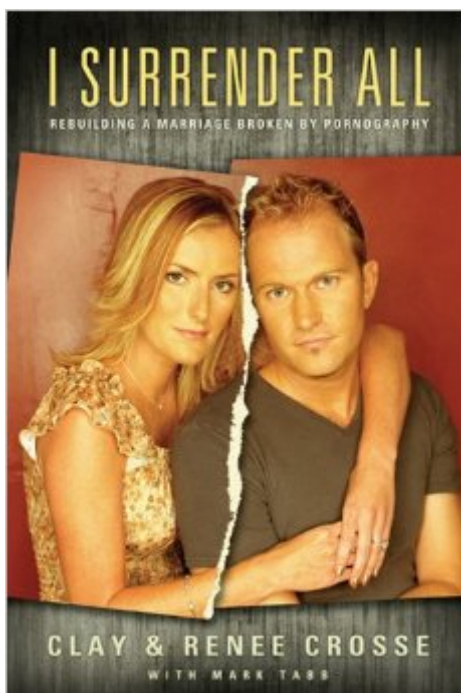


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# I Surrender All: Rebuilding A Marriage Broken By Pornography



## Synopsis

Dove Award-winning artist Clay Crosse and his wife, Renee, share their personal story of his struggle with pornography and how they rebuilt their marriage.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

When Clay Crosse married his high school sweetheart in 1990 he wore a white tuxedo symbolizing the fact that he and Renee (in her white gown) had remained virgins until marriage. "We saw this as a way of glorifying God in our wedding ceremony and telling other young couples that it is possible to wait for sex until marriage. As I watched my bride coming down the aisle toward me, I realized God had given me a great blessing in her. In that moment I knew more than ever before that I wanted our lives to be different. I wanted us to stand out from the world and shine for God. Unfortunately, eight years would pass before I would begin to do the work to make this desire a reality." In those eight years Clay Crosse became Clay Crosse: Christian Star. His first single, "I Surrender All," climbed to the top of the charts and the Gospel Music Association named him New Artist of the Year in 1995. His first four albums went on to produce eight #1 singles. But the white suit came back to haunt Clay. Even though he and Renee had remained virgins, Clay hadn't remained pure. He'd become dependant on pornography to sate his sexual desires until he was married. As his career took off, with accolades and money flowing freely, he become increasingly self-centered and his shallow faith couldn't support the weight of his success. He and Renee gradually loosened their standards --- using coarse language, laughing at crude jokes, and viewing

movies regardless of sexually explicit content. He was able to justify crossing back into porn use because it didn't feel like that much of a stretch from what he viewed in mainstream media on a regular basis. "When I watched a mainstream movie that contained graphic sexual content and nudity, something stirred inside of me. The old feelings I experienced when I watched pornography before I was married came back. I like them, and I wanted more. As I said a moment ago, the focus of my life increasingly was me and what would make me happy. Pornography fed this hunger, and I knew when I could find it," he writes. That seemingly benign move started a spiral into lust that, two years later, left Clay perched on the edge of an affair. Thankfully, the Lord got Clay's attention and he started to do the difficult work of reorienting his life on God and others rather than himself. It's that difficult work that fills the chapters of *I SURRENDER ALL*, the book Clay and Renee Crosse have written together about his struggles with pornography and lust, and her struggles to forgive and trust him again. The fact that this issue came to a head for them several years ago, in 1998, gives their advice weight. They've been in the marital trenches and have just enough distance from the dark days to offer light, but are close enough to still have compassion and a sense of urgency about the issue. The couple offers a lot of practical tips for avoiding temptation and supporting a weak spouse. The Crossees also advocate male headship in the household, which some will have theological qualms with. But they and readers can agree that their most important move was to reaffirm their commitment to Christ and to rely on his strength to keep the marriage together when neither of them was able or willing to based on their own power. Even though Clay and Renee's marriage faced unique opportunities to slide into danger because of his ego-driven profession, it's clear that the temptations Clay faced and the emotions Renee felt are universal. Anyone --- male or female, married or single --- who is struggling through issues stemming from pornography will find valuable information, understanding, and exhortation in *I SURRENDER ALL*. --- Reviewed by Lisa Ann Cockrel

This book has a lot of value to offer, but it's not about sex addiction. There's a difference between desensitization and sex addiction, and this book addresses desensitization. True addiction involves a cycle that includes elements of compulsion, detachment, acting out, and shame. That is not remotely what Crosse describes. Instead, he writes about desensitization: how the use of pornography can desensitize a person to sex in such a way that all of the emphasis is placed on lust/the physical while the emotional experience is increasingly overshadowed, and how that use desensitizes a person to the objectification of women as well. When a person uses pornography on a regular basis, they can become focused on the selfish nature of the gratification and lose sight of

sex as a way to bond emotionally. The objectification in porn can bleed over to other areas of life until the person looks around and just sees potential objects for their own enjoyment. Sex stops being a give-and-take act of love and becomes all about physical pleasure and self-gratification, which then leads to considering sexual acts involving less and less emotional connection. This is one of the dangerous consequences of porn, particularly in a Christian marriage, and it's good to have a book addressing these dangers, particularly in a society that says, "it's just porn," and doesn't see the dangers of that desensitization. If you're looking for a book that addresses these aspects of porn use, particularly if you're in a Christian marriage, you'll find this book useful. However, this is not the same thing as sex addiction. Crosse doesn't describe any feelings of compulsion. He wasn't acting out to escape the painful feelings of life. He wasn't consumed with shame each time he acted out. He used porn because he didn't think it was a big deal and it "felt good," and experienced a desensitization. He did feel shame once he "confessed his sin" and "repented," and he does struggle with temptation, but that's NOT the same thing as addiction. In true addiction, he would've tried to stop when he realized it was wrong and found himself completely unable to do so. He would've fought urges he couldn't control. He would've experienced the detachment of using. He would've needed to completely restructure his coping mechanisms and beliefs, work through a process such as a 12-step program, figure out and work through what was driving him to use, etc. Porn wasn't his coping mechanism: it was just a self-indulgence that took him down a bad and selfish path. With true addiction, repenting and handing your life over to God is not enough to correct the problem. That's certainly helpful, but the above steps are still necessary. I think any sex addict who reads this book is going to feel angry with the author for calling himself an addict and frustrated by the lack of material to which they can relate. If you are suffering from ACTUAL sex addiction, particularly if you're in a 12-step program and identify strongly with the feelings and experiences expressed by other members in your group, I don't think you'll find much value in this book. However, if you've tried a 12-step meeting or two and didn't identify with the experiences of those there, you may well be suffering from desensitization rather than an addiction, and it might be worth reading this book to see if it resonates more with your experience. Desensitization is still damaging to individuals and relationships; it's just handled in a different way than addiction. I think desensitization is a pervasive issue in this age of porn that is so readily available and easy to hide, but it's just not the same as addiction, and referring to it as addiction is part of why it suddenly seems like everyone has a "sex addiction," and why so many are skeptical of the existence of sex addiction. I hope that as more research is done, a better distinction will be made between these two issues so that both can be better understood. It's a shame that this book

is classified as being about sex addiction, because that undermines its value in combating desensitization, and it also confuses the issue of true addiction.

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