

Living in the Light

### a study for women in the area of sexual purity

#### Living in the Light

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# Guidelines for Using This Study

Although this study can be done in a one-on-one setting to help another person in their growth in the area of sexual purity, this study is most effective when used with a small group of people (ideally 2 to 8 people) of the same sex.

Groups should combine this study with the sharing of lives, getting struggles with sexual purity into the light, ministering to one another and friendship.

Goals of the Group:

1. To provide a safe place for Christian women to gather together and acknowledge their struggle in the area of sexual purity and/or with sexually compulsive behaviors,
2. To serve as a Christ-centered environment for biblical community and support,
3. To educate women concerning underlying spiritual, relational and psychological issues in their struggle—and to call each woman to walk the path toward freedom,
4. To equip women to battle sexual temptation and to break the addictive cycle,
5. To encourage and stimulate their capacity for intimacy and connectedness with God and others,
6. To facilitate the release of each woman’s feminine soul fashioned in the image of God,
7. To lead each woman to the Cross of Christ to be restored to lives of redeemed purpose, passion and power.

Guidelines for the Group:

1. Take confidentiality very seriously. Because of the intimate nature of the group, what is said in the group needs to stay in the group. Each woman will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement. You are encouraged to talk freely and share in great depth with others in the group. Sharing what was said during the group with others outside of the group is a violation of confidentiality and privacy (this includes your spouse or significant other).
2. The underlying goal is to provide a place where a person can be fully known and fully accepted.
3. Commit to coming every week (ideal length of the study is two hours.) A 15 to 20 minute time of worship at the beginning is helpful to bring members into the presence of God.
4. At some point during the study, we would like each person to share her sexual history. Transparency and vulnerability about your own sexual history and struggles in the area of purity (both in the past and present) is key to the success of this group.
5. Make it your personal goal to step outside of your comfort zone at least once in each group meeting. Take risks in asking others for feedback. Take risks in asking other

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questions to gain understanding and to draw them out, but do it with grace and in love. If you sense God’s leading to pray for someone or to ask for prayer, you are encouraged to take the initiative. We are the body of Christ and are called to minister to one another as led by the Spirit. Getting together with each other outside of the group is also encouraged.

1. Completing the reading and homework assignments from “Sexual Purity – Into the Light” is extremely important. They will form a big part of what we discuss and share with one another—and of what God does in your life. You will need to make a significant time commitment to the assignments and the group to both contribute and to receive all that God has for you. Involvement in this group cannot be a backstroke involvement.
2. It will be helpful for each member of the group to install Covenant Eyes (if applicable) on their computer and to exchange reports with at least one other member of the group. This will help group members to not feel like they are all alone when they are using their computers.
3. As the group jells and people connect more deeply with one another, it will be a good idea to exchange email addresses and cell phone numbers. This is to foster communication with one another especially when you are struggling with acting out in some way. Members can either call or text one another to ask for prayer when they are dealing with temptation.
4. Experience has shown that after being in a group where members can be “naked and unashamed,” most will want to be in a group like this the rest of their lives.

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# Agreement of Confidentiality

I, , as a group member of this study*,* understand that I am bound by honor to respect the privacy and confidentiality of others in the group. I personally commit that I will not share any identifying information concerning others issues or struggles with anyone outside the group, including my spouse or significant other.

The only exception to this would be in the case where I discovered that a member of the group was engaging in severe and increasingly dangerous moral behavior that was placing her life, career, marriage and/or family in danger. In this case, I would encourage this person to get professional help and report her struggle to someone in authority over her. If she refuses to seek help and report her struggle, I might be forced to bring this to the attention to someone in authority over her (her pastor, elder, spiritual leader, legal authorities and/or someone from the People Resources Team).

Signed:

Date:

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# Introduction: Moving Into The Light

At the heart of all sexual uncertainty is a fear to make oneself vulnerable in a genuinely intimate relationship with another person. What every person struggling with their sexuality lacks—and what he or she must develop if he or she is to experience fulfillment—is the ability to connect meaningfully with others. Above all, he or she must learn to receive love and to trust.

This reflection and discussion guide focuses on discovering how not being loved, or loved poorly, reinforces our innate tendency to doubt the goodness of God. This in turn makes us afraid to believe in real love even when it is right in front of us. We must unlearn the skills that we so automatically employ to protect our hearts and deaden our passion. That process has many facets, including learning to embrace personal weakness, facing painful feelings, and relying on God and on others to communicate to us a sense of “being somebody,” a person who is loved and who has something of value to offer others and the world.

Because connecting with others—learning to give and receive genuine love in relationships— is at the heart of living out of a pure passion and finding freedom from sexual preoccupation, it is essential that this material be discussed in the context of a small group (or at least a one- to-one relationship). Healing is not to be found in precepts or principles, much less books or seminars. Healing is to be found in love; and love is to be found, not in books or seminars, but in relationships.

“Confess your sins to one another,” says James 5:16, “and you will be healed…” As group members confess their sins to one another, barriers to connecting with God and with others will be torn down, rebuilding participants’ ability to connect in meaningful relationships. A group setting enables participants to break out of darkness and isolation and move toward connection and the building of trust.

The small-group setting in which this material is discussed must be one in which confidentiality is assured. It should, therefore, be a closed group, i.e., once the group is formed, no new members may be admitted nor visitors sit in, except by special arrangement and with the advance consent of all group members. As a rule, new groups will be formed to accommodate those eager to get similar help.

It is our desire that our gracious God will use women’s interaction over this material to usher many into the freedom that is our heritage in Christ. May God guide you as you connect passionately with Him and with others!

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### Acknowledgements\*

The inspiration for this study guide came from the very thorough work done by Craig Lockwood in his book, *Falling Forward.* It is a book that I have read with numerous men who are struggling with sexual obsession and gender identity issues. I have also used it to lead small groups of men struggling with addiction to pornography. Many of the topics addressed in *Falling Forward* are critical to learning to live free from sexual addiction.

But Craig’s book is quite voluminous and it became clear that a shortened version would be especially helpful in the context of campus ministry. So this study guide is primarily a synopsis of selected sections of Craig Lockwood’s book that can be completed by students in a group Bible study format within a one semester time period.

The big ideas of the study are from *Falling Forward.* However they have been reworded, reorganized and combined with ideas from other sources that informed our thinking in this subject area. Specifically, Gerald May, Larry Crabb and Dan Allender.

This study guide is a resource for those engaged in ministry to others. It is not to be sold for profit. We are not receiving any compensation for our work in editing this material. Our purpose for making this available is to meet an expressed need by campus ministers for something that can help them address the wave of sexual struggle that is engulfing students today.

Editors; Ed Cvelich

Phil Cheney Greg Haskell

\* Modified for use by women Marcia Deal, November 2010

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### Chapter One

Using Sex as a Drug

Deep within the heart of every human being is a passionate hunger or thirst for love. “What a man desires,” says Proverbs 19:22, “is unfailing love.”

In the final analysis, only God Himself can quench that thirst for a lover who will never fail us. And He invites us—indeed, pleads with us—to come to Him to satisfy that hunger and thirst: “Come to me, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost…” (Isaiah 55:1). “He who comes to me,” promised Jesus, “will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty” (John 6:35).

Tragically, however, we are as determined as we are thirsty to quench that thirst with something other than the love of God. In Jeremiah 2:13, God laments, “My people have committed two sins: they have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.” And he pleads with us to look to Him to satisfy that heart-hunger and soul-thirst: “Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live” (Isaiah. 55:2-3).

All of us are guilty of seeking out substitutes for that “living water” that is to be found only in intimacy with God. We have, in effect, turned to other gods, looking to people and to things to provide us what is to be found only in connecting with our Creator. But those “broken cisterns” cannot supply the living water we crave. In the case of sexual sin and/or romanticized or sexualized fantasies the false god is a mood-altering experience, a physical and emotional “high.” C. S. Lewis highlighted the way illicit sexual behaviors are a displaced desire for God when he observed that “every man who ever knocked on the door of a brothel was seeking God.”

Such idolatry, however, saps our desire for God—without ever deeply satisfying our thirst. Such “fixes” do not satisfy for long. They may, for a time, cover up the pain of emptiness; but they eventually consume the person in a destructive cycle.

God’s design: that sexuality be our *servant* in love, not our master.

Matthew 22:37-38 spells out God’s agenda for us. He intends that we love Him, and love others as we love ourselves. The focus of God’s concern is not behaviors, but relationships. God is not content with our simply stopping certain behaviors or thought processes; He desires that we grow in whole and trusting relationships with others. He is concerned with our sexual behaviors and thought life because giving in to sexual temptation interferes with loving others. God’s intention is that we use our sexuality to serve our relationships, rather than relationships serving our sexuality.

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#### Developmental Influences

The ways that we relate to others are shaped by a combination of factors: our innate temperament, our experiences (both ongoing experiences and past experiences), and the ways in which others (most notably our parents) have loved us or failed to love us.

It is almost impossible to overestimate the impact of the ways our parents influence the way we perceive ourselves, God and others. Parents are the “lenses” through which children “see” themselves, God and the world. Long before we reach adulthood, we have already internalized a view of ourselves, of God and of others that either enables or hinders us as we move into intimate relationships.

We can experience love only in so far as we are able to trust God and others. Painful experiences in intimate relationships, experiences in which we trusted our parents or others and yet found that trust betrayed by their failure to love us, undermine trust. They leave us afraid to trust, to be vulnerable. Sexual preoccupation, as a rule, results from a failure to trust, to be vulnerable. And the inability to be vulnerable prevents us from meaningfully connecting to others. We are lonely all the time,1 hungering and thirsting for intimacy, but unable to achieve *genuine* intimacy because we are afraid to trust, to be vulnerable. We prefer, therefore, to settle for a superficial sort of *false* intimacy—physical intimacy without emotional intimacy, sexual connection without emotional connection or a thought life that is not based in reality.

