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A Confession Someday-Maybe (The Young and the Restless)

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THE YOUNG AND THE RESTLESS



Karl Haffner*

My favorite story of confession comes from John Ortberg's book *The Life You've Always*

Wanted. He tells of trading in his old Volkswagen Super Beetle for their family's first piece of new furniture—a mauve sofa.

When the salesclerk at the furniture store learned they had small kids, he advised, "You don't want a mauve sofa. Get something the color of dirt." But believing their kids were above average on the behavior scale, they bought the sofa anyway.

Here's how John tells the rest of the story. "From that moment on, we all knew clearly the number one rule in the house. Don't sit on the mauve sofa. Don't touch the mauve sofa. Don't play around the mauve sofa. Don't eat on, breathe on, look at, or think about the mauve sofa. Remember the forbidden tree in the Garden of Eden. On every other chair in the house you may freely sit, but upon this sofa, the mauve sofa, you may

A CONFESSION
SOMEDAY-MAYBE

not sit, for in the day you sit thereupon, you shall surely die.

"Then came the Fall.

"One day there appeared on the mauve sofa a stain. A red stain. A red jelly stain.

"So my wife, who had chosen the mauve sofa and adored it, lined up our three children in front of it: Laura, age 4; Mallory, 2; and Johnny, 6 months.

"Did you see that, children?" she asked. "That's a stain. A red stain. A red jelly stain. The man at the sofa store says it is not coming out. Not forever. Do you know how long forever is, children?" she asked. "That's how long we're going to stand here until one of you tells me who put the stain on the mauve sofa."

"Mallory was the first to break. With trembling lips and tear-filled

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eyes, she said, 'Laura did it.' Laura passionately denied it. Then there was silence, for the longest time. No one said a word. I knew the children wouldn't, because they knew that if they did, they would spend eternity in the time-out chair.

"I knew they wouldn't because I was the one who put the red jelly stain on the mauve sofa, and I knew I wasn't saying anything. I figured I would find a safe place to confess—such as in a book I was going to write, maybe."**

Confession Is Freeing

The truth be told, we've all stained the sofa. There's plenty for

all of us to confess. And when we confess our shortcomings, we foster community and built character. Such has been my experience. Whenever I confess, "I was wrong; can you forgive me?" it's like aloe vera on a sunburned soul.

Confession is not burping our sins in public so everyone can wince. It's the purifying process through which God allows us to experience his grace.

So how will you handle the stains in your sofa? I suggest you come clean. Confess. And revel in grace.

**John Ortberg, *The Life You've Always Wanted* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1997), pp. 119, 120.

REPORT CARD ON YOUTH ETHICS

Most American high school students admit that they lie and cheat a lot. Of 8,600 students who filled out confidential surveys, 70 percent admitted cheating on a test at least once in the past year, half of them more than once. Nine out of 10 admitted to lying to parents in the past year, and 78 percent said they lied to teachers.

One in six students admitted drinking at least once in the past year. Sixty-eight percent said they had hit someone because they were angry. Half said they could get their hands on a gun if they wanted to.

Michael Josephson, president of Joseph & Edna Josephson Institute of Ethics, who took the survey, said, "This data reveals [sic] a hole in the moral ozone."—Reported in *Waymarks*, published by the Southern Union Department of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty.