

EMB Podcast Episode 3

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

workshop, pornographic magazine, story, work, people, jj, podcast, behavior, facilitator, doug, furniture store, life, dad, fact, felt, talk, engage, counseling, small group, listened

Doug Barnes 0:01

All right. Welcome to the every man's battle podcast. You're in for a treat today. My name is Doug Barnes. I've been working with every man's battle for quite a while. Today we're going to hear all things JJ West. If you're not familiar with JJ, he will tell you his story in depth, but he is the main speaker, one of the main speakers for Every Man's Battle. And he speaks at our Intimacy in Marriage Workshop. And you'll hear him on the New Life Live radio program as well. So we're going to hear a lot about his story today.

JJ West 0:43

So glad to be here.

Doug Barnes 0:57

Good. Good. I can't wait until we can get all things JJ West. I'm looking forward to that. So yeah, you are a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, have been since 2001.

Two kids living in Florida. Happy life. And I know that we are looking forward to hearing all about your story. So when we come back, we're gonna take a short break. And when we come back, we will dive into how did you land here with us? And where are we going to go with our podcast? So awesome. Stay tuned.

All right. Welcome back to the every man's battle podcast. We're in for a real treat. today. We're talking with JJ West. From every man's battle, he's the main speaker. And he also speaks at some of our other Okay, I'm gonna start over. Sorry. Okay. Stop. One more time. Okay. I remember ours listened to the album, everyone. We just want to get going here. So alright, 321 go.

Welcome back to the Every Man's Battle Podcast. My name is Doug Barnes. And we are in for a treat today. Because we are listening at a deeper level to all things JJ West. And so

Well, before we get there, tell us a little bit about your story. How did you get to this place of your own integrity drive?

JJ West 3:01

Oh, man, yeah, that's a that's a, that's a big story. So I, I was exposed to pornography at about five or six years old. Those of you

who've been to the workshop, know my story well, but for those of you in the audience who have not been to the workshop, you don't know that I grew up in the home of a, what I would call a full blown sex addict. My dad had every pornographic magazine, at least one issue of every pornographic magazine that was in print in the 70s hidden somewhere in the house, or the this shed or the workshop or the bathroom or whatever, or the store, the furniture store that my parents owned, and had a subscription to a couple of them. And so I was bringing it in the mail. One day, like I said, about five, six years old, and the the, the pornographic magazines that would come in the mail at that time came in these, these brown paper wrappers that were sealed on the long end, but open on the short end. And I honestly don't remember if I if I slid the magazine out myself, or if it just fell out as I was bringing in the mail. But what I do remember is the image it fell open to. I mean, this was now 47 years ago.

And that image is seared in my brain. Like I remember the image it fell open to it because it was the first time I had seen an image of a naked woman I'd never experienced that before. And and right away. Boy, there was something I was drawn to like I felt this like electricity shoot through my body. But I also noticed something else. And I couldn't have put words to it at the time that at that age, but I I had this idea that if somebody saw me looking at that image that I would be in trouble, and I needed to put it away, so I quickly put the magazine away. So now I understand that that shame at the time, I didn't know what that was, but I put it away. And it wasn't long before I realized, okay, these magazines keep showing up at the house, they must be somewhere because I never see them leave. So they've got to be somewhere. And so I found all of these stashes that my dad had, and the bedside table and in the box under the bed and the shed, and you know, every everywhere, right, and as, as a elementary school student, I would get a chance every once in a while to peruse those magazines, but not very often, and not for very long at you know, at any given time. But by the time I was in middle school, I had a lot more freedom. I was, I was I was also for those of you who haven't listened to to Doug's podcast, where we, where we dive into all things, Doug, you'll notice the similarities in our stories, I was also the youngest by birth. And I was I was, quote, unquote, the good kid, I, you know, I follow the rules, and I got good grades, and I was respectful and all of that. But what really was happening, I wasn't really the good kid, I was just, I was learning from my older siblings, I saw how they would get in trouble. And I learned to be sneakier than them. I learned to be craftier than them. But yeah, but not better. I wasn't, I wasn't more well behaved. I was just good. I was better at hiding my stuff. So by the time I was in middle school, I had a lot more freedom. And so I had convinced my parents to let me instead of going to the furniture store to work after, after school, if I got good enough grades, I got paid, but paid for A's, right. And so if I went home after school, and did my homework and studied, then I could, I could not go to the store and work. And so, of course, I