Longing for connection without relational risk is the driving force behind all sexual struggles. One “acts out” sexually or reverts to a romanticized or sexualized fantasy life in a vain attempt to satisfy the desperate thirst of her soul. Overcoming sexual sin and a distorted fantasy life involves dealing with this frustrated longing for emotional intimacy.

Therefore, working through and processing memories of painful events from one’s family history (and possibly other relationships as well) is a crucial part of learning to trust and of breaking destructive sexual attachments. Only as we face the painful realities that have undermined our willingness to trust, to be vulnerable, and resolving those issues with God, can we enter into the freedom of healthy relationships with the Lord and with others.

1 See *Lonely All The Time* by Dr. Ralph Earle and Dr. Gregory Crow (New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1989).

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*Chapter 1 Discussion Questions:*

1. What hungers and thirsts are you currently aware of in your life?
2. What about your sexual habits, including your fantasies, is exciting and seems to be life-giving?
3. In what ways has your approach to sex become a false god? What has it cost you?
4. Read Romans 1:18-25. How does this passage show that sexual struggle is the result of turning away from God and looking to other people to give us a sense of life?
5. In John 15:9-13, Jesus talks about love and obedience. Do you think He was more concerned with behavior or relationship?
6. Briefly describe your relationship to God. How is it marked by grace (freedom to love and to follow your heart)? How is it marked by license (freedom to sin because the law seems impossible)?

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### Chapter 2

Using Sex as False Intimacy

In creating Adam and Eve in His own image, God intended their relationship to be a picture and a metaphor of two intimate but invisible relationships. He intended them, first of all, to be related to one another in a oneness that reflects the unity that characterizes the relationships among the three persons of the Trinity—separate, distinct Persons united in a bond of perfect trust and love.2 And He intended their love and their oneness, secondly, to reflect God’s relationship with His people and Christ’s relationship with the Church.3

Before their fall into sin, Adam and Eve reveled in an intimacy that was untainted by fear of rejection. They were “naked and felt no shame” whatsoever.4 Their physical nakedness mirrored the condition of their hearts and minds, which were likewise unveiled toward one another. Secure in the love of God and in one another’s love, they had no need to hide. They trusted God and one another without reservation. They enjoyed genuine intimacy.

Physical intimacy is only a small part of genuine intimacy. Physical nakedness is but a metaphor for emotional nakedness. Genuine intimacy is a matter of knowing and being known, of seeing and being seen (and accepted and loved) for *who one really is.* It is a matter of exposing the sensitive and private places *of the heart*. The Bible makes it clear that physical intimacy be reserved for marriage partners5 and that most, but not all of us, are called to marriage.6 But God made all of us, single or married, for loving communion with Him and with others. This communion involves knowing others and being known in deep relationships of mutual respect and love.

Such intimacy depends upon self-disclosure. It can only be achieved by baring the sensitive and private places *of the heart* (at times and in places that are appropriate)*.* This involves vulnerability and risk-taking. Implicit in genuine intimacy are sensitivity and care—a place of safety, of sanctuary. Genuine intimacy can grow only in a relationship in which each partner reflects God’s grace and compassion in dealing with our fears and flaws and failures.

To move toward genuine intimacy is to risk the pain of being misunderstood, or even rejected. This element of risk can be terrifying. Those whose backgrounds are characterized more by rejection and shame than by love and affirmation fear being wounded by a partner who finds them unacceptable. Risking intimacy *of heart* (non-sexualized intimacy) with the

2 Jesus makes it clear in His John 17 prayer (verses 20-23) that His desire is that a bond of love and unity among *all* believers reflect the oneness that characterizes His relationship with the Father. That this is *all the more* true of husband-wife relationships is clear from the fact that both Genesis 2:24 and Ephesians 5:31 (quoting Genesis) making a point of using that vocabulary (“oneness”) to describe God’s agenda for husband-wife relationships.

3 The Old Testament uses “husband-wife” imagery to refers to Israel’s relationship with God (e.g., Jer. 31:32; Isa. 54:5) and the

New Testament uses “bride-groom” imagery to refer to Christ’s relationship with the Church. (Eph. 5:21-32, in fact, cites Gen. 2:24

to explain that God had this “metaphor” in mind when He created us male and female and instituted marriage).

4 Genesis 2:25.

5 Hebrews 13:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:8.

6 Matthew 19:12; 1 Corinthians 7:1-9.

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opposite sex can be especially frightening. For the person whose doubts about herself run deep or whose trust has, in the past, been betrayed, it is easier to withdraw—to opt for the false intimacy of fantasy or physical intimacy with no heart connection.

False intimacy substitutes sex for love.7 The intense feelings of sexual arousal combined with imaginary or real physical closeness is one way to dull our deep longing for *genuine* intimacy. It allows for a momentary “connection” on a superficial level while avoiding the possibility of rejection. The Internet images or fantasy (in a woman’s imagination) are at her disposal (for a few minutes, at least) without her having to risk rejection.8

Having lost one’s ability to trust is a major barrier to genuine intimacy. That ability to trust must be restored if genuine intimacy is to be achieved. Those whose background makes them fearful when it comes to sharing their feelings and their fears find themselves “in a bind.” They long deeply for love, while, at the same time, fearing the vulnerability that makes it possible to experience genuine intimacy. There is no risk-free way out of this bind. Healing takes place only as the fear of rejection is overcome in real relationships.

However, vulnerably entering into those healing relationships involves clinging to the truth that we are unconditionally loved and deeply valued by our Heavenly Father and by the Lord Jesus. Since no man or woman is perfectly safe, there is always some risk associated with being vulnerable. It is the assurance that the Lord Himself can be relied upon to accept us and affirm us “with no strings attached” that prompts us to risk being known in relationships with “safe,” but less-than-perfect, people.9 Each of us must look to God as our source of acceptance, affirmation and love, then reach out by faith to be loved by others—daring to be vulnerably honest, first in non-sexualized same-sex relationships, and then in non-sexualized opposite-sex relationships. To do so is a bold step of faith.

We will never satisfy our thirst for real connection by acting out sexually. A first step to freedom from bondage to sexual sin is to get in touch with our heart’s longings, wounds and strategies—our painful memories, our fears of rejection, and the ways in which we have covered up and tried to ease these longings and wounds. Then, by bold faith in God’s assurance that we are His dearly loved children, with something to offer those to whom we extend ourselves, we must step out by faith to allow others to know us. Only then will we experience the genuine intimacy for which we were created.

7 This can be true even in marriage when a couple’s “love-making” is not grounded in emotional intimacy.

8 Hence the appeal of pornography and other forms of extra-marital sex even to married women. In any marriage relationship (and particularly in a relationship that is not characterized by warm acceptance and love), the risk of rejection is always there. To opt for pursuing a real-world husband rather than an extra-marital lover (in one’s imagination or in the real-world) is to risk rejection. Taking that risk requires the emotional strength that is born of a healthy relationship with one’s spouse and/or others and/or reliance on God’s unconditional love and acceptance.

9 On learning to exercise discretion with respect to whom one trusts, see Henry Cloud and John Townsend excellent book, *Safe*

*People: How to Find Relationships That Are Good for You, and Avoid Those That Aren’t* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995)*.*

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## Chapter 2 Discussion Questions:

* 1. In what ways have you experienced a sense of belonging? *i.e.*, feeling loved, accepted, wanted, included
  2. In what ways have you experienced others believing in you?
  3. In what ways have you been disappointed or hurt in relationships (as a child, or as an adult)? How do these memories affect the way you relate now?
  4. How would you assess your ability to trust in intimate relationships?
  5. In what ways do you substitute sex or fantasy for love?
  6. Write a statement that expresses your feeling of acceptance by God.
  7. Identify one way in which you could cultivate non-sexual intimacy skills.

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### Chapter 3

Consequences of Misusing Sex

Sexual preoccupation is an attempt to deaden pain which instead adds to the pain one experiences and spreads it to those around him.

“It is like a physic malignancy, sucking out life energy into specific obsessions and

compulsions, leaving less and less energy for other people and pursuits.”

* Gerald May, *Addiction and Grace* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1991) 13.

“Just as an obsession is a persistent repetitive thought, a compulsion is a persistent repetitive behavior.”

* Earle & Crow, *Lonely All the Time* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989) 17.

Mental sexual or romanticized fantasy preoccupation often builds in intensity as it continues unchecked over time. At first, obsessive sexual or romanticized thoughts are simple intrusions into daily living, written off as minor, victimless sins. Eventually these can become entrenched habits and can progress to the extent where one sees daily realities as irritants that get in the way of her romanticized or sexual fantasy. These obsessive thought patterns increase isolation and can even cost productivity at work. Time devoted to others and to productive pursuits are sacrificed. More and more free time is needed to indulge the cravings and compulsions.

These habits are fostered as an attempt to quench the deep-felt thirst for intimacy with God and with others. They are like a pain-killer which works for a time but to which one develops immunity. Stronger, more frequent doses are needed to cover the pain.

##### So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.

*Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.* (Ephesians 4:17-19)

Anyone who sins sexually, consciously and with pre-mediation disobeys God. This sin leads to feelings of guilt, shame and despair. These feelings lead one to feel less connected to God and others and, hence, more thirsty than ever. Faced with this reality, one chooses either repentance and submission to God, or a hardening of the heart. This hardening is often subtle but steadily progressive. The more hardened and distant one feels, the more essential the pain-killer becomes. One typically slips into more frequent and extreme behavior in an attempt to “up the dosage.”

Sexual compulsion and romanticized or sexualized fantasy leads to and feeds on emotional distance. One cannot be a slave to her own sexuality without neglecting her relationships with God and the people close to her. Those people closest to her are affected by her withdrawal

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and feel the emotional distance developing. Spouses especially can suffer from the weakening of the bond.

