

# COMMAND

Christian perspectives on life in the military

SPRING 2023 Vol. 72 No. 1

THIS ISSUE

## THE EMPTY PROMISES OF ADDICTION

*There is hope and healing from the sexual  
brokenness we all experience in our lives.*



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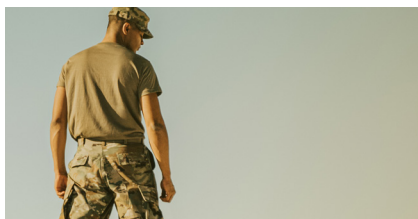


Photo by SGT James Garvin, USA

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# COMMAND

Vol. 71, No. 2, Spring 2023

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COMMAND is published twice a year by Officers' Christian Fellowship.

Nonprofit postage paid at Englewood, Colorado, and at additional mailing offices.

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Unless otherwise noted,

Scripture quotations are from The ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®).

ESV® Text Edition: 2016.

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**Cover image: Photo by SGT James Garvin, USA**

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**SCOTT  
FISHER**

Executive  
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## *ENGAGING IN THE BATTLE WITH TRUTH, LOVE AND GRACE*

Let's jump right in. I know pornography is not something that many believers like to discuss, but if we are going to effectively impact the military community, we have to be willing to authentically engage in the areas where the battle is raging.

The statistics couldn't be clearer on the overwhelming, devastating impact of pornography. Here are three from the Family Research Council as part of a study from November 2017:

- Pornography is a global \$97 billion annual industry.
- Porn websites have more unique visitors each month than Netflix, Amazon, and Twitter combined.
- 49% of rescued sex trafficking victims report that they were forced to participate in the production of pornographic material.

These data points alone underscore just how widespread such addictive behaviors are in our society, and these behaviors are not just a "guy's problem" either. Consider the data from this ongoing client survey since 2009 by Pure Desire Ministries:

- 68% of church-going men struggle with unwanted sexual behavior.
- 25-30% of church-going women struggle with sexual dependency issues.

Paul said, "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do" (Romans 7:15). We don't know specifically to which issues Paul was referring, but sadly too many believers could utter these same words regarding problematic sexual behaviors.

At a workshop in Pensacola, Fla., this past January, OCF partnered with Pure Desire Ministries to discuss sexual brokenness



and unwanted sexual behaviors and introduce solutions for healing and wholeness.

In addition to offering the above statistics, the leaders of that event, CAPT Brent and Nicole Breining, USN (Ret.), took it a step further, offering several case studies of military leaders who were very successful in their careers, but had their careers destroyed by problematic sexual behaviors that caught up with them.

Among these real-world examples were two command master chiefs who were charged with soliciting minors; a rear admiral and strike group commander who was relieved of command after being caught viewing porn on a DoD computer while underway; and a Navy contractor who pled guilty to providing bribes to Navy officials to include money, travel, and prostitutes.

If you asked these leaders whether they intended to destroy their careers when they woke up that day, I suspect they would probably say no. If you think you are “above” any of these sins, or perhaps sin in general, consider what the Bible has to say about that: “Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall” (1 Corinthians 10:12). Also, “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8).

Brent said, “[These things happen on] the subconscious level and over time it becomes habitual, and the behaviors become out of control. This doesn’t happen overnight. It’s conditioned over time and brings people to that place of thinking they could get away with it.”

In the face of what can sometimes appear to be overwhelming and insurmountable obstacles in the lives of so many, what can we do? Here are five considerations for you:

### **1. Realize we can find healing in authentic fellowship and confession**

**with one another.** “Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working” (James 5:16).


### **2. Embrace Biblical views on sexuality, and seek to restore, not reject, those affected by a sexual addiction.**

“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death” (Romans 8:1-2).

**3. Recognize the impact that sexual addictions can have on the individual, spouses, and families in the form of betrayal trauma.** “But each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death” (James 1:14-15).

**4. Rejoice that we can have hope and victory through our heavenly Father.** “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Romans 7:24-25).

**5. Reinforce the importance of Godly character among our military leaders.** “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things” (Philippians 4:8).

As soldiers together in a broken world, let’s authentically engage the sin in our own lives and the lives of those around us with truth, love and grace, remembering: “For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery” (Galatians 5:1). 







