

# **FALSE LOVE**

## **Pursuing Purity after Pornography or Adultery**

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# “False Love”

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## WHAT IS G4?

***G4 groups provide a small group atmosphere where individuals invest a season of their life in overcoming a particular life-dominating struggle of sin or suffering. They provide a safe environment where members learn insights and skills that will allow them to more fully engage in biblical community.***

G4 has 7 core values which guide each group:

**Bible-Based & Gospel-Centered:** Programs and information do not change people. God changes people through the power of the Gospel and the wisdom of His Word. The relational structure of G4 Groups is the vehicle God has ordained to transport the Gospel and Scripture into the lives of His beloved, enslaved, and hurting children.

**Recognize the Difference Between Sin & Suffering:** G4 Groups recognize that struggles of sin are different from struggles of suffering in terms of cause, dynamics, emotional impact, relational influence, and other ways. While every believer is simultaneously a saint, sinner, and sufferer, there are fundamental differences (practically and theologically) between a struggle an individual does (sin) and those that happen to the individual (suffering).

**Built On Honesty & Transparency:** The courage to be honest about our suffering or sin is often the essential expression of faith God calls for in overcoming a life-dominating struggle. G4 Groups create an environment that fosters honesty and transparency by incarnating the love of God and protecting confidentiality within the group.

**Uphold Confidentiality:** We all have a story to tell. G4 Groups are a safe place where group members can be open, honest, and transparent without fear that their issues will be shared outside of the group. G4 group members commit to hold in confidence things shared within the context of the group environment.

**Avoid Struggle-Based Identity:** We recognize that when an individual has struggled with one issue for an extended period of time that struggle begins to define them. G4 Groups are structured in content, duration, and philosophy to alert the participants to this temptation and guide them away from it. G4 Groups strive to teach and model what it means to live out of an identity as a dearly loved child of God.

**Blend Discipleship, Accountability, & A Guided Process:** G4 Groups are more than a Bible study on a given subject. They develop a practical theology of their subject during the group study and guide members through an intentional process during the personal study while the members hold each other accountable.

**Transition Into Larger Small Group Ministry:** The goal is for each G4 Group member to be in a general small group within a year. Group members may choose to be a general small group the whole time. If desired, at “graduation” the G4 Group leader would direct the participant to a small group with a leader who has completed personal study and counseling exercises for that area of struggle. It would be the participant’s choice whether to disclose that was the reason for choosing that leader’s small group.

## The 9 Steps of G4

We do not believe there is a one-size-fits-all solution to the struggles of life. Neither do we believe there is any magic in these particular steps. However, we do believe that these steps capture the major movements of the Gospel in the life of an individual. We also believe that it is through the Gospel that God transforms lives and modifies behavior as He gives us a new heart.

In G4 Groups we attempt to walk through the Gospel in slow motion with a concentrated focus upon a particular life-dominating struggle. We do this in a setting of transparent community because we believe God changes people in the midst of relationships.

We believe that the Gospel speaks to both sin (things we do wrong) and suffering (painful experiences for which we are not responsible) to bring peace, wholeness, and redemption. We also believe that every person is both a sinner and a sufferer. However, we believe the Gospel is best understood and applied when we consider how the Gospel relates to the nature of our struggle. The nine steps below are those used by G4 Groups to address struggles of sin and suffering.

<b>Sin-Based Groups</b>	<b>Suffering-Based Groups</b>
<p>STEP 1. ADMIT I have a struggle I cannot overcome without God.</p>	<p>STEP 1. PREPARE yourself physically, emotionally, and spiritually to face your suffering.</p>
<p>STEP 2. ACKNOWLEDGE the breadth and impact of my sin.</p>	<p>STEP 2. ACKNOWLEDGE the specific history and realness of my suffering.</p>
<p>STEP 3. UNDERSTAND the origin, motive, and history of my sin.</p>	<p>STEP 3. UNDERSTAND the impact of my suffering.</p>
<p>STEP 4. REPENT TO GOD for how my sin replaced and misrepresented Him.</p>	<p>STEP 4. LEARN MY SUFFERING STORY which I use to make sense of my experience.</p>
<p>STEP 5. CONFESS TO THOSE AFFECTED for harm done and seek to make amends.</p>	<p>STEP 5. MOURN the wrongness of what happened and receive God’s comfort.</p>
<p>STEP 6. RESTRUCTURE MY LIFE to rely on God’s grace and Word to transform my life.</p>	<p>STEP 6. LEARN MY GOSPEL STORY by which God gives meaning to my experience.</p>
<p>STEP 7. IMPLEMENT the new structure pervasively with humility and flexibility.</p>	<p>STEP 7. IDENTIFY GOALS that allow me to combat the impact of my suffering.</p>
<p>STEP 8. PERSEVERE in the new life and identity to which God has called me.</p>	<p>STEP 8. PERSEVERE in the new life and identity to which God has called me.</p>
<p>STEP 9. STEWARD all of my life for God’s glory.</p>	<p>STEP 9. STEWARD all of my life for God’s glory.</p>