took up, you know, took that option, right? And I would come home from middle school. And I would spend, you know, an hour or two, looking at pornography before the rest of the family got home. And so, but what started off early on, as you know, looking at it from time to time, for a little bit of time, by the time I was in middle school, I was looking at it almost every single day. And I was looking at it for hours on end. It's I was I was addicted at that point, right. And then, and then as well, my my addiction took another another turn or another added layer, in that I began to engage in what's called voyeurism, which for those of you who don't necessarily know the definition of that word, it's it's anytime you are engaged in watching other people undress or engage in some sort of sexual activity, usually, they don't know that you're there. It's kind of the classic peeping Tom. By the time I was in middle school, I was already engaged in that behavior. And, and so both of those things were happening. And I was growing up in a home where not only was my dad, a sex addict by all, you know, definition of the of the term of the word. But I was also growing up in a home where we just didn't talk that much. We just didn't, we didn't talk about important things. I mean, we all got along, we, you know, I fully believe we loved each other, cared about each other, but we didn't, we didn't take the time to listen and ask important questions and dig in. And so I really didn't know who to talk to in my family, like, you know, again, like Doug, I never got the the sex talk. I never got the birds and the bees talk. They only literally the only conversation that I remember was, again, sometime maybe 10 12 years old. There was some

conversation happening with the adults at the furniture store about the fact that they were going to have condom commercials on TV and how this was just crazy. And so I pipe up and say what's a condom and you know, silence, right? Like there's no it's just crickets in the background. Right? And and so no one says anything but later that day, my dad pulls me aside in the warehouse and begins to describe to me what a condom is. And I think the whole conversation lasted maybe two or three minutes tops that probably not even that long was probably like 30 seconds. But you know, it was like it felt like four hours and as he's describing and and it was just so uncomfortable. Right like the whole that whole thing, even though it lasted just a couple of minutes was so uncomfortable. And that was it. That was the only Converse sation we ever had about about sex, about sexuality, other than as we would drive around if my dad and I were driving around, like making deliveries or something, or if like we were in the mall. And maybe mom and my sisters were in a store, and my dad and I were waiting out front or something. He would regularly point out women to ogle. Right? He would say, Oh, check her out three o'clock. Check her out six o'clock. Wow, she's really pretty. Oh, wow. She's, she's attractive. So that was it. That was my, that was the extent of my conversations with my family. So So I was really left to figure out. What does it mean to be a man? What is this whole sex thing all about? Had to figure all that out on my own. And my only teachers were, you

know, the pages of these pornographic magazines. And then what I would learn from TV shows and movies. So, so I was pretty messed up. Pretty, I had a pretty skewed view of what it meant to be a guy what it meant to be a man, and what sexuality was all about. It was all very selfish, self focused. It never, it never even occurred to me to think about how my behavior might be impacting the the girls around me, never even never even occurred to me. In fact, to that point, I remember when I was in high school, I had a subscription to Sports Illustrated. And many of you probably know that once a year, Sports Illustrated would have the swimsuit issue.

Doug Barnes 11:38
Swimsuit issue, Yeah.

JJ West 11:39
Swimsuit issue. And so I had taken all of the pictures from that year Swimsuit issue, and put them up on my my bedroom wall. And my mom came in one day, and she said, Hey, you might want to think about having these on your wall. If, if a girl came over how she might feel if you had these up on your wall. I'm blown away.

Doug Barnes 12:05
Ouch!

JJ West 12:06
Oh, I didn't think about that. I'd been had never even considered how it might impact other people. And so the next time she came in, she's like, Oh, you took all the pictures down? No, I just put them on the closet. I just I just put them all on. Like cuz she went to put something away in the closet. She opened up. She's like, Oh, here's where they all are. You know, but you know, she at least had she that question at least started me considering the fact that I lived in a world with other people. And they had their own feelings, and they had their own desires, and they had their own goals. It wasn't just about me.

Doug Barnes 12:44
Wow. All right, we need to take a little break here. So put your finger right there. We're going to take just a short break. And we're going to come back and we're going to continue this story. This is this is the Every Man's Battle Podcast. I'm Doug Barnes. He is JJ West and we will be right back.

Welcome back to the Every Man's Battle Podcast. My name is Doug Barnes. And today we are hearing so much about everything we need to know at least to start with about JJ West. He's the main speaker at every man's battle. And we have just been listening to a lot of the background of how he formulated his belief about women and about acting out. I want to I want to switch gears a little bit to ask this question. How how did that background do you think how did that affect

you becoming a therapist? As you as you continue to, to grow? How do you think that affected that?