# THE EMPTY PROMISES OF PORNOGRAPHY

**“I do not understand what I do. For what I want  
to do I do not do, but what I hate I do”  
(Romans 7:15).**

If ever there were a verse to describe a person's struggle with a problematic sexual behavior, such as an addiction to pornography, this verse written by Paul would be it.

Such addictive behaviors promise joy and fulfillment with each hit of the neuro-cocktail they produce in the brain, but instead, the cravings end up rewiring one's brain to an extent that it may lead someone to engage in increasingly risky sexual behaviors to get that same high.

On the following pages, we're going to share two stories from OCF's Crosspoint podcast that are rooted in some way to the topic of problematic sexual behaviors.

And speaking of the podcast, we're starting this season with at least 6 episodes that focus on problematic sexual behaviors, pornography, betrayal trauma, and so forth.

It's a really heavy dose of a really heavy topic, but there's a lot to say about it. This is an issue that affects so many people, both in and outside the church, and these sorts of problematic behaviors have ended up destroying the careers of some successful military leaders.

If you haven't subscribed to the podcast, search for OCF Crosspoint on your favorite podcast app, or go to [ocfusa.org/subscribe](https://ocfusa.org/subscribe).

*—Josh Jackson, Director of Communications*

# HOW GOD HEALED A ‘PERFORMING CHRISTIAN’ FROM ABUSE AND TRAUMA

BY KAREN FLIEDNER, COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST

**C**arl Crabtree is a man on a journey—a faith journey riddled with shame, guilt, temptation, and lust.

Since 2015, when the former Navy commander’s road brought him to Connecticut, Crabtree and wife, Christy, have served as the OCF Field Staff representatives at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy. They have answered a particularly high calling to future military leaders.

However, just like Christian, the protagonist in the classic book *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, Crabtree’s journey has been the search for relief from the great burden (our sin and that of others), a sojourn along the road of sanctification from the City of Destruction (the world) to the Celestial City (heaven), and one rife with many pitfalls, dangers, and deceptions to wrestle with and overcome.

In his journey toward becoming a self-described “man earnestly desiring to serve the Lord,” Crabtree shared some of his personal struggles on an OCF Crosspoint podcast episode, and he said that the “trauma I’ve experienced in my life, how [it] affected me throughout my life, but also of how God is healing and restoring me.”

A foster-to-adopt kid whose divorced parents were each divorced in other marriages as well, Crabtree grew up in poverty—often cold, hungry, inadequately clothed. “There were a lot of bad people in my life, such as felons,” he said, adding that he was “bullied, [and] abused sexually, physically, and emotionally” and that he “witnessed traumatic



events, sexual assaults, injuries to children and abuse.”

“I had a gun [held] to my head several times,” he said. “Even my father threatened to shoot me.”

Despite his horrific life, Crabtree said that “my adoptive mother told me Jesus died for me, died for my sins, and I felt God’s call on my life at age 4. I was a Christian, but I had a lot of baggage. In those days, it was ‘Go forward. Keep moving forward,’ so that’s what I did.”

Pressing on, Crabtree zeroed in on the military life both “as an escape [and] a method to pay for college.”

“In the military, they love performers,” said Crabtree, who lists performance as one



of those coping mechanisms “we often come up with when the world fails us.” And in the military, Crabtree said, “We are all about being control freaks, so that worked perfectly with how I chose to cope with all my past issues.”

“I would just perform my way out of the situation and just control my situation so this would never happen again, by being good at taking care of life’s circumstances,” he said.

But he quickly found it didn’t work as envisioned. “I got into the military and experienced terrible injustice. I saw terrible things in four wars; as a junior officer I saw my commanding officer and executive officer doing things that would get them fired today,” Crabtree said.

“I was the black sheep in the naval aviation program,” he said. His evaluations as an officer reflected that as he was passed over twice for an O-4 promotion to lieutenant commander. “I was leading Bible studies, was really good at my job, but socially I just didn’t fit in.”

Crabtree worked on the side in children’s ministry or as a youth leader where he also experienced the pain of false accusations by other Christians, a “devastating” experience that took over a year to clear his name after being fired.

“When church people and Christians hurt you, it’s even worse than the world because you don’t expect it,” Crabtree shared. His reflex response? Continue as a performer—in all areas of his life. “Not only was I a performer in the military, but I was a performer as a Christian, a father, and a husband. I really wanted to control my life.”

As he was retiring from the military to go into ministry, Crabtree said, “God allowed the heat to intensify in my life,” a season that Crabtree considers as “the worst two years of my life, and the worst two years of my marriage.” His dad, stepdad, and mentor all died; a Christian boss broke levels of trust; and his two youngest kids were battling debilitating

health issues, their suffering something that Crabtree called “the worst thing you can experience in life.”

As he wrestled with thoughts of “God, why is this happening to me?” on the one hand, Crabtree realized he was also struggling with other thoughts, “Wow, now I am considering all those options that men do, that I used to look upon them as weak and ‘what are you thinking? Getting a divorce—what are you thinking? Having an affair—what are you thinking? Alcoholism? Drugs? Food? ... Porn?’”

As a sophomore in college in ROTC, and later as an officer with other Naval aviators, Crabtree shared that he struggled with pornography and lust.

“Porn is a stress reliever for many. It is just like a drug or sugar fix. Lust teaches the wrong way to have a healthy sex life. I am looking to the world to meet my need, trying to find hope in the world instead of in God,” he said. “When your wife catches you looking at porn, it is the same feeling as if you drove her down to a whore house and told her to work for the day and bring back the money. You must spend time picturing this, weighing out how you are crushing her, stomping on the woman you vowed to cherish till death do you part.”

Feeling “empathy for every one of those men” as he considered all the ways to cope with his pain, Crabtree found himself in brokenness, a humility that comes from being buried under your circumstances, realizing, “I can’t perform my way out of this.”

Rather, Crabtree said, “God was saying, ‘No, Carl, you just need to let it go.’ I didn’t know that not trying in my own strength was the answer.”

## Healing starts with your identity

Crabtree’s upward journey toward healing and restoration—which included the Lord redefining and bringing to life terms like

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Continued on next page

forgiveness, trust, obedience, and inadequacy—was in identifying with Christ, starting with His own suffering.

“Suffering is the only thing that the Bible says Jesus had to do to in order to trust and obey His Father,” Crabtree pointed out. “Hebrews 5:8 says that although He was the Son, He learned to trust and obey through what He suffered.”

“God uses suffering in our lives in order to heal us,” Crabtree said. “And suffering is what I needed to really trust God.”

The point of suffering, Crabtree said, is not being delivered from the fiery furnace of circumstances that he says we’re prone to wanting. Instead, “The point of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Daniel 3:16-18) is ‘we’re trusting God in this.’”

It was in Christ’s own sufferings where He learned obedience to the Father, said Crabtree. “In the desert, He focused on the Word—what were the promises? What did God say?” And in Gethsemane, Crabtree pointed out that the Savior “embraced who He was, embraced the Father, and let go of the world.”

It was an OCF member and Coast Guard officer who shared with Crabtree about his own personal battle with being “a performing Christian,” one who “had Ephesians 4-6 down but didn’t have Ephesians 1-3 down.”

“Ephesians 4-6 is all about the things you should do,” Crabtree said. “We’re military; we love doing things. Give me a bunch of things to do so I can excel. So I started studying Ephesians 1-3 about my identity in Christ—all the things that God says who I am. That is what I needed to focus on.”

Forgiveness was another area that Crabtree felt God emphasized as key to his

identity in Christ—and a key pathway to healing. Although intrigued by the definition of forgiveness he read in a book—“Accepting the consequences of someone else’s sin on your life”—Crabtree recoiled at first.

“I told God there’s no way that I am going to accept the consequences of what they did,” Crabtree recalls. “Are you crazy? I lived through it, and now you want me to accept it?” He felt God showed him 1 Peter 2:23 where, despite the insults and suffering, Christ did not retaliate, but rather “He entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly.”

“Jesus didn’t trust in the soldiers; He trusted in the Father as He accepted the consequences of their sin on His life,” Crabtree pointed out. “I had that with my head, but I did not have it with my heart.”

And it requires a posture of total surrender, he said. “I just ask, totally and sincerely, ‘whatever it takes.’ Whenever I get to that point, that’s when God says, ‘we can do something,’” Crabtree said. “Until then, it’s just me, just wishful thinking.”

One outcome that Crabtree felt has been achieved by his “chewing on my identity in Christ and all the things He had given” is being able to “deeply forgive” others, which has led to what Crabtree called a “60% healing” in his life.