Anyone who shares in her life can be hurt by her selfish detachment in order to pursue her sexual high or retreat into her fantasies. As relationships weaken and break around her, her perception that intimate relationships are painful grows and increases her determination to avoid true intimacy. Her painkiller has increased her pain and spread pain to those close to her.

## Chapter 3 Discussion Questions:

1. Identify and describe your obsessions and compulsions. How have they escalated over time?
2. How have you suffered as a result of your thoughts and actions?
3. Who close to you has suffered from your actions or neglect?

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### Chapter 4

Compulsive Behavioral Patterns

Although particulars of each person’s sexual struggle may differ, there is a circular process and generalized pattern all people follow. The cycle includes sexual pressure, acting out, the sex act and despair.

### The Cycle

Stage One: Sexual Pressure

The cycle begins when the person’s thoughts become focused on her behavior of choice. The individual’s mental energy is directed toward reaching a mood altering high without actually acting out sexually. She thinks about sex or her fantasies to produce a trance-like state of arousal designed to blot out the current pain of reality and most external demands for her attention. Thinking about sex or fantasies can continue for minutes or hours before a transition to the next stage of the cycle occurs.

During the preoccupation phase, the person experiences a heightening of energy due to the release of adrenaline in her body, as well as euphoric emotions associated with thoughts of giving into the sexual activity or giving herself to her fantasies. As all aspects of her being become focused on sex, sexual release or fantasies, she experiences a powerful force that the Bible calls temptation (James 1:13-14).

Stage Two: Acting Out

People use rituals to enhance their mental preoccupation, excitement and euphoria. Rituals are regularly followed patterns of preparing for sexual activity. Once the person has begun her ritual, the chances of stopping the cycle diminish greatly. She is giving into the pull of the compulsion. For the sake of simplicity, we have called this phase of the cycle “acting out.” Even though the person may not reach orgasm, or make a sexual contact, she was hoping to and willing, if only the circumstances had been right.

*Examples:* Romantic movies Romantic novels

Watching sexually explicit movies Cruising certain streets in town

Showing up at a local bar at cocktail hour

Frequenting public bathrooms in order to find erotic graffiti Surfing the Internet

Staying up late to watch TV alone

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Stage Three: The Sex Act

The compulsive act, which normally ends in orgasm, is the starkest reminder to the person that she has been reduced to slavery and that her will is paralyzed. The sex act is the breaking point in the sexual pressure that began the cycle. The release of physical pressure also brings an end to the denial and sanity-bending rationalizations that allowed the person to get as far as she did. The “sex act” is the point at which sin becomes undeniable. It is hard evidence that the Scriptures have been violated and the person is truly addicted.

##### Examples:

For the voyeur, it is the actual sighting.

For the homosexual, it is a sex act with a person of the same sex. For the fetishist, it is masturbating with his object of desire.

For the pornographer, it is masturbating while viewing the chosen porn. For the one who fanaticizes, it is masturbation.

Stage Four: Despair

At this point in the cycle the person can go one of two ways. She can either seek help or sink back into familiar patterns of denial that submerge her pain. She usually resolves to never act out again. The vow seems sincere at the time, yet without breaking the stranglehold of secrecy it is really an oath of self-sufficiency and a type of denial. At a superficial level the person hopes that this will be the last battle. But somewhere within she is resigned to the nauseating (and yet exciting) roller-coaster ride of alternating euphoria and misery produced by the addiction.

Despair builds with each cycle. The person attempts to go it alone and hides her secret life. She cannot withstand the isolation (though she doesn’t admit this to herself) and eventually the need to medicate her guilt and remorse propels her into another cycle of seeking sexual gratification. Self-hatred increases with each relapse and increases the unmanageability of her life.

### Triggers and the Addictive Cycle

We may find ourselves, at times, falling back into the addictive cycle without knowing how we got there. This can be avoided by discovering what has triggered our compulsive response. A trigger is an event that breaks through to the person’s pain and sets into motion the sexual cycle. Most of the time what triggers the person is outside of her conscious awareness. Many triggers are not as obvious as direct visual and sexual stimuli. Often triggers have to do with seemingly unrelated environmental stresses. These break through the person’s defenses and access residual, unresolved pain. Some of this pain originated in early life experiences.

Rejection is a common trigger, especially in marriage or dating relationships. True intimacy involves risk and the possibility of conflict. For instance, at the time of a conflict the person may only be aware of feeling angry. But at a deeper level, the fight may be felt as an assault on her adequacy, which threatens to expose her deep fear of rejection. This accesses her

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painful belief system about her inferiority and worthlessness, which then ignites her addictive cycle.

Stress also acts as a trigger. A common stress pattern would involve feeling overwhelmed by an immense workload and slipping into a sexual fantasy as an escape. The cycle is then underway.

Abandonment, which is similar to rejection, can also be a trigger for sexual acting out or reverting to a fantasy world. The present-day environment may summon pain that came from earlier, similar experiences. This may trigger feelings of abandonment, a need to perform and a sense of unacceptability, which surfaces the belief that life is unfair and I deserve a break.

This sets the person up to again give into her compulsive pattern of medicating her pain.

According to the Scriptures, we are responsible for our choices and should avoid people, places and things that we know may lure us into sin. If we knowingly put ourselves in a circumstance where we may be overwhelmed with temptation, we are responsible. An important transition point is reached when the person chooses, out of respect for herself, to avoid her triggers.

##### “A prudent man sees evil and hides himself; the naïve proceed and pay the penalty.”

(Proverbs 27:12)

It is important to state here that identifying triggers is not the same as being freed. It is only the first behavioral step in stopping the addictive cycle.

### Breaking the Cycle

As we have just seen, the addictive cycle produces its own pain, namely the guilt, shame and despair of repeated relapse. This pain actually increases the probability of again falling into sin. Underlying pain fuels compulsive sin. The first step in the process of healing is to modify behavior, which interrupts the driving power of the addictive cycle.

As a person gives herself over to a sinful action again and again, the mind weaves twisted thoughts to support and accommodate the duplicity of the behavior. We usually think of thoughts leading to behavior, but our souls also function so that our behavior shapes our thinking. Changing behavior makes way for thoughts and feelings to be changed.

Change does not come to us as we passively wait for it. Rather, a person must choose to fight and win by God’s empowerment. Change begins with action. Changing behaviors eliminates the need for the distorted thinking formerly used to justify sin. As our actions change, our thinking will become more truthful and empower us to get to the deeper issues that fuel our compulsions.

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## Chapter 4 Discussion Questions:

* 1. List and describe any triggers that are connected with your compulsive sin?

*(Ex: fatigue, loneliness, boredom, late night TV, being alone with the computer, argument with friend, recalling past sexual experiences, etc.)*

* 1. What distorted thoughts empower you to act out; rationalizations, entitlements, rewards and excuses?

*(Ex: I won’t be found out, I am already forgiven, I am already down so one more time won’t matter, I will*

*never be loved so this is the best I can hope for, masturbating is not so bad, at least it keeps me from fornicating, if I don’t give in I will never get anything done, etc.)*

* 1. What ineffective methods have you used in trying to resist your compulsive cycle?

*(Ex .will power, accountability, eating…)*

* 1. Journal about three fairly recent compulsive cycles. Be specific in describing each of the four stages. Identify any patterns running through the cycles.

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### Chapter 5

The Role of Shame

When a person is running from her own pain, she has not embraced her weakness. She does not yet understand God’s mercy and kindness at a heart level. Her shame prevents her from receiving the grace and truth of God. Shame is a sense of personal badness that all people have to some extent or another. Shame is also reinforced by negative messages received over the course of one’s life. It leads to the development of a protective style of relating that increases fear, hiding and isolation.

Spiritual Roots of Shame

In Genesis 3 we see the origin of man’s shame. After Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit (vs. 4-8) they covered themselves and hid from each other and God. God entered the Garden and asked Adam, “Where are you?” (vs. 9) Adam’s answer illustrates man’s basic survival strategy, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.” (vs. 10) Adam was afraid of his nakedness, physically, emotionally and spiritually before God and Eve.

Now fallen men and women seek after safety by hiding the truth of what he or she really is (sinful, fearful and unable to trust). Shame calls for secrecy and darkness. One who experiences shame has an adversarial relationship with herself. She separates from herself to survive emotionally because she feels too bad and worthless to be acceptable. The self is thus disowned and pushed away into darkness. Shame in essence is a sense of unacceptability that leads to hiding from God, others and one’s self.

Shame Leads to Contempt

When hiding did not work to protect Adam from the gaze of God, he turned on himself. “…I was afraid because I was naked…” (vs. 10) Adam expresses contempt for his felt weakness. All people hate feeling afraid and exposed. One way to deal with the shame is to beat ourselves up for our weaknesses. This is called self-centered contempt or low self esteem. The goal is to avoid the rejection of others by beating them to the punch and rejecting ourselves first.

When self contempt did not cause God to back off, Adam focused his contempt on God and Eve. “…The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.” (vs. 12) In trying to escape true feelings of guilt, remorse and responsibility for his sin, Adam blames God and then his wife. Others-centered contempt is a way to deflect exposure onto the other person’s supposed weakness and creates enough separation to protect us from facing our own shame.

Shame Distorts Truth

##### Search me O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. (Psalm 139:23-24)

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By responding out of their shame, Adam and Eve refused to face the truth of their sinful disobedience and instead blamed God, the Devil and each other. This distorted their understanding of their real need for forgiveness and restoration. Intimacy, truth and goodness were now experienced as a threat rather than an invitation into the fullness and beauty of life with God and each other. Since that time, much of man’s thinking has been distorted in order to conceal his flight from truthful relationships. We believe lies about ourselves and others to maintain a defensive detachment that feels safe. These lies take many forms but they follow the pattern of contempt for self and others.