JJ West 14:01

Well, I think because I carried so much shame about my sexual acting out behavior. I mean, I felt like a monster especially with the voyeurism. The pornography bothered me It certainly wasn't something I would want to advertise or have known. But it wasn't... it really was the voyeurism that that I carried the most shame about. Then I just felt I felt so broken I felt so so dirty so you know unclean right, the the leper, right like, you know, if anyone knew this about me, they would they would reject me they would run away and so I carried around all this this shame felt so awful about myself and, and everything that I was trying to do to correct my behavior wasn't working. And, and so though, when I was in after, after, after I'd gotten through college, and I, pardon me, after I'd gotten through college, and gone to grad school, and now I was working professionally as a, as a professional Christian, by the way, in full time ministry, you know, and still struggling, I said, you know, I gotta do something different. So I started seeing a therapist, and talking about this issue. And, and that opened my eyes to the fact that I could, I could experience healing, right, it, it started me on a journey of looking at not just the behavior, but the why behind the behavior. What are some of the wounds that are there that I'm, you know, we talked about at the workshop, we keep trying to meet legitimate needs in illegitimate ways outside of God's will and design. I was unaware of the legitimate needs, I was only aware of the illegitimate ways that I was trying to meet those needs, the behavior, but I had no, I'd never really had investigated what were the legitimate needs behind it. And counseling allowed me to do that. And so once I'd had that experience as a recipient, it was, it wasn't long after that, before I realized, man, I really want to do this professionally. And so at the time, as well, when I was working as a campus minister, one of the things that it was a group called InterVarsity, Christian Fellowship, I worked with them for nine years, eight years paid one year of volunteer and one of the things they do after your first four years is they have this big kind of survey interview process where they they ask a bunch of people in your world to fill out these surveys, these these questionnaires. And, and the net result of all of that was one of the strengths of my of my time in ministry was the way that I offered counseling the way that I counseled others. And it was like, oh, okay, so this is legit, this isn't just oh, this was great for me, I would love to be able to do this. Like I have some some skills and abilities and knowledge in this area. And so that's when I decided to go back to school, get a degree in marriage and family therapy. And, and then shortly thereafter, once I once I got my degree, I worked in a couple other kind of areas of counseling, doing in home therapy for the therapeutic foster care system, did a very short stint in a in house treatment facility for teenagers dealing with drug and alcohol stuff. But it wasn't very long into private practice before I started working

with guys struggling with sexual integrity. And then, very shortly thereafter, got introduced to the Every Man's Battle Workshop. 2009 was my very first workshop as a small group facilitator. I'd never I'd never been to the workshop before. I really hadn't heard about it. But I, you know, got on the New Life Counselor Network, and got on the list of yes, I'd be willing to facilitate small groups. And so 2009 in Atlanta, got to facilitate my first group, I got to have my first experience of the workshop. And Doug, I mean, I was blown away. I was just blown away by the the intensity of the work that was done at the workshop, seeing, you know, something that in our private practice might take months to get guys to, they were, they were doing that in a weekend. And I mean, I mean, literally, I'm in like tears as I'm, as I'm going through the workshop as a facilitator. I'm like, I'm crying. I'm ripped apart, like, this is amazing. And so that started the journey where I was a facilitator for, gosh, about a decade, about a decade. And then in 2000 2002, I got the call from Larry Sonnenburg the time president of of new life, saying, Hey, Jason, who was the facilitator at the time, has decided to retire. And he he suggested that you take over and I was shocked by that call. I mean, it was the week before Thanksgiving. And I was like, Larr, are you sure you have the right number? Like I don't, I think we have a bad connection here. Like this is this is kind of crazy. But but something hit me knew that it was right. Something in me knew that. Even though it was a daunting task to step into that role, because as you know, Jason had done it so well, for so long. It was very daunting to step into that role. But I knew there was something. There was something in the inva... the invitation there was something in me that I think God was God was saying, this is this is from me, this is, this is an invitation from me, and I want you to step into it.

Doug Barnes 20:18

All right, that's really awesome. So JJ, what was it, like stepping into that role for you as the one of the main speakers for every man's battle? Walk us through that.