## Sharing with the cadets

Another outcome is the reaction he gets and deep connection he develops with the cadets by being transparent with them while sharing his story and desiring to inspire them to respond to Christ’s higher calling to them in their own lives—to serve our nation in their upcoming military careers as effective, humble Christlike leaders.



## How God healed a ‘performing Christian’ from past trauma

Catch the full podcast interview with Carl Crabtree as he shares his experiences as a foster-to-adopt kid and onward (link is case sensitive): [bit.ly/crabtree7](https://bit.ly/crabtree7)



Crabtree shared some insight into the ministry at USCGA OCF: a typical week lineup includes men's and women's Bible studies, meetings, mentoring, apologetics, theology, and other fellowship events. Mondays are for the Crabtrees' sabbath rest, and Wednesdays are for their "date" lunch together.

Then there are weekends at Shepherd's Fold, the OCF ministry house located on sixteen wooded acres the Crabtrees call home. On any given weekend, a handful, to dozens, and upwards to over 150 cadets and others will gather to enjoy activities such as camping, splitting wood, cooking, and games, all while biblical, iron-sharpening-iron fellowship takes place. As Crabtree said, "The gospel is shared and the vision planted for them to minister to active-duty Coasties."

"I love talking about this," Crabtree said. "I believe in less than one minute you can instantly connect with people, and they feel you are safe and can talk to you. That's by being completely vulnerable, by being secure in your identity in Christ, and by being humble."

From that position of humility, of accepting of our standing before a righteous God, Crabtree "can be completely open and vulnerable" to the cadets, who respond. "They don't have to feel like it's a performance issue because they have to perform here at the academy or in the military, and they struggle with that."

His emphasis to the cadets is not on performance but rather on having faith, which is about trusting and obeying God.

"I want the cadets to get that. I want them to know they're not the hero of their story, but Jesus is. All they have to do is trust in Him, obey, and He will lift them up," he said.

"There are a lot who graduate who are really great at obeying, but they don't trust in the Coast Guard regulations or the leaders. Well, God wants us to trust fully in Him and then obey. And here's the thing—this is what sets me free. When I obey, the results aren't

up to me. I just obey. I don't have to sweat it," Crabtree said.


How does one battle failures, or when something triggers past memories or feelings, or if the enemy of our souls attacks to condemn us?

"As you go through the healing process—we're being redeemed our whole lives—some of it is 'I've been healed, it feels wonderful, it's so good.' To have that kind of peace is the best feeling on Earth. But in other areas, I have to receive grace. As Hebrews 4:16 says, we can receive grace to help us in our time of need, in the temptation itself," said Crabtree.

It's applicable, too, in Crabtree's desire to be a good husband. "When we make mistakes, when we sin, what do we tend to do? We put ourselves in the penalty box, but we also want to defend ourselves," he said. "And I find myself getting into an argument with my wife just because I don't receive God's grace and say, 'I'm wrong, I'm sorry.' That's hard to do, to receive grace that I wasn't a good husband. If I don't receive grace that I wasn't a good husband, then I go into all these coping mechanisms, which just make matters worse."

Crabtree said a pathway to victory is to recognize our standing before a holy God, of His preeminence and our lacking. To accept the unmerited gifts of grace and mercy. To be identified with Christ, both in His standing and suffering. To trust Him and obey.

Constantly on the look for "those nuggets that talk about my identity in Christ," Crabtree said, "it's not just unlimited forgiveness, unlimited love, or that I have unlimited acceptance. I'm complete in Christ, not lacking anything."

"Once I receive grace, I can freely give grace. That's why Jesus came, to die for your inadequacy; [He says] 'I delight in covering your inadequacy; I delight in covering your sin.'" 

# THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS: ‘CAN A CHRISTIAN HAVE AN ADDICTION?’

BY COURTNEY TAYLOR, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

*Editor’s Note: The following article was adapted from a conversation between OCF Director of Communications Josh Jackson and Dr. John Thorington, who was a guest on OCF’s Crosspoint podcast.*

“‘Then neither do I condemn you,’” Jesus declared. “‘Go now and leave your life of sin.’”

Jesus’ two short sentences found in John 8:11 provide the precedent as to how Jesus confronts our sin and set the standard for how we ought to confront our sin, too.

