over people. My wife has been taught all her life that she needs to be a submissive wife. One day when I came home she was reading a book on *Tough Love* or some such title. That really scared me! I wondered what I would do if she ever really was strong enough to deal with this thing. I don't respect her, because she

doesn't make me deal with it. But I don't want her to make me accountable to her. Do you think you can stay in love with someone you don't respect?

**Dr. Hawkins:** Could it be that you don't really understand the meaning of biblical sin or repentance? Throughout our session, you never once labeled what you did as sin.

**John:** You know, sometimes I feel sorry for myself. I've repented so often that I'm not sure I know what sin is and what true repentance would be like. You know that story about Esau. He couldn't find repentance. Sometimes I think I'm an Esau. I only repent because I want a job, or some favor, never because I feel I have sinned against God and my family. Sometimes I feel true repentance is beyond me. If I had dealt with this thing early in my life, or if others had held me accountable in the beginning, I could have beaten it. Now it owns me. It runs me. It goes underground for a while, but it always comes back. It always takes over.

**Dr. Hawkins:** Have you ever considered the long-range effects of this sin on your children?

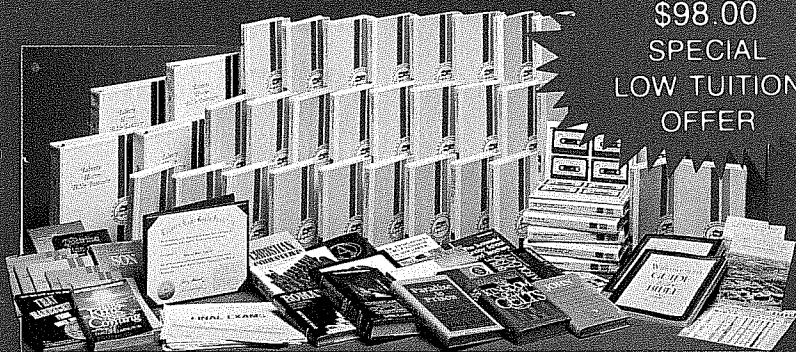
**John:** I guess the only thing I really worry about is this problem being visited on my children. You know the idea that the sins of the father will be visited on the children to the third and fourth generation. I guess there are a lot of things God's Word says that I don't really believe, or I wouldn't do what I do. I would hate to have my children turn out like me. I'm sure God's grace will keep that from happening.

**Dr. Hawkins:** There are some serious issues that we need to deal with in your life. We need to look at the various ways sin has taken over in your life, and develop a strong program of accountability, spiritual and psychological renewal. If you are ever to be restored to usefulness as a human being, such a long-term program is a necessity.

**John:** I would love to do that... but I've got to run now. I'm late for an appointment. We are meeting the moving people to get some estimates. I start a new ministry on the West Coast on the first of the month.

■ **Ronald E. Hawkins** is director of counseling and chairman of the Department of Church Ministries at Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia.

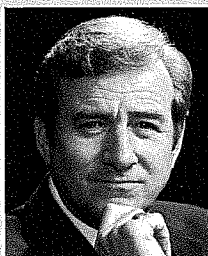
## THIS BIBLE RESOURCE LIBRARY CAN BE YOURS



**\$98.00  
SPECIAL  
LOW TUITION  
OFFER**

## LIBERTY HOME BIBLE INSTITUTE

will provide this valuable resource library  
as part of a complete Bible college study program.



Dr. Jerry Falwell

**God intended that Christians study His Word. Liberty Home Bible Institute is designed to assist you in obtaining a deeper understanding of God's Word.**

**I encourage you to call our Liberty Line 1-804-847-9000 and request your free LHBI Information Packet—or send this coupon for complete information on how you may enroll in this outstanding home Bible study course.**

**Liberty Home Bible Institute**  
Dept. 1105 Lynchburg, VA 24514

Please send me—without obligation—my free information packet.  
(Please print clearly.)



Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Street \_\_\_\_\_ Phone ( ) \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_