##### Examples of lies about self:

* I’m worthless
* I’m stupid
* I’m a failure
* I’m not loveable as I am
* I’m a bad, unworthy person
* I’m ugly
* My life will never amount to anything
* Everything I touch turns to disaster
* I’m not feminine
* It’s always my fault
* God can’t forgive me
* If I have to depend on my social skills to get close to anyone, it won’t happen

##### Examples of lies about others:

* All women/men are evil and will play with my mind
* All women/men will reject me
* If I get close to women/men they will leave me
* All women/men are needy and will suffocate me
* Women/men are shaming and hurtful
* Women/men are emotional monsters that consume little boys/girls
* When women/men find out who I really am they won’t like me
* People are not dependable; I can’t trust them to meet my needs

##### These lies and many more are usually generalized toward all of life and lead to life dominating issues like:

* Fear of rejection
* Fear of intimacy
* Fear of confrontation
* Compulsive, inappropriate intimacy outside of marriage
* Emotional isolation inside marriage
* Sexually connecting without commitment
* Sexually addictive affairs
* Narcissistic masturbation
* Fear of initiating sexually

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* Sexualized anger
* Misogyny (generalized disinterest and hatred of women)
* Misandry (generalized hatred of men)
* Homosexual and lesbian tendencies

Overcoming Shame

##### Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me.” (Matthew 18:3-5)

Young children have the ability to live life with their hearts open. Their self-protection has not yet reached a level of sophistication that hides who they truly are. Jesus says that we must become like children and no longer be controlled by our shame in order to experience Him.

Shame, as well as our faulty belief system, prevents the reality of our true identity in Christ from sinking into our hearts. Through the unchangeable work of Jesus on the cross, Christians are declared righteous and clean. This truth should greatly increase our sense of value and acceptability before God and others. But the fact is this truth has not been incorporated into many believers sense of identity. If shame is not overcome, a man or woman cannot let his/her true self emerge and thus be renewed in the image of God. This is a difficult process because we have become expert at keeping ourselves hidden.

When we begin to get in touch with our shame, we will likely experience increased levels of pain, anxiety and isolation. The very things we are trying to avoid. Feelings are important but cannot be the focus. Acknowledging and persevering through uncomfortable emotions is critical to growing spiritually and relationally. Remember, one reason compulsive sin has gained its power is because of unwillingness to face psychic, emotional and relational pain.

##### “Beware of turning to evil, which you seem to prefer to affliction.” (Job 36:21)

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## Chapter 5 Discussion Questions:

1. When are you most aware of your shame?
2. Does your shame lead primarily to self-contempt or other-contempt? (Explain.)
3. What lies do you believe about yourself?
4. What lies do you believe about others?
5. What does it mean for adults (male and female) to live with their hearts open?

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### Chapter 6

Surrender the Illusion of Control

Acting out sexually or indulging in romanticized or sexualized fantasy is a form of control. It’s the attempt to self-medicate pain and resolve issues through one’s own strength apart from God. We don’t trust God to fill the deep-felt needs of our lives so we find our own flawed solutions. The addictive cycle so often ends with a resolution to not let it happen again, to take back control—and just like acting out, it is doomed to failure. We would rather stay in control than acknowledge our weakness and need to trust in God.

##### Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: Do not handle! Do not touch! These are destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence. (Colossians 2:20-23)

Subduing compulsive sin through self-restraint only leads to pride and reinforces self- sufficient thinking. Instead, acknowledge weaknesses and surrender them to God. “Trusting that God’s strength will emerge out of our surrender is the bridge from the futility of self- effort to walking in the power of the resurrection life.”10

For example, one college coed had the pattern of relating to men she liked in only two ways. She would swing between being the boss, taking responsibility for everything in the relationship, to becoming a compliant sex object. She realized both modes of relating were harmful, but she felt powerless to change and each failed relationship left her feeling more grotesque and hopeless.

The first step in surrendering to God meant saying “no” to those behaviors. *“But that is the only way I have ever acted. If I don’t act that way I’m afraid I’m nobody with nothing to offer. The thought of that leaves me feeling scared and totally empty.”* Her counselor replied, *“Surrender means entering that emptiness and trusting that out of that void God will cause something of your true femininity to emerge. What you then offer will be true to whom you really are and it will be good.”*

##### I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. (Philippians 1:6)

Surrendering to God means giving our lives over to Him, trusting in His limitless mercy, and focusing on Him. This means facing our fear that God’s solution to our pain will not be adequate. One must believe that God knows best and is truly able to eradicate sin and heal

10 Falling Forward, Craig Lockwood, Desert Stream Press 2000, Anaheim, CA page 51.

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our pain. We doubt that truth when we choose to handle pain our way . A woman of faith acts according to God’s truth, trusting God for the results. This is the step we take whenever we turn from sin to obedience.

To use another example, one who lies needs to accept that admitting the truth, which is God’s way, is better. Lying gives the illusion of control in difficult situations. However, if she chooses to tell the truth, she is relinquishing control to God. Sin is trusting in your strength and ability versus God’s power. Telling the truth can be scary and painful for someone who has always depended on lies for protection. Once she accepts that God’s way is better, she can begin to step out in faith and tell the truth, perhaps fearfully and only partially at first, but God rewards acts of faith, however small. As she learns to trust God in speaking truthfully, she will experience the emotional and spiritual rewards of inner relief, honesty, holiness and courage. The need and desire to lie will lose its strength and new patterns of truthfulness will take its place.

Since sexual sin is rooted in a lack of trust in relationships, stepping out in faith to be vulnerable in relationships, old and new, is a way to begin trusting God and surrendering control. There is a subtle but significant difference between effort to obey God, and effort to resist sinning. The former implies surrender and the latter implies control.

##### My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.

(2 Corinthians 12:9)

Your weakness is God’s opportunity to shine through you. Choose a lifestyle of stepping out in faith, embracing the adventure of life as a child of God, rather than one of a discouraged, embattled soldier trying and failing to fend off evil desires. This is a scary situation for someone who has always tried to control, or avoid relationships, but that is when God steps up to show what He can do. Pray for protection and obedience but also for faith to give up control and to begin loving others in the midst of fear.

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## Chapter 6 Discussion Questions:

1. In what ways does acting out exhibit your desire for control?
2. How do you try to control relationships?
3. How can you begin to love others with honesty and vulnerability?
4. What are you afraid God will do or require of you if you relinquish control to Him?
5. Read 2 Corinthians 12:9-12. When do you feel most weak and vulnerable?

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### Chapter 7

Turn to God

The loneliness and fear we experience due to our separation from God through sin extends into every relationship we have. Our sin is an attempt to quench the never-ending thirst we have for a relationship with our Creator. Therefore, restoring our relationship with God is fundamental to ending compulsive sexual sin. By His death on the cross, Jesus made that relationship possible; and by believing in Him, we become God’s adopted children and co- heirs with Him. As Jesus gave up His Spirit on the cross, the curtain separating the Most Holy Place in the temple was torn, symbolizing the new accessibility of God’s presence*.* (Matthew 27:50-51)

As newly adopted children we need to learn to relate to God as our loving Father and learn to put away our sinful habits. As we discussed in Chapter 6, the power of our own wills to change is not enough. We cannot become holy by our own strength. We can, however, employ our wills in practicing the presence of God. While we are still responsible to obey, we can do so by accessing God’s power in His presence. The more time we spend with Him, the more accessible that power becomes. In His presence we see our true selves, weak and small, yet heirs of the Almighty God of all creation.

To turn to God is to focus one’s thoughts on Him and the truths He has made known to us. We must accept the reality that Jesus lives inside us and is always present. Include Him in every circumstance. Engage in every conversation and make each decision with Him consciously by your side and interested in every tidbit. Paul admonishes us, “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”(Romans 12:2a)

If we are not being influenced by God, we are being influenced by the world. Again Paul says, “Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable -- if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.” (Philippians 4:8) If we walk in His presence, we will be humbled by His power and holiness, and uplifted by his love and mercy.

When we are not mindful of His presence, we are more vulnerable to temptation and less equipped to turn away. When mindful of His presence, we would have to choose to ignore Him in order to succumb to temptation. How can one look at pornography with Jesus or entertain romanticized/sexualized fantasy knowing He is present in our hearts and minds? When we come to value His presence, sin becomes less appealing since it requires us to “forget” that God exists in order to enjoy our experience of it.

The triggers of our addictive cycles are like weed seeds looking for barren ground in which to take root. A garden full of lush, healthy, fruitful plants leaves little room for weeds to invade. A mind preoccupied with sensual desires or feelings of discontent is barren soil waiting for

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temptation. If God fills your thoughts, where can temptation settle? To set one’s mind on that which God values, is the renewing of one’s mind that Paul talks about in Romans 12:2. The mind starts following God’s patterns and not the patterns of the world. We can start to see ourselves as God sees us—as His cherished children, full of eternal potential, and not the shameful rejects we might perceive ourselves to be.

Choosing to honor God when tempted to act out sexually means facing all the pain and anxiety that we’ve tried to deaden through our sin. Until we let God handle our pain and fear, we are doomed to fight a losing battle against it. “Substituting the life-giving practice of God’s presence for heart-hardening cycles of masturbation is essential to the healing of sexual addiction.”11 Living in God’s presence exposes our lives to the truth about Him and ourselves.

God’s presence must be practiced, not just intellectualized. Spending time reading God’s Word, in prayerful listening to God and in fellowship with other believers all help to heal the wounds and relieve the shame we carry from our past and present sin. One must not become obsessed with trying to figure oneself out, getting lost in introspection. These are expressions of one’s will seeking to find control. When we uncover the pain and wounding that underlies our compulsive behavior and identify the lies we have come to believe about ourselves, we need to hear the truth as declared by our Father and Creator. A daughter who has been tormented in the world needs to hear her father’s affirmation. She needs to learn to be secure in the truth about who she is. God created us as spiritual beings capable of relating to Him on a personal level. God speaks to His children in many ways but it usually requires focused attention on our part to hear Him.