**To learn more about G4 Groups visit [www.summitrdu.com/g4](http://www.summitrdu.com/g4)**

## “Where Do I Begin?”

In life and counseling, finding the starting point can be difficult. Life is fluid enough that identifying where to begin with a life-dominating struggle can feel like finding the beginning of a circle. In order to help you with this very important question, Freedom Groups have developed a progression of five levels of starting points.

A struggle in one of the higher categories may have many expressions or contributing causes in the lower categories, but unless the upper level concerns are addressed first (i.e., substance abuse should be addressed before conflict resolution skills), efforts at change have a low probability of lasting success. The degree of self-awareness usually increases as you go down the page. The level of denial usually increases as you move up the page.

1. **Safety** – When the basic requirements of safety are not present, then safety takes priority over any other concern. Safety is never an “unfair expectation” from a relationship. If safety is a concern, then you should immediately involve other people (i.e., pastor, counselor, or legal authorities).

This category includes: thoughts of suicide, violence, threats of violence (to people or pets), preventing someone from moving freely in their home, destruction of property, manipulation, coercion, and similar practices.

2. **Substance Abuse / Addiction** – After safety, the use of mind or mood altering substances is the next level of priority concern. Substance abuse makes the life situation worse and inhibits any maturation process. The consistency and stability required for lasting change are disrupted by substance abuse.

This category includes: alcohol, illegal drugs, prescription drug not used according to instructions, inhalants, driving any vehicle with any impairment for any distance, and similar activities.

3. **Trauma** – Past or present events resulting in nightmares, sleeplessness, flashbacks, sense of helplessness, restricted emotional expression, difficulty concentrating, high levels of anxiety, intense feelings of shame, or a strong desire to isolate should be dealt with before trying to refine matters of character or skill. Trauma is a form of suffering that negatively shapes someone’s sense of identity and causes them to begin to constantly expect or brace against the worst.

This category includes: any physical or sexual abuse, significant verbal or emotional abuse, exposure to an act of violence, experience of a disaster, a major loss, or similar experience.

4. **Character** – This refers to persistent dispositions that express themselves in a variety of ways in a variety of settings. Because both the “trigger” and manifestation change regularly and hide when convenient, it is clear that the struggle lies within the core values, beliefs, and priorities of the individual. Skill training alone will not change character.

This category includes: anger, bitterness, fear, greed, jealousy, obsessions, hoarding, envy, laziness, selfishness, pornography, codependency, depression, social anxiety, insecurity, and similar dispositions.

5. **Skill** – With skill level changes there will be a high degree of self-awareness that change is needed in the moment when change is needed. However, confusion or uncertainty prevents an individual from being able to respond in a manner that it is wise and appropriate.

This category includes: conflict resolution, time management, budgeting, planning, and similar skills.

Hopefully, after reading these five points, you will have less of a “jump in anywhere and try anything” mentality towards your struggles. Change is hard but knowing where to start helps to establish confidence. Remember, you are not alone. Christ will meet you and the church will walk with you at any of these five points.

A more detailed version of this material can be found at [bradhambrick.com/traige2](http://bradhambrick.com/traige2).

## Chapter I

### “It’s Not ‘Just Porn’ or We’re Not ‘Just Friends’” ADMIT I have a struggle I cannot overcome without God.

**“Not overcoming my lust and deceit would be more costly than anything God would take me through in the pursuit of His freedom. God is good for having brought me to this point of admitting my sin.”**

**Memorize:** John 3:19-21 (ESV), “And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out by God.” As you memorize this passage reflect upon these key points:

- “Judgment” – This does not have to mean condemnation but agreeing with God on the problem and solution.
- “People loved the darkness” – We all naturally enjoy things that are evil and would destroy us and those we love.
- “Exposed” – Bringing darkness to light is the first action of God’s grace in our life, but it hurts so we resist it.
- “Comes to the light” – Voluntarily surrendering to exposure (admitting) is our first response to God’s grace.
- “Carried out by God” – If you feel like your sin is larger than you can overcome, be encouraged by these words.