The human heart was designed to worship something, described as a “perpetual idol factory” by theologian John Calvin in *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. We who follow Christ know He must be the sole object of our worship, and He is the only one who can satisfy every desire (John 6:35). Ever since Genesis 3, however, humanity has sought to worship anything but Christ and replace Him with idols—or addictions—ranging from money to status to comfort and everything in between.

## The impact on the individual

“Is this a preoccupation?” “Is this taking a lot of your time, impacting your focus and concentration?” “Is there a behavior that is compulsive... and in the end it’s starting to mount up to having a lot of negative consequences in your life?” These are the questions licensed professional counselor Dr. John Thorington asks when helping

individuals determine if they are facing an addiction.

Thorington has spent decades working with men, women, and teens who have faced sexual addictions in particular, and he continues to do so from his practice in Huntsville, AL. While he has extensive background in confronting sexual addiction, pornography, and compulsive behaviors in particular, his assessment of the root of those things applies to individuals’ addiction in all forms—sin.

“[In sin,] we’re living in a way that’s contrary to the will of God for us,” Thorington said. “He wants so much for us not to be caught in a lifestyle that’s self-defeating and destructive, which is so characteristic of addiction.”

Thorington said addictions’ impact on the human brain cannot be ignored, citing Romans 12:2 that calls believers to be transformed by the renewing of our minds.

“That is sacred space that needs to be protected,” Thorington said. “One of the things we try to do is to help [those who are struggling] to become more grounded, strengthened, and aware of what it means to be a child of God and to know the love of God and how transformative that can be for them.”

Because of the shame that so often accompanies addiction, crises of faith often follow, prompting some believers to pose the question, “Can a Christian have an addiction?”

While some believers might assume a true follower of Christ cannot have an addiction



**“ABSOLUTELY [CHRISTIANS CAN HAVE AN ADDICTION], BUT WE DON’T WANT TO LEAVE THEM THERE EITHER.”**

**DR. JOHN THORINGTON**

because the Holy Spirit lives within them, Thorington says such an assumption leaves many questioning their own salvation. As is so often the case, a right view of God and what He has done for us is key to overcoming the crises of faith.

“God did justify us, salvation is a gift that’s freely given, and hopefully we received that with joy and thanksgiving, but the truth is we’re all in process,” Thorington said. “Absolutely [Christians can have an addiction], but we don’t want to leave them there either.”

With these crises of faith often come crises of identity, prompting the question, “Am I identified by my addiction?”

“Absolutely not,” Thorington said in response to that frequently asked question, discouraging the common practice for participants in an Alcoholics Anonymous group to introduce themselves solely by their first name and their identity as an alcoholic.

“What I would say is this: ‘My name is John, I’m a follower of Jesus.’ What identifies me is this: ‘Abba Father—I know who I belong to, and it’s to Him. He loves me, He has a purpose for my life, and He is God all the time,’” Thorington said. “I want [people] to have that kind of a saving relationship, to know who they are in relationship to Him.”

### **The reality in relationships**

When considering how an individual’s addiction alters relationships with others, Thorington mentioned the Bible’s example of David, remembering how he already

had several wives when he saw Bathsheba and chose to commit adultery with her and murder her husband (2 Samuel 11).

“[The Bible] is very clear that it had a huge impact on his family in some pretty painful ways,” Thorington said.

Just as relationships can be harmed as a result of addictions, as in the case of David and his family, they can also be strengthened in the recovery process, which Thorington said begins with confession as commanded in James 5:16.

“James says it very clearly: ‘Confess your sins to one another in order that you may be healed,’ but be careful,” Thorington said. “You don’t want to confess to just anyone. Choose people that you know are trustworthy, they care about your development, they love the Lord—those are safe people.”

Thorington also encouraged developing a planned disclosure, which involves getting help before confessing to friends and family in order to avoid the additional pain that could come from a rushed confession.

“If you get another third-party person, and they’re a trained counselor who knows how to moderate that [disclosure], it could be a redemptive thing at the end,” he said.

Once that confession has taken place and individuals are on the road to recovery from addiction, Thorington emphasized the importance of community.