As one reads, studies and meditates on the Bible, the Holy Spirit speaks to us, personalizing the message to our own needs. In His Word, we learn about ourselves and more importantly, about Him—His character, His love and what pleases Him.

Meditating on the Scriptures and listening in prayer is a critical part of restoring intimacy with God. As we pray, we should patiently listen for God to speak to our hearts. The more we read and pray, pouring out our hearts to Him, the more sensitive our hearts become to His voice. Devote serious, regular time to prayer. While praying, set aside time to just listen, patiently waiting for Him to put His word in your heart. Do not presuppose an answer nor try to force your own agenda. Do not become discouraged if no word seems forthcoming, God cannot be rushed. God’s communication, both the content and the means, may surprise you.

Seek out fellowship with godly, loving people who are also seeking an intimate friendship with God. Others can help us perceive the truth God has for us and in some cases be the means of His communication. As we share our relationship with God with others, we learn things from other perspectives and benefit from the shared understanding of our Father.

As we have said several times, true intimacy requires giving up control in a relationship, allowing the other person to see the real you and either accept or reject you. Fear of rejection

11 Falling Forward, Craig Lockwood, Desert Stream Press 2000, Anaheim, CA Page 76

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leads us to try to control the way others perceive us and minimize that chance of rejection. When it comes to issues of sexual sin, a lifetime’s accumulation of guilt and shame pressure us to hide and present a mask of purity to the world, especially other believers. Often, to be held in esteem in the Christian culture, one must conform to their standards or risk public embarrassment and expulsion from fellowship. We think, “If my fellow Christians knew the nature, depth and frequency of my sin, they would reject me and leave me truly alone.” As each individual is left on her own to struggle with her sexual issues, we choose to put on the good façade and sacrifice true intimacy. We might admit to some common, more culturally acceptable sins, but we perceive our sexual sin too base and shameful to share with others.

Instead of trusting God and others, we take control through secrecy. Secrecy contributes to a good Christian public image, but when alone, we are more vulnerable to temptation and susceptible to continue in our habits. Alone, we choose to fight sin by our own strength.

Controlled by our fear of others and our own shame, we feed our doomed patterns of control and isolation.

##### Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another that you might be healed.

(James 5:6)

We are designed for unity and fellowship with God and each other. God’s grace is powerfully

dispensed by loving friends who accept and nurture us as we confess our sins to them. Confessing the sins of our past to one another liberates our souls from the shame we’ve needlessly carried. Being accountable to confess our current sins to one another brings mutual growth and maturity. By pursuing relationships with trustworthy people where we can lower our guard and honestly confess our sins, we can receive the love and acceptance God has for us. As we experience real intimacy and accountability in Christian community, facing God, others and ourselves honestly and without shame, we are encouraged and healed. As we become more transparent, the intimate relationships with God and people that we thirst for are formed and strengthened. People united in their desire to know God and pursue holiness fulfill God’s intent for His kingdom.

Time in the Word, prayer, confession and honest sharing does not happen without planning and discipline. Like any relationship, it is nothing without two-way communication. Invest in time with God and persevere when life threatens to interfere. Turning to God is not a single decision, it requires faith, diligence and patience, but what a relief! Our willpower is not to be spent fighting off the desire to sin, but spent getting to know our heavenly Father. We need to start quenching our thirst with Living Water. Because God is the only one who satisfies.

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## Chapter 7 Discussion Questions:

1. Try to visualize how each portion of your day, (work, leisure, time with family, etc.) would

change as God’s presence is recognized.

1. Identify the times during the day or week when being aware of God’s presence is most

difficult.

3. How can you bring God’s presence into these situations? Make a plan.

4. What specific triggers can be neutralized by practicing the presence of God?

1. Are there things you feel you can’t confess to anyone?

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### Chapter 8

Grief and Loss: The Path to Freedom

In walking the path toward God and away from your old habits, you may experience overwhelming feelings of emptiness and sadness. That’s because there is real loss involved in giving up your “acting out.” Each person will go through a natural grieving process as she accepts the loss of something which she holds dear. It is like losing an old friend because the sexual practice has become a very comfortable way of nurturing yourself. Every time you are ripped from the comfort of your “friend” you may feel angry. There will be confusion with God for allowing this situation, frustration with others who expect too much of you, and disappointment with yourself for not being able, without a lot of anguish, to “just say no.” Anger is a normal part of the grieving process.

You may also experience an increased sense of weakness and shame. You will become tired of the struggle and just want it to go away. You will be tempted to live in self-pity and refuse to accept responsibility for your actions. However, holding on to self-pity opens the door to binging and is a detour back to your old patterns.

Most people also experience other sensations such as undefined body pains, loneliness, fear, anxiety, depression and loss of motivation. Feelings like these will surface from deep places in your heart which have been anesthetized for years by restless acting out. But the process of grieving is important. It cannot be sidetracked or avoided if you are to live in freedom.

Consider All Things Loss

##### But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ. (Philippians 3:7-9)

The Apostle Paul is recounting his very real experience of loss for the sake of his relationship with Jesus. He is not specifically referring to sexual struggle but he is talking about whatever gave him a sense of strength and wellbeing apart from the righteousness that comes through Christ.

Forsaking thoughts and behaviors that give us a false sense of strength, intimacy and pleasure is never glamorous or immediately rewarding. Yet we must let go of these if we are to gain Christ. The process of *“considering everything loss”* requires us to name specific actions that we will give up and never go back to. But in order to avoid the pain of loss we usually try to bargain our way around the finality of this decision. We will entertain thoughts such as:

* + It’s only in my mind. I’m not really acting out.
  + I don’t struggle as badly as other people I know.

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* Masturbation is not so bad. I’m not hurting anybody.
* If I resist the temptation I will never be able to focus and I will go crazy.
* I’ve been good. I’ll just treat myself occasionally.
* I need to test myself and see if I can resist.
* Porn, masturbation and fantasies actually protect me from acting out with another person.

##### Ask yourself these questions:

* Do I see how destructive my thoughts and behaviors are to others?
* Do I hate what it does to me?
* Do I see it as bad only because God says it is, and yet secretly cherish the stimulation?

We must be brutally honest with ourselves about these questions. If we don’t see the destructiveness of our sin on ourselves, God and others then we will keep returning to old patterns. A person will not change significantly if she can’t proclaim with a certain amount of conviction and passion, “I really *want* to go God’s way.” Not just, “I *ought* to go God’s way.”

Refusing to Accept Loss

You may be thinking, “Isn’t there some way to get around facing the pain and embarrassment of grief and loss?” I believe the answer is no. There are two types of losses that must be grieved. We have already talked about the *present loss* of our sinful behavior and its medicating effects. But there are also *past losses* that are less obvious. These losses feel more abstract and involve the loss of essential human contact with important people in our past.

Examples of this type of loss are:

* The loss of warmth and affection from an angry mother that leaves a sense of emptiness.
* The loss of wisdom and guidance from a father who was absent, harsh or emotionally distant.
* The loss of personal uniqueness due to receiving constant criticism and rejection instead of affirmation.
* The loss of personal dignity, having been used for someone else’s purposes.
* The loss of trust in intimate relationships because of repeated disappointments.

What happens when we do not process our losses? Simply put, we stay stuck because we don’t learn to live in present day reality. We remain blind to how we put our hope in a self- focused strategy that can’t give life and we remain blind to how we are using others (in actuality and in fantasy) to compensate for our sense of emptiness.

Entering into Grief

How does a person enter into grief? Two elements are involved. The first element is to see how her selfishness affects the people around her. This will involve confessing to her spouse and friends and requires humility to accept their reactions. When she owns up to the truth

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that her sexual sin hurts her friendships and has a deadening and distancing effect on her relationships, something deep within her soul will react. The ugliness of her sin and the contradiction in the way she has been living will leave her profoundly shaken. The shame and functional guilt over “who she is” that has pushed her to hide and work hard at being better will give way to true guilt over “what she is doing.” There will be remorse and sadness not for self but for those people she has been hurting. This is the first step.

Second, gripped by the gravity and ugliness of her sin, she will turn to the Lord expecting an angry look and harsh punishment. Fully convinced that her situation is hopeless and that she deserves judgment, she will experience grace instead. She will be embraced by Jesus in a way that says, “Yes, your sin is ugly, that is why I died. I love you just as you are. I’m proud to call you sister and friend.”

How do these two elements—sorrow over sin and God’s gracious response—work together to transform a person’s heart? When I see how much damage my efforts to protect and satisfy myself have caused, I am confronted with the utter failure of my decision to live without completely trusting God and others. It also robs me of the illusion of being able to fix things on my own. God’s help and presence, at that point, become an absolute necessity.

That’s when the second element, the Lord’s grace, exposes the foolishness of my selfish preoccupation even more. I discover that the love and connection I’ve been working so hard to earn is already fully provided in my relationship with Him. I realize His love and acceptance have nothing to do with my being lovable, for here He loves me at my worst. God’s warm embrace melts my heart and disarms me of the contemptuous practice of calling “who I am” bad. I then willingly desire to move toward Him and the people I love with a new openness and inner freedom that is the fruit of Biblical repentance.

In 2 Corinthians 7:9, Paul states, “Your sorrow led you to repentance.” In Romans 2:4, he says

that, “God’s kindness leads you toward repentance.”12

The elements of sorrow and kindness facilitate the process of grief, so I can experience the reality of Jesus’ words, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.” (Matthew 5:4)

12 This section on “Entering into Grief” was adapted from *Self-Image* by James Moore, Navpress: Colorado Springs, CO 1992, page 53-55.

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## Chapter 8 Discussion Questions:

1. What past losses have you experienced? How do they currently impact you?
2. What present losses associated with giving up “acting out” are you aware of?
3. In what relationship are you most gripped by the ugliness of your sin and by the ways your selfishness has hurt that person?
4. a. How do you react to the image of being warmly embraced by a loving God when you least deserve it?
   1. What, if anything, prevents you from discovering God in this way?

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### Chapter 9

The Impact of Family Environments

In this chapter we will look at how patterns of sexual sin are established. It is very common for these same patterns to run through the history of families. Families where there is a lack of genuine communication and where the expression of feelings and negative thoughts are taboo often result in an ethic of secrecy and isolation. When the norm is not to talk about family events, the child must guess about reality. Usually she concludes that she is responsible for the family dysfunction and learns not to trust her true self, with all its genuine emotions and reactions. Because of the family dysfunction, she is not able to test reality in relationship with others. She is trapped in an environment where hiding from self and others seems to be the only acceptable lifestyle.

Family Environments

The “rigid family” is an environment that contributes to the formation of sexual preoccupation. It is one where there are high demands for performance and achievement coupled with little or no encouragement and nurture. It can be a religious or nonreligious home, but a rigid Christian family may also choose a church setting with high demands for holiness, and caustic criticism of people who struggle. The resulting lack of acceptance and feelings of helplessness produce secrecy and hopelessness. They also produce rebellion, and added excitement about experiencing the forbidden fruit.

On the other extreme is the “chaotic family.” Here the environment is unpredictable, blaming and crisis oriented. It requires the constant rush of adrenaline to survive. In this home the family does not have a set of values and beliefs that unite them. In addition, nothing ever gets resolved, so the child does not learn appropriate problem solving skills. The ultimate goal is to protect one’s self and avoid responsibility for the crisis. In both the rigid family and the chaotic family, transparent and vulnerable sharing leads to punishment and shame. Thus the inner world of the child is diminished and she is left to find something external to herself and her family to meet his emotional needs.

Most home environments fall somewhere between these two extremes but the results in the life of the child can still be the same. Patrick Carnes describes the emotional dynamics that result:

*“Note that anxiety and control are common aspects of these experiences. The uncertainty of mastering unknown, uncertain, or extreme environments and the inability to ensure acceptable outcomes, are cornerstones of all addiction. The addiction supplies a temporary solution by allying anxiety and giving momentary purpose to the self, but ultimately it compounds life’s problems.”*

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Traumatic Events

Traumatic events can also play a role in the formation of compulsions. We will mention two types of events: abandonment events and sexual events. Abandonment events, such as childhood loss of parents and siblings, abuse, neglect, and extremely harsh discipline are closely related to a deep-seated sense of rejection. And as we have noted before, rejection is one of the triggers for compulsive sin. Early sexual stimulation in the life of a child is also traumatic. Molestation and exposure to pornography awaken confusing feelings which tie sexuality to acceptance and closeness. These feelings can then fuel inappropriate behavior later in life.

Many people pass through their first sexual experience in adolescence with an appropriate amount of guilt. But they recover and sexual experimentation does not become the focus of their thoughts and desires. On the other hand, persons who have intense sexual experiences earlier in childhood often begin a life of secrecy, self-doubt and ritualized patterns of sexual acting out as a way of coping with their shame and internal world of pain. Most sexual strugglers portray their childhood as a collection of shameful memories, rather than events from which wisdom was gained.

Although we present the above scenarios as common factors contributing to sexual preoccupation, it is necessary to clearly state that there is not always a direct correlation between a certain type of family life and sexual sin. Sexual desire is one of the most powerful mood altering chemical responses in the brain and anyone at any age, can develop a habit of using sex as a way of escaping unpleasant thoughts and feelings.

We mention the concept of family history and generational sin because it is probable that a man struggling with sexual sin will pick a wife who agrees to a no-talk rule in their new family unit. She is likely to also be a survivor of a dysfunctional family and she will choose to deny or accept his sexual problems in order to stay dependent on him and avoid facing her own insecurities. This new family unit will follow the same distant relational pattern as the family units before it, and it will be a fertile environment for sexual sin to take root in the next generation, unless intervention occurs.

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## Chapter 9 Discussion Questions:

* + 1. Reflect on your childhood home environment. Describe any ways that it could have contributed to your sexual struggle. In what ways did it foster the no-talk, no-trust, no-feelings rules? Describe the qualities of your family system that foster any of the following: performance, isolation of your true self, secrecy, excessive closeness, smothering, or abandonment.
    2. List or describe any traumatic events (sexual or non-sexual) which you think may have contributed to your involvement with “sex as a drug.” These events may be intense sexual events, sexual events equated to love, abandonment events, i.e. death, desertion, neglect, abuse (physical, emotional, or sexual).

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### Chapter 10

The Role of Mothers

The bond between mother and child is foundational for a child’s sense of personality, morality and emotional wellbeing. So we want to touch on the importance of the mother-child relationship and the deep wounding that occurs when there is deprivation or dysfunction in that relationship.

Difficulties in mother/infant bonding occur for many reasons, some of which have to do with the mother and some have to do with circumstances. Many mothers love their children very much but have lives that are not conducive to creating attentive, nurturing homes for their little ones. The mother may be depressed and withdrawn, have several other kids, or a husband who abandoned her, resulting in a great deal of stress and anxiety. The financial difficulties of the family may force the mother to work outside the home during critical stages of development. Or young parents may simply be unaware of the importance of what is happening developmentally in the child during this early stage of life.

Early Bonding

The first year of life is a critical stage in the bonding of mother and child. It is then that the baby begins to take into her tiny world a sense that she is as one who is loved, and receive what Frank Lake calls a “sense of being.” “It is a core sense of warmth that enables the baby to peacefully exist, without feeling a need to earn his acceptability.”13 A sense of being establishes a foundation of security and confidence upon which the child’s personality develops. When acceptance has been internalized, the child has a sense of self; once she has a sense of herself, she can enter into relationship with another person without experiencing overwhelming anxiety.

The dread that an infant experiences at mom’s absence in early life makes her feel as though she is ceasing to exist. That dread that she feels when separated from mother powerfully impacts her, and is recorded as sensations in her little body. Because the child is pre-verbal and cannot think and rationalize as adults do, a lot of pain gets repressed. Latter in life, the person may still feel this pain as anxiety, fear, or depression. It may even be the root of her fear of intimacy. The prospect of emotional vulnerability can raise a subconscious dread of annihilation.

The Absent or Rejecting Mother

As the child grows she sometimes does not get the nurture that she should from her mother. The result is a distressing sense of emptiness, loneliness and restlessness. A mother’s rejection is often indirect and is experienced as a series of small breaks in trust. Young children often misinterpret their mother’s actions, suspecting that they are somehow responsible for them. Examples of indirect actions that contribute to a sense of rejection are:

13 Falling Forward, Craig Lockwood, Desert Stream Press, Anaheim, CA. Page 134.

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* A constantly angry mom.
* A depressed, unresponsive, low energy mom.
* A mood swinging, unpredictable mom.
* A mom who verbally bashes men in general and her husband in particular whom the child loves. If the child is male, he feels that he is also bad and unacceptable.

It is not uncommon for adult men to hold beliefs such as “I can never succeed at making a woman happy” and “Women see me as an irritant. I have no value in their eyes.” These men will simultaneously desire and avoid committed relationships with women, but not know exactly why. Women can also develop a similar belief pattern.

The Over Protective or Engulfing Mother

During the first year of life, the infant does not know that she is separate from her mother. But between ages 1 and 3, the baby starts to realize that she is an individual and starts to test her separateness. A mother should let the child individuate from her. She can make the play area safe so she won’t hurt herself, but will give her space to experience her separateness. She sets proper boundaries where they are needed, but she primarily serves as home base, so that the child can go off and explore alone. Mom is there to welcome the child back. She doesn’t clutch onto the child and inhibit her exploration or punish her when she returns. She facilitates separation and individuation.

A mother who is over attached to her baby will not let the child separate. She will be over protective and keep her inordinately close to her. Lack of separation between mother and child can reach a serious level when she uses the child to nurture herself with the child’s love. Without realizing that her inner-being is being invaded by a larger-than-life mother, the child’s individuality is emotionally engulfed. She has no ability to separate as she grows physically and does not develop an understanding of boundaries.

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## Chapter 10 Discussion Questions:

1. “Being” is a core sense of security that enables a person to peacefully exist without having to earn acceptance. It is the ability to trust that one is loved and significant even if she is doing nothing to earn that significance. Describe your “sense of being.” Where does your acceptance and significance come from?
2. How do you stay emotionally safe in relating to the opposite sex?
3. In *The Road Less Traveled,* M. Scott Peck defines love as, “The will to extend oneself for the purpose of nurturing one’s own or another’s spiritual growth.” He adds that love always requires “an act of work or courage.” How does this idea of love impact the way you think about relating to the opposite sex?

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### Chapter 11

The Role of Fathers

A father has a unique role in establishing a child’s sense of value and identity. He communicates value through his spiritual and emotional connection with his child. He expresses connection through attention, conversation, and play. He points out the uniqueness of the child’s gifts, calling and personality, and he also, affirms him/her with his personal interest in their welfare. When this connection is missing the child’s emotional and spiritual development may flounder.

Both the mother’s and father’s love are essential for a child to have a complete sense of being loved and valued. Without the sense of well-being from mother, and the sense of protection and strength from father, the erotic drive that emerges in adolescents may be misunderstood and misused. Rather than seeing sex as something that adds to the beauty of a committed monogamous relationship, a son may see “scoring” as proof that he is adequate, potent and manly. A daughter may use sex as a substitute for the missing love and affirmation of her father.

Fathers have a high degree of influence on the identity development and behavior of their children through teaching and life example. If a father models and teaches behaviors that are spiritually, emotionally and sexually appropriate, his children will more likely be comfortable in their sexual identity and behavior. Fathers also have a unique place in the family by symbolically representing God the Father. If a father misrepresents the truth about God, his authority and influence can have damaging effects on his children.