#### Teaching Notes

“The message of this book is not that I’m against lust, but that I’m for God’s plan for sexual desire. Yes, lust is bad. But it’s bad because what it perverts is so good (p. 11).” Joshua Harris in *Sex Is Not the Problem (Lust Is)*

“No one deserves sin. Sin is not something to be deserved or desired, but is something to avoid at all cost (p. 50)... The more a person becomes involved in sin, the less he sees it. Sin is a hideous disease that destroys a person’s ability to comprehend its existence (p. 60).” Steve Gallagher in *At the Altar of Sexual Idolatry*

“In our culture sex is everything and sex is nothing (p. 120)... One of the things that porn does is to make us think marriage is for sex. But it’s the other way round: sex is for marriage (p. 125)... So what is sex for? It is, first and foremost, an act of unification, uniting two people into one flesh (p. 122)... That’s why porn—along with all sex outside of marriage—is a sham, a fiction, a lie. You can no more ‘try out’ sex than you can ‘try out’ birth. The very act produces a new reality that cannot be undone (p. 123).” Tim Chester in *Closing the Window*

“These romantic fantasies further increased the distance between her and Jimmy because they were a constant reminder of his failure as a husband. She noticed that the more involved she became in the novels and soaps, the more resentful she felt towards him (p. 112).” Kathy Gallagher in *When His Secret Sin Breaks Your Heart*

“When you start confiding in your friend things you’re reluctant or even resistant to share with your spouse, that’s an indicator the emotional intimacy is greater in the friendship than in the marriage. When something happens and you think about sharing with your friend before you think about sharing with your spouse, that’s another indicator you’ve invited someone to stand between you and your spouse. One of the best indicators of this increasing intimacy is sharing with your friend about the problems you’re having in your marriage (p. 235-236).” Gary & Mona Shriver in *Unfaithful*

“The determining factor in what makes the stimulus pornographic is how a sex addict turns otherwise nonsexual material into sexual fantasy. If you are an addict, this means you must determine what is pornographic for you and not worry about what is pornographic for someone else (p. 31).” Mark Laaser in *Healing the Wounds of Sexual Addiction*

### Embedded Study

This is miserable. Whether you are picking up this material for yourself or to help a friend, you’ve probably tried to avoid this subject for a while. Although unpleasant, this material is vital. It is vital for you personally if you are caught in sexual sin, because you will never know lasting peace and joy while the leach of lust drains your life. It is vital for you as a friend, because sexual sin is reaching epidemic proportions in our culture and must be addressed if we are going to do “relevant” ministry.

“If you preach the gospel in all aspects with the exception of the issues that deal specifically with your time, you are not preaching the gospel at all.” Martin Luther as quoted by Tim Chester in *Closing the Window* (p. 10).

Sex is awkward to talk about, especially when guilt is involved. Even reading about sex when it has to do with sin. Thinking about confession is as painful as sex is fun; as repulsive as sex is attractive. The equal and opposite force of what drew you to sexual sin will try to drive you away from this study. Satan, the one seeking to destroy your life and relationships (1 Pet. 5:8) wants to keep you from this study, especially in the openness of a G4 group or counseling relationship, as much as he wanted you to sin.

One of the things that makes sexual sin hard to talk about is the stereotypes that we place on those who struggle with lust. It feels like if you admit that you struggle with sexual sin that you are confessing to being a pedophile, a social misfit, or a danger to society. Our goal in these materials is to speak to the real dangers of sexual sin without reinforcing these stereotypes.

“Sex addicts, however, do not fit the popular stereotypes. They are otherwise gentle and kind. They care deeply for others. To fellow church members they appear to be ideal Christians (p. 16).” Mark Laaser in *Healing the Wounds of Sexual Addiction*

**Exercise:** Stop and pray. This will be a crucial exercise every time you feel the temptation to flee from the light of God’s grace into the false protection of sin and secrecy. Stop and pray every time you want to stop this study prematurely. Stop and pray every time you react to this material with defensiveness or excuses. Prayer is an expression of faith and the realization that you are incapable of completing this journey without God. Use the first part of “The Gospel Prayer” (provided below) to guide your prayer during times when shame tempts you to despair, hide, or stop.