“We’ve got to connect ourselves to

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**Continued on next page**

## Additional resources

For further reading, the following list includes a variety of resources, some of which address addiction broadly while others address sexual addiction specifically:

► *Rethinking Sexuality* by Julie Slattery

► *Pure Teens: Honoring God, Relationships, and Sex* by Dr. John Thorington

► *Pure Teens: Free to Love* by Dr. John Thorington

community, and we can't do this alone," Thorington said. "Most of the guys I work with tell me they don't even have one close friend, or maybe they have an online friend but not a real person that loves them unconditionally."

Thorington shared that he has personally benefited from regular times to connect over the years with a few Christian brothers, who can hold him accountable and grow friendships. He encouraged a "paradigm shift" away from having these friendships for the sake of having them.

"We need to internalize the value, the significance of these things, and enjoy them as the gift that they are from God," Thorington said. "These relationships are life-giving, and it's a lot better to face the challenges of life being supported by other people."

## The choice of the church

Speaking from 30 years as a church pastor, Thorington said the church, whether through fearful silence or legalistic condemnation,

has handled addiction wrongly and needs to seek forgiveness corporately.

"We've been silent, and that silence, I believe, is equated to spiritual abuse," Thorington said.

"When we don't speak on this issue, we are letting the culture take control."

When discerning how the church ought to address addiction, Thorington pointed to Jesus' words in Luke 4.

"We're called to be a place where God's healing and restoration is being affirmed," Thorington said. "Even Jesus, when He went to his hometown synagogue, said that He came to bring release for the captives and to bring healing to the brokenhearted."

The silence or condemnation could very well factor to the rate at which people are leaving the church, Thorington said, having heard of many cases in which people felt they could not bring up addiction in the church.

By way of further case study, Thorington also looked to John 8, where the Pharisees seek to stone the woman caught in adultery and test Jesus in the process. As Jesus instructs those without sin to cast the first stone, the woman's accusers trickle away.

"He said, 'I don't condemn you either,' so in other words, He offers her grace," Thorington said. "Then the second thing He said is go and sin no more, so He gives her grace, and He then speaks to her the truth."

Whether facing addiction individually, in relationships, or in the church, Thorington said trust in God is paramount.

"Be encouraged in knowing this—God is good, and He's not going to let us down," Thorington said. "If we put our faith and our trust in Him, He will help us as we fight this battle." 🙏



## Dr. John Thorington: Theological implications of addiction

Catch the full interview on the OCF Crosspoint podcast and discover 6 areas he explores in the life of the addict (link is case sensitive): [bit.ly/drjohn23](https://bit.ly/drjohn23)



## 7 ways to improve your brain power in recovery

**O**ur brains control everything we do. The road to recovery from addiction starts with making your brain the best it can be. By starting here, it makes it much easier for you to gain control of your life. Dr. Thorington passed on these seven ways you can improve your brain function, pulled from *Unchain Your Brain* by Daniel Amen and David Smith:

**1. Appreciate Your Brain.** What would you do without it? Just doing regular exercise can improve your mood. Plus, you may find it reduces the cravings for acting out.

**2. Feed Your Brain to Prevent Relapse.** The foods you eat can either help your brain and keep you on track with your recovery or hurt your brain and set you up for relapse. If you eat only junk food, it won't help your sexual cravings go away.

**3. Rest Your Brain.** Are you getting enough sleep? Your brain doesn't work as well when you get less than six hours of sleep a night. Research also shows that when you don't get enough sleep, you are more prone to addictive behavior.

**4. Work Your Brain.** The brain is like the human body. The more you work it, the healthier it gets. Learning new things such as taking music lessons, or taking a foreign language class makes new connections

in the brain, making you more aware and your brain more capable. You are never too old to learn more!

**5. Exercise Your Body for Your Brain.**

Exercise can activate the same pathways in the brain as morphine and increases the release of endorphins, providing a temporary mood boost. There's considerable scientific evidence proving that exercise encourages the growth of new brain cells, improves cognitive ability, alleviates depression and anxiety, and reduces ADD symptoms.

**6. De-stress Your Brain.** Did you know that stress is one of the most common causes of relapse? Traffic jams, cramming for a big test, or arguing with a best friend can be all it takes to trigger a relapse. Stress will happen no matter what. Knowing how to handle stress in your life is critical if you want a healthy recovery.

**7. Kill the ANTs That Infest Your Brain.**

ANTs stand for *automatic negative thoughts*, the thoughts that just pop into your mind and wreck your day. You have to change your thinking in order to change your behavior. You must challenge and change the lies that you tell yourself, like "I can't overcome this struggle" or "I will never be happy."



# Your Legacy Matters

Did you know that over the next 30 years, Americans are expected to transfer over \$36 trillion in assets? And yet, according to a recent study, only 32% of Americans have current estate documents.



*DVIDS photo*

## OUR PLANNED GIVING WEBSITE CAN HELP YOU

The topic of estate planning can sound daunting, but it is so important. Through a partnership with our friends at The Giving Crowd, we can provide you a simple, easy-to-use, and confidential tool that will help you initiate first steps on what to think through and then organize into a summary that you can share with our planned giving team and/or your professional advisor.



Scan the QR code with your mobile device  
or visit [ocfusa.mylegachyhq.com](https://ocfusa.mylegachyhq.com) now.

Need help? Call 719-233-6406  
or email [OCFPlannedGiving@ocfusa.org](mailto:OCFPlannedGiving@ocfusa.org).



*Photo by Courtney Taylor*



*Hampton Roads Region OCF photo*

### ▲ Hampton Roads Region OCF

LTJG Sam Perry, USN: "Four members of our two Bible studies were deployed on the USNS Comfort. Several of us went to witness their return and welcome them back as the ship docked. As the ship was pulling in, a message appeared in our group chat from another OCF member who was deployed. It was a picture of the Comfort from afar, with his caption saying, 'I'm pulling in today, too!' What a blessing. We had no idea when he'd be back! Just a few minutes later, one of the girls waiting to welcome the Comfort back got a phone call from her husband, who was deployed on a submarine and the sub just docked at pier 3; we were just two away at pier 1!"

### ▲ Home Office moving:

After much prayer and deliberation by OCF directors and the Council, the OCF Home Office has moved from its longtime Englewood location to Colorado Springs. While it will be hard to leave a place we've occupied since 1984, we're moving to the heart of one of the nation's most concentrated and diverse military communities, allowing us the potential to expand from being solely a home office supporting the field to a ministry hub for operations. As of 1 June, you can find us at our new office space in the David C Cook Building:

**4050 Lee Vance Drive,  
Suite 330  
Colorado Springs, CO 80918**

Our 1-800 number will no longer be active, but you can still reach us by calling 303-761-1984.





Photo by Chet Arnold

### ▲ OCF in Pensacola

Forty OCFers and friends gathered in Pensacola at the end of January for a one-day conference on sexual brokenness and learning to enjoy sex the way God intended. The day consisted of speaker sessions with CAPT Brent & Nicole Breining, USN (Ret.), who serve on staff with Pure Desire Ministries and volunteer as OCF Local Leaders in Jacksonville, FL, a panel discussion, and break-out groups.

“Participants expressed their gratitude for this conference and how it addressed a problem that pervades not just our society but the church as well,” said OCF Southeast Coastal Region Coordinator Chet Arnold, who coordinated the event.

The Breinings are guests in several episodes of OCF’s Crosspoint podcast: [ocfusa.org/subscribe](https://ocfusa.org/subscribe).



Photo by Courtney Taylor

### ▲ OCF Local Leader Conference:

At the end of March, local leaders, area coordinators, and others participated in the annual OCF Local Leader Conference. This conference continues to be an important weekend of encouraging one another, sharing lessons learned, and developing our vision for military ministry. The 2023 version of this event included strong turnout at both conference centers and virtual sites such as Pensacola, with plenary sessions being broadcast to members around the world.





*White Sulphur Springs photo*



*USMA OCF photo*

### Regional ROTC Retreats

▲ **Eastern ROTC, OCF Local Leaders Greg & Lucy Lane:** “The Eastern ROTC Retreat at White Sulphur Springs saw the LORD at work in the presentations by the speaker, LCDR Barrett Craig, CHC, USN, the junior officer panel, breakout groups, Cedarville Army ROTC’s praise team’s music, and seminars on various topics. Especially pertinent was Chaplain Craig’s message of finding our identity in Jesus Christ with Him as Lord and Savior and us as His followers.”

◀ **NEAR-R, USMA OCF Field Staff Reps Steve & Angela Kreh:** “Great weekend in New Hampshire at the Northeast Academies and ROTC Retreat! Lots of fellowship (maybe some was slightly competitive), laughter, and dancing (this is becoming the regular program piece of OCF retreats!). Our cadets loved being with Norwich, RPI, UNH, and Sienna cadets!”





*Photo by Will Roslansky*

### Regional ROTC Retreats

▲ **Midwest ROTC, Valor staffer Bob Holthouse:** “The Midwest ROTC Retreat was totally orchestrated by God. God did some amazing work in many of [the 82 students’] lives as these cadets and midshipmen had lots of opportunities to interact with the staff of senior officers. It is exciting to know there are some better equipped saints who will be leading in our military in the near future.”



*Photo by Tom Falconer*

#### **Are you following @OCFUSA on social media?**

Follow us on Facebook and Instagram, tag us, and chat with us about how ministry is going in your area.

▲ **Rocky Mountain ROTC, OCF Area Coordinator Tom Falconer:** “[Lt Col Kate Toms, USAF] addressed some of the most challenging questions of our faith from a philosophical perspective but on the foundation of Jesus. A highlight of the fun free time we had was the polar plunge numerous participants took in the 40-degree ponds.”





Fan the flame of fellowship and join us at WSS this summer for a vacation with a purpose! Join us for Christian fellowship with other military families, great Biblical teaching, loads of fun, and memories that will last a lifetime.

Visit [whitesulphursprings.org/](http://whitesulphursprings.org/) to learn about and register for any of our summer programs:

**Summer R&R** is a great way to get away from it all and be refreshed, encouraged, and equipped through a variety of speaker sessions and activities. Join us for one of eight different Summer R&R weeks that run from 9 June-4 August.

**Allegheny Outback!** is our high school adventure camp. Your high schoolers will love the new friends they'll make, the high adventure activities, and the time digging into God's Word together with their counselors and other campers. AO! runs Saturday-Sunday from 10 June-4 August.

**Camp Caleb** is our summer camp program for rising 3rd through 8th graders. We keep the camper-counselor ration small so that kids not only have fun but receive great Biblical teaching and encouragement throughout the week of activities and adventure. Camp Caleb runs Sunday-Friday from 11 June-4 August.



## THIS SUMMER ONLY

Special this summer is the **Harrison House Rededication Ceremony**, scheduled for the weekend of 29-30 July. Join us at WSS to celebrate God's faithfulness and provision as we reopen the old hotel and introduce it to a new generation of OCF families!

4500 Milligans Cove Road, Manns Choice, PA 15550  
814-623-5583 // [wssoffice@ocfusa.org](mailto:wssoffice@ocfusa.org) // [whitesulphursprings.org](http://whitesulphursprings.org)





## LIEUTENANT JUNIOR GRADE

### CARA EDWARDS

United States Navy

#### **Came to OCF:**

I knew I wanted to get involved in a Christian group while at the Naval Academy, and there were a lot to choose between. But an ice cream social the summer before my freshman year introduced me to OCF, and I knew I wanted to go back once the school year started.

#### **Why OCF:**

From the first meeting I had an overwhelming feeling that OCF was family. The other midshipmen were and always have been so loving, accepting and fun. And since graduation, no matter the underway schedule or duty stations, OCF has remained a family of like-minded officers that I treasure for their impact on my life, spiritually and otherwise.

#### **Why a military life:**

I love the challenge and how no two days are ever the same. Leading sailors and driving ships is a dream come true.

#### **What's on your bucket list:**

Visit every national park.

#### **Tunes you're listening to:**

Anything by Jonathan McReynolds or John-nyswim.

#### **Best advice given you:**

Always put your people before the paperwork.

#### **What are you hoping for in your OCF Council experience:**

To learn more about how the organization works and serve God in new ways.

#### **The ah-ha moment of your identity in Christ:**

Deployment, believe it or not. It can be a spiritually difficult time, but at the same time it helped me realize how personal and real my relationship with Christ is, even through it all.

#### **Life Bible verse:**

"For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed," says the Lord, who has compassion on you" (Isaiah 54:10, ESV).



# Are you deploying?

Please let us know of your upcoming deployment by filling out our new online form so that we can pray for you and your family. Recognizing that OPSEC is of the utmost importance, we will not publish or otherwise release the information beyond OCF members.

**LET US KNOW YOU ARE DEPLOYING:** [ocfusa.org/deployment](https://ocfusa.org/deployment)