### Distortions of the Image of God

There has been much written about the damage done by absent, cruel, shaming, addicted and/or unfaithful fathers. Almost every person can tell stories of times he/she was hurt or disappointed by his/her father’s words, actions or absence. But let’s focus now on how our fathers may have shaped our view of God. Sandra D. Wilson in her book, *Counseling Adult Children of Alcoholics* (Dallas, Word Publishing, 1989) identifies five distortions of God that come through fathers to their children.

* 1. The Cruel and Capricious God

The family environment established by the father was one of fear due to emotional neglect, coupled with harsh treatment. Thus the concept of the fatherhood of God does not sound inviting or comforting to the grown child. Scripture reading and prayer will be accompanied with fear and the painful expectation of being punished by God for not meeting His standards. To this person closeness to God means pain.

* 1. The Demanding and Unforgiving God

The demanding/unforgiving God is a few shades less frightening than the cruel and capricious God. One may earn His approval, but only through hard work and doing good

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Christian deeds. Here the father was a demanding perfectionist but offered little nurture.

This child may become a “good Christian” adult with the wrong motivation.

* 1. The Selective and Unfair God

The selective and unfair God loves others, but not the one who holds this view of God. The child in this scenario carried her sense of “being different and not as good as others” over into her relationship with God. When a person holds this view of God, she gives mental assent to the scriptures that indicate she is a beloved child of God, but in her heart still believes that God discriminates by treating His other children better.

* 1. The Distant and Unavailable God

This view of God often results when dad was not in the home due to death or early abandonment. It can also result from his emotional absence or passivity. The person may believe that God loves her but does not expect God to interact with her in a personal way.

* 1. The Kind and Confused God

In this view, God the father is loving, but weak and ineffective in dealing with the problems of the world or the individual. Here the child has seen her father be confused, weak and ineffective in handling family chaos. The child then transfers her observations to a heavenly father who cannot intervene positively in the lives of his children.

* 1. The Sexually Perverse God

There is another view that is fairly common with victims of a father’s physical or emotional incest. Here the person feels that God will somehow become sexual if her worship becomes too intimate. When she feels close to God, the person also feels sexual arousal. This experience is shameful, confusing, and leaves the person struggling with much ambivalence about herself and God.

### Fathers Impact on Self-Control

The wounds inflicted by a father either physical and/or emotional leave a child unable to create appropriate boundaries and develop a much needed ability to exercise healthy self- control. A daughter will lack inner strength in her love relationships when her father has been absent or emotionally skewed. Often the need for masculine affirmation becomes sexualized. In her sexual exploits, she is really looking for her father’s love and affirmation.

### Forgiving Our Fathers

We need to face the reality that our earthly fathers have failed us in many ways. We need to forgive them and let the love of god as Father, permeate our hearts. But forgiveness cannot be transacted with one general prayer. It is a process of identifying and releasing specific loss, hurt and disappointment. It also involves letting go of protective vows that we have made in response to those hurts.

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## Chapter 11 Discussion Questions:

* + 1. List any of the symptoms of a wounding father relationship that you identified within this chapter?
    2. Which distortions of God were you able to relate to? Describe them and connect them to your relationship with your earthly father.
    3. How do you view masculinity and men?
    4. Identify any vows you have made that impact your relationships with men and women. Connect them with wounding events from your past and take them to God in prayer. Choose to forgive your father and ask for forgiveness and freedom from your self-protective vow.
    5. What is one action you can take this week to improve your relationship with a man in your life and with God?

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### Chapter 12

The Role of the Demonic

##### Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 6:11-12 NAS95)

Katie’s and Susan’s Story

Pornography was so prevalent in the dorms that it became a normal part of Katie’s life during her freshman year in college. By summer break, she was acting out with greater and greater frequency, and occasionally she would be sexually active—on one occasion, with another woman. After the summer, she met a classmate who was a Christian. She got in a Bible study, and just before Thanksgiving, became a follower of Christ.

Pornography, masturbation and acting out sexually now made her feel really guilty and full of shame. She was able to get free for several months, but when she was under stress toward the end of the school year, she would resort to fantasy and masturbation. She tried to rationalize her struggle. “Everyone struggles with this stuff,” she thought to herself, but nonetheless, every time she gave in to it, she felt so full of self-hatred that she began to doubt that God could still love her.

Susan gave her life to Christ in her early twenties while in college. Her life changed very radically. Soon after college Susan met and married a wonderful man. Susan had relied on romantic movies and novels and masturbation to fill her time and meet her emotional needs for many years before and after she became a Christian. The fantasies led to becoming sexually active before she came to Christ. About 10 years into marriage, after three kids came along, she began to struggle with fantasies for other men. This was accompanied by masturbation on a regular basis. She thought that her conversion experience had set her free from all of this. She also struggled with images of fantasy created men when she made love with her husband. She couldn’t get them out of her mind. She felt extremely disheartened and was losing hope that she could ever be free.

The battle to live in sexual purity and to keep our sexual struggles in the light is especially difficult because it involves intense spiritual warfare. As an example of how the demonic is linked to sexual temptation, consider God’s command to Israel to go in and conquer the promised land of Canaan. In many cases, God told Israel to wipe out the entire population of cities because of their sexually idolatrous ways. Two gods of Canaan, Baal-Peor and Ashtorah, were highly erotic in nature, and sexual acts often accompanied their worship. In essence they worshipped the male and female sexual organs. The participants in this kind of worship were held captive by unclean sexual spirits. *(Please see footnote at end of chapter).*

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All sexual acts outside the boundaries of holy matrimony subjugates the worship Jesus made possible in Spirit and truth, to the adulation of carnal pleasure and falls into the category of fleshly wisdom that scripture calls *earthly, sensual, demonic* (James 3:15 NAS95). Acting out in these ways gives Satan legal permission to enslave and afflict those who surrender the members of their bodies to the lusts of the flesh.

### Soul Ties

The prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases has taught us that if two people have a sexual relationship, it’s as though each is having sex with every partner the other person ever slept with. The same holds true in the spiritual realm. In sex, the two become one and the demonic influence to which each partner has opened him or herself up is passed on like a spiritually transmitted disease. This type of bondage is often referred to as a “soul tie.”

A soul tie is a spiritual connection between two people. Beneficial soul ties exist, such as the deep unity possible in marriage where *the two become one flesh*, but other soul ties can be used for the devil’s advantage. Soul ties formed during sex or strong emotional enmeshments outside of marriage will cause someone to become scattered, fragmented, and less than the person God created her to be. They hinder one’s ability to develop intimate relationships in the present. A man or woman may be tormented in different ways due to an ungodly soul tie.

##### Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership has righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever. (2 Corinthians 6:14-15 NAS95)

One of the reasons that Katie and Susan continued to struggle even though they were walking with God were that they both had un-severed soul ties with men, and in Katie’s case a woman, and activities in their past that continued to give the enemy a foothold.

### Dealing with Sexual Images Stored in the Mind

When people give up the use of pornography and romanticized or sexualized fantasies they are still left with a mind full of highly sexualized images. Sexual images from our past will pop into the mind, but this in itself isn’t sin. Sin is entertaining the image and choosing to dwell upon it for our own pleasure. Instead of sliding into a downward spiral of self-condemnation and discontent, we can take our guilt to God in prayer. Realize that the devil is using these images as a hook of shame to rob us of the full joy God wants us to experience as sexual beings created in His image. We can reject the accusations of the enemy in the name, power, and authority of Jesus Christ.

##### This went on day after day until Paul got so exasperated that he turned and spoke to the demon within her. “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her,” he said. And instantly it left her. (Acts 16:2 NLT)

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The Good News is that all authority in heaven and earth has been given to Jesus Christ, and this includes authority over the demonic activity prevalent in unbiblical sexual activity.

Although we’re no match for Satan and his demons, Jesus is! Once sexual sin has been fully recognized, confessed, renounced or repented of, and forgiveness has been received, we can take the authority that Jesus Christ has given us to command any demonic spirits to leave and never return.

### A Spiritual Warfare Listening Prayer Inventory

Going through this *Spiritual Warfare Listening Prayer Inventory* will help you determine where you are in your experience of sexual purity as it relates to spiritual warfare. An excellent way to do this is to spend an hour or two alone with God, listening to Him and seeking His help in dealing with the demonic element of your struggle with purity.

Once you’re alone with God, you can prepare yourself for a time of listening by praying through the guidelines listed below. Then listen to God over the following questions that focus on your past, present, and your past in your present.

1. Still and quiet your soul – *But I have stilled and quieted my soul like a weaned child with its mother.* (Psalm 131:2) This is not a test of how spiritual you are. Don’t try too hard. Relax and trust the new heart Jesus gave you.
2. Exercise authority over the enemy – Pray something like, *In the name of Jesus Christ I prohibit any voice or influence of the world, the flesh, the devil, and even my own understanding from speaking or interfering with this time.* (James 4:7)
3. Invoke His presence – Acknowledge Him as the One who is truly present. Pray something like, *Come, Lord Jesus, in a special way, and manifest Your presence during this time of listening.* (Psalm 70:1)
4. Invite God to search your heart – Ask Him to search you and then talk to Him about what He reveals, and confess any sin. (Psalm 139:23-24)
5. Ask God to communicate with you – *Speak, Lord, for I am listening.* (1 Samuel 3:9-10)
6. Wait in silence – Quiet your heart with the words, *My soul, wait in silence for God alone. Be still and know that I am God.* (Psalm 62:1)
7. Write down your impressions – These may be words, phrases, visual images, or thoughts that come into your mind through the still small voice of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

My Present

1. *Father God, are there any areas of unconfessed sexual sin in my life that I have not brought to you and confessed as sin, renounced, and fully dealt with, including the resulting demonic attachments?* (List those things that come to mind on a separate piece of paper).

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My Past

1. *Lord Jesus, would You reveal to me any ungodly souls ties I have formed with other people throughout my entire life that may be hindering me from walking in purity and devotion to You?* (This could also be a soul tie with a parent, sibling, or other enmeshed relations from the past. List any names that come to mind on a separate piece of paper).