JJ West 20:29

It was it was scary. It was daunting. It was nerve racking and a lot of ways, not for maybe the reasons that some people might find or might think, because, quite frankly, the, the upfront role wasn't the part that scared me. I've been doing theater since like, the sixth grade. So I wasn't, I wasn't, I just I don't get like stage fright. Whenever I'm teaching or speaking, that just doesn't happen. I don't experience it there. I do experience it if I ever had to sing in front of people, but that's a different story. So if I have to, if I have to speak or teach it, that doesn't bother me. So it wasn't that part. It was it was two things. One was the fact that what I had watched Jason do for a decade, is the way that he would manage the room the way that he would facilitate the whole, the whole crowd, right? The whole audience, which is different than facilitating a small group, right? I facilitated small groups. But I'd never had to facilitate a group that

size on this particular topic. And so I wasn't sure how I would do that. That was part of it. When I have talked with Jason about that before I, you know, agreed. And after I agreed, I also talked to him and said, Okay, give me give me a crash course, how do I do this? Right. But the the thing that probably, that I said two things was really three things, because the second thing is twofold. One of the things that that was the most challenging was the fact that now my story, and really our story. So I really, you know, had to get buy in from my wife. And she was she was really on board from the beginning. But, but our story was going to be available to a much larger audience than before, right? I'd shared my story in a lot of different capacities in kind of small group settings, and one on one and various places like that, but but not at this level. And certainly not at the level where it would might be recorded. And people would share it with other people, right, like that was that was gonna be different. So So and now it's going to be, you know, on a podcast, right? So, you know, that was a bit daunting. But there was also this other piece where it was like, I was being handed a child, who had been raised to about 17, you know, maybe had one more year of high school left. And then it was gonna go to college. And it was like, hey, you know, you're gonna adopt this child now. And they're great. Like, they get straight A's, and they're, they're wonderful and servant hearted, and, you know, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. Don't screw them up. I've been handed this workshop that is so good. And I've seen the I've seen the fruit of it for for a decade. Now. I'm being handed this and I'm feeling like, oh my gosh, please, please, please, God, don't let me screw this up. So that was it was daunting in that way for sure. But but I'll say this. Alright, so that's kind of the negative side of it. The positive side of it is that oh my gosh, it's been so rewarding. It's just been so rewarding. To be able to I mean, I tell I tell people this all the time. I have the privilege of sitting on the front row, like 50 yard line, and watching God work miracles.

Doug Barnes 24:27
Yeah, yeah.

JJ West 24:29
And I get paid to do that. Are you kidding me? I mean, that's a good gig, right? Yeah, yeah. Yeah. So I'm, I'm so honored and just privileged to be in the role that I am. I love teaching. I have always I think, certainly in my adult life, I've always loved teaching. I love being able to explain things to people in a way that allows the light bulb to go on, or challenges them to... To look at something in a different way, I try to be engaging. And that's it. That's really fun work for me.

Doug Barnes 25:09
Yes. And that comes through at the workshop, too. I've witnessed that firsthand. And so that really comes through and that that's really, it's really fun to watch. Because it shows that that love of teaching

and really engagement, the engagement piece with with the guys at the workshop that really shows up. So that's, that's true. That's awesome. That yeah, that really comes through. Alright, so before we wrap things up here, what's been the best part about the work that you that you do? What's been the best part for you that you could if you if you had to name one thing? What would that be?

JJ West 25:46

Yeah, yeah. You know, I would say the best part of the work is the astounding fact that God could take this mess of my life. The very things that I thought were so shameful that they should stay hidden for ever. No one should ever know about this, that God could take that stuff and use it to help other people.

I mean, I'm blown away by that. Yeah. I mean, how good is God that he can take?

You know, forgive my language crap, right, that crap that I that I've done, the horrible ways that I've lived, the harm that I've done to myself the harm that I've done to others, that he could take that and use it to bring about good and healing in other people's lives and their journeys is amazing to me. And that's, yeah, that's the best thing.

Doug Barnes 26:54

Wow. Yeah, that I resonate with that, too. That's, that's, that's a great description. That is a great description. All right. Well, we need to wrap this up for today. JJ, thank you for an in depth look. And we both know, there's there's way more to the story. And there's way more chapters to be written. You know, God is going to write a whole lot more for JJ West and the Every Man's Battle Workshop, the Intimacy in Marriage, the podcast. So if, if you're hearing this, you know that there are other workshops that Every Man's... that New Life has, we're going to invite you to go to the website, newlife.com. Or you could call the office at 1-800-639-5433 that's 1-800-New-Life. And get some more information about anything that you've heard today as far as the workshop. And as far as for JJ story, we're going to ask you to stay tuned for more, because more will be revealed. More, he'll talk way more about his journey and his life as we get into these podcasts. So I hope that you have enjoyed this. JJ, thank you so much for giving us a tour of JJ Westville and... we hope for more.

JJ West 28:19

Thanks as well. Thanks as well for just the way that you have helped unpack the story today. Really have enjoyed it.

Doug Barnes 28:29

Awesome. Awesome. All right. So we will have more podcasts coming so for today. We will say goodbye but stay tuned for more.

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