My Past in the Present

1. *Holy Spirit, are there any sexual or emotional images, sexual phrases or fetishes that I treasured in my heart in the past that still trouble me in my present-day life?* (Don’t be in a hurry. List anything that comes to mind on a separate piece of paper).

### Employing the Authority of Christ to Dethrone the Enemy

##### Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 18:18-19)

The *Spiritual Warfare Listening Prayer Inventory* may have exposed areas where the enemy has gained access to you through sexual imagery and activity that you haven’t completely confessed or fully dealt with. When a person deals with the demonic, it’s best to do so with at least one other person present. If you’re part of an *Into the Light* group, you may want to pray together through many of the following prayers in your next study.

The person who is struggling should pray through the prayers of renunciation for himself or herself. This is important. If the person feels unsure of what to pray, he or she can pray after someone else leads in these prayers. Others present can agree with their prayer and pray God’s protection over them.

1. Unconfessed Sexual Sin

Sexual sin that is unconfessed or only partially dealt with can give the demonic a foothold in our lives and make our struggle seem next to hopeless. Once God has revealed areas of sexual sin, it will be necessary to thoroughly deal with any foothold the enemy may have gained through it. Pray through the following steps in the name of the True Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth:

* + Confess the area(s) of sexual sin specifically,
  + Ask for forgiveness,
  + Receive the forgiveness of Jesus Christ,
  + Renounce the sexual sin(s),
  + Exercise the authority of Christ by commanding any demon that may have gained access to you to leave and never return, and

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* Ask for the Holy Spirit to fill the vacated places.

After you’ve prayed through these steps, ask Jesus if He has something to communicate with you. Often He has a word that can take the healing even deeper. Men and women who struggle with sexual sin usually find new freedom in their sexuality when, after confession of sin, they specifically command Baal, Ashtoreth, and any other sexual demonic spirits to leave and never return.

Sample Renunciation Prayer

*In the name of the true Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth I confess and renounce these areas of sexual sin . I ask for Your forgiveness. Thank you Jesus for shedding Your blood for the remission of sin. I receive Your forgiveness. Furthermore, in the name of the true Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth, I command Baal, Ashtoreth, as well as any other demonic sexual spirits that may have gained access to me through this sin to now go to wherever Jesus would send you and never return. I further command that these demonic*

1. Spoken Commitments

Take out your list of soul ties from your *Spiritual Warfare Listening Prayer Inventory.* In any of these relationships, did you make spoken commitments, vows, or simple statements such as, *I will love you forever; I will never love another. Y*ou need to renounce these spoken covenants in order to break the soul tie. When you renounce something, you “take it back” in the authority of Jesus. Because you made the statement verbally, you also renounce it verbally in prayer, making the promise void and empty of power.

For example, Sharon dated several boys in high school and college, but none of these relationships went deep emotionally or sexually. That changed when she was in graduate school. “I never knew it could be like this,” she told Phil the first time they had sex. “You’re the only one who’s ever made me feel this way.” When Phil finished his degree, he took a job in another state, but they talked often by phone and made plans for Sharon to visit him. After a couple of months, though, he told her he wanted to back off from their relationship and date others. Sharon was sure he would change his mind once they were together, but he told her not to come. “I’m sorry, but it’s over,” he said, and hung up.

While they were dating, Sharon had several times told Phil, “You’re the only man I’ll ever love.” Now, sick with anger and grief, she declared, “I’ll never be able to love anyone else.” This, then, is the spoken covenant Sharon needs to renounce to break her soul tie with Phil.

1. Get Rid of Any Gifts Exchanged

Gifts symbolize a relationship and can hold a soul tie in place. If you have a ring, personal gifts, cards, letters, pictures, jewelry, and other “relationship gifts” from a previous relationship, it’s time to get rid of them. Holding onto such gifts symbolizes that this relationship is still important to you, and can actually hold the soul tie in place even after it has been renounced.

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1. Renounce and Break Soul Ties

Sexual contact in relationships (including petting) can create a soul tie that links your soul to another person and hinders you in the area of sexual and emotional wholeness. A fantasy life that is based on movies and novels, or persistent fantasies regarding real people can also have the potential to create soul ties. When praying through soul ties it is important to pray regarding real people you have had sexual contact with, but also a soul tie to your fantasy life if one exists. If you have persistent fantasies involving one or more particular individuals you may want to pray breaking those specific soul ties in addition to the soul tie to your fantasy life in general.

Pray through the following steps in the name of the True Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth:

* + Specifically confess the soul tie or covenant
  + Ask for forgiveness
  + Receive the forgiveness of Jesus Christ
  + Renounce the soul tie
  + Exercise the authority of Christ by commanding any demon that gained access to you through the soul tie or covenant to leave and never return
  + In the name of Jesus Christ:
    - Give back anything your soul may have received from the other person
    - Take back anything your soul may have given to them
  + Ask for the Holy Spirit to fill the vacated places

Sample Soul Tie Breaking Prayer

*In the name of the true Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth I confess and renounce my soul tie with or promise I made to . I ask for Your forgiveness. Thank you Jesus for dying for my sins. I receive Your forgiveness. Furthermore, in the name of the true Lord Jesus Christ, I now break this soul tie giving back anything I took from as well as taking back anything he or she took from me. In Jesus’ name I command any and all demonic spirits that may have gained access to me through this sin to now go to wherever Jesus would send you and never return. I further command that these demonic spirits not*

1. Dealing with Sexual Images

Sexual images we’ve viewed will often keep troubling us even though we’re no longer acting out. The first step in dealing with this foothold is to confess to the Lord Jesus the sin of having opened the door in this way, to repent of whatever was done, and to ask for His forgiveness and then receive it. It’s also good to restate our commitment to keep the door to our soul closed to inappropriate images.

The most effective way is to bring the images to the foot of the Cross and ask God to take them away. Often Jesus will give us a picture or sense of what He does with the images we offered to Him. Finally, we can ask God if He has something He wants to give in return for what we offered Him.

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For example, Sarah had been exposed to pornography during her high school years. This fed the struggle she already had with movies, novels, an obsessive fantasy life including masturbation. Before graduation she came to Christ, later went to college, got married, and was doing well. Oftentimes the images she had treasured in her fantasy life would pop into her mind either when she was making love to her husband, or when there was stress in her relationship with her husband. She had tried everything to get free. After praying and laying the images at the foot of the Cross she began to gain victory over the images. She found it much easier to dismiss any temptations that would come.

If you are present as a support for the person who’s been confessing, you can then pray, *I ask that the neural pathways with the images would be destroyed and new pure and holy pathways would replace them*. If both of you are comfortable with this idea, you can lay hands on the person’s head or shoulder, or even anoint him with oil. Then ask her to pray in agreement with your prayer.

The process of calling the elders to pray for healing as described in James 5:14-16 is also very applicable here. If you do this in a women’s group setting, the men of the group can act as elders.

\_ Footnote to chapter

Baal-Peor – Lord of the gap, opening or slit. “The worship of this idol consisted in exposing that part of the body which all persons usually take the utmost care to conceal.” Jewish Encylcopedia.com. Numbers 25 gives an example of Israel joining herself in the worship of Baal of Peor. Recounting this event, the Psalmist notes that there was demonic involvement in this worship of Baal Peor in Psalm 106.

Ashtoreth – “Ashtoreth was known by several different names (Ashtarte, Astarte, etc.) Depending on the region where she was worshipped. Astarte, the Phoenician name of the primitive Semitic mother-goddess, wherever worshiped, was a goddess of fertility and sexual love.” Jewish Encylcopedia.com

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### Chapter 13

Summary

Transformation in the life of a believer is a process of learning to live as a child of God, beginning at conversion and continuing until physical death. People were created in the image of God to relate to Him and enjoy His companionship forever. We need to learn this truth because sin has severed our relationship and actively hinders its restoration. Our separation from God has left us fearful and distrustful of Him and others around us. God has provided the means of restoration through the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus. By believing in Him and living in open, intimate relationship with Him and others, God miraculously transforms us into His likeness. However, in our sinfulness, we struggle to relate with God on our own terms, and failing, seek to satisfy our thirst with false idols that seem to satisfy, but only separate us further and intensify the pain of our isolation.

In our isolation, when we substitute false intimacy for true intimacy, we risk sexual addiction. Adam and Eve were created to relate intimately with each other as well as with God. But fear of rejection leads us to distance ourselves from others and create an illusion of control through compulsive sexual behavior. By seeking to dull the pain within us by acting out sexually, our pain and shame only intensify and spread to others over time.

The cycles of our compulsive sexual behavior need to be recognized and interrupted. We need to identify the circumstances that prompt our cycle and plan ways to escape. Pain underlies our behavior and needs to be faced and felt without our self-medication. By bringing that pain before God, He can heal us.

God heals us when we surrender ourselves to Him, abandoning our self-protective, destructive and futile methods. When we confess to Him our sin and our inadequacy in overcoming it, God steps in and begins to dispense His Living Water that quenches the thirst of our soul. Instead of battling harder to ward off temptation, we can by faith begin to experience His presence and begin to experience intimacy with Him and with other people according to our created design. This relationship with God requires devotion and discipline in seeking Him through reading Scripture, praying--both petition and listening, and fellowshipping with other believers who are honestly walking the same path.

Without becoming obsessed with figuring ourselves out, it is helpful to uncover the many roots of our pain so that we may understand our response to them, confess our sin where appropriate and ask God to heal those wounds as only He can. When we stop trying to hide from our shame and pain, we may have to go through a period of intensified temptation and emptiness as we wait for God’s healing and joy. God has promised to honor faithful dependence on Him and knows what we need in order to advance in our life-long journey of growing into His mature children. Each temptation over the course of our lives is an opportunity to live by faith that can bring new understanding and deepening intimacy with our Creator.

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