“In Christ, there is nothing I can do that would make You love me more, and nothing I have done that makes You love me less (p. 40).” J.D. Greear in *Gospel*

### Assessing Your Level of Motivation

“Quitting smoking is easy. I’ve done it a couple dozen times,” captures well the pattern of trying to change any unwanted but enjoyable behavior. We want to, but we don’t. We’re motivated, but we’re not. We think we should, but wish people would just leave us alone. This mindset is called “ambivalence” – feeling two contradictory emotions about the same thing. Even if we didn’t know what ambivalence was, we’re good at it.

**Read James 1:5-8.** This is often a guilt passage. We read it and think, “If it applies to me, I should freak out because it sounds really bad.” Start with verse five and realize the passage begins with presenting God as generous. God is not upset about supplying what we need in our double-minded moments. This will help you not doubt that there is hope for your fickle desire to change (v. 6). God is a gentleman. He won’t change us against our will (v. 7). But God is also loving and warns us against the dangers of our double-minded tendency. At this stage in your journey, you’re just getting comfortable admitting what God already knows. There is hope because God is not surprised even if we are surprised when we admit how bad things have gotten. Hope begins where you are and God will always join you there.

You need to name this tendency early in your journey or this attempt will merely be the latest edition of your good intentions. Don’t feel ashamed of your conflicted motives. God already knows and he still wants to help. The only person you can lie to is yourself and those who love you. In this section, you will look at five levels of motivation from Carlo DiClemente in *Addictions and Change* (bold text only). In the parentheses, we’ll map out how these correlate with the nine step journey of this study.

**I. Pre-Contemplation** (before you started): This is the stage when you don’t anticipate making any changes in the foreseeable future because you don’t think they are needed. You are probably annoyed and offended if someone suggests that you change. “Change” as a concept is either not on your radar or is met with resistance instead of consideration.

- 2. Contemplation** (Step 1): Now you are beginning to believe that change might be beneficial and are wondering what the process might look like. You are trying to decide if change is “possible,” and, if so, if it’s “worth it.” You want to know what would be required and whether these sacrifices would produce a more satisfying life than continuing to neglect them.
- 3. Preparation** (Steps 2-4): In this phase your consideration becomes more concrete. You gather the information necessary to enact an effective and sustainable plan. You assess obstacles; both logistical (external) and motivational (internal). You begin to enlist people to come alongside of you for the journey.
- 4. Action** (Steps 5-7): At this point plans come to life; ideas become choices. Progress is made and setbacks are navigated. There are successes and failures, but the trajectory of your journey is forward. Techniques become habits and habits become a lifestyle. The roles once filled by your lust and lies are now filled with healthier and more satisfying ways of managing life.
- 5. Maintenance** (Steps 8-9): A new lifestyle is embraced. Increasingly your emotions and thought patterns conform to this new lifestyle. Lust is no longer your “reward or escape of choice.” At this stage you begin the work of restoring relationships and pursuing interests that were damaged or made impossible by sexual sin.

**Exercise:** In the margin beside these five levels of motivation write “today” beside where your motivation is now. Write significant dates or events in the margin that came to mind when you read each description. Chances are this is not your first attempt at this journey. Recognizing where you will begin to cover new motivational-terrain is important. Begin now realizing that every relapse is an opportunity to learn. There is no shame in falling; only quitting.

“Motivation for change occurs when people perceive a discrepancy between where they are and where they want to be (p. 8).” William Miller, et al in *Motivational Enhancement Therapy Manual*

### Sexual Sin Evaluation

**Instructions:** Read the following descriptive statements. As you read them, think of your total experience of sexual sin; not just where you think you are “now,” The purpose of this evaluation is to give a complete picture of what needs to be changed. Any dishonesty on this evaluation will impair your ability to overcome sexual sin and live in healthy, real relationships. Mark the answer that best fits how you respond:

**(N) almost never, (R) rarely, (S) sometimes, (F) frequently, or (A) almost always.**

When completing this evaluation, it is important to note that “sexual” or “attractive” do not have to mean visual. They are meant to carry the broader connotation of the word “intimate.” This involves both closeness and excitement.

Additional copies of this evaluation can be found at: [www.bradhambrick.com/falselove](http://www.bradhambrick.com/falselove).

1. I rank people based upon their attractiveness or my preferred romantic qualities.	<b>N</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>A</b>
2. I ignore or think less of people I find unattractive or uninteresting.	<b>N</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>A</b>
3. I compare the man and woman in a couple to see who “married up.”	<b>N</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>A</b>
4. I take more than a glance at an attractive person other than my spouse.	<b>N</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>A</b>
5. I have preferred features I observe, compare, and “score” in other people.	<b>N</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>A</b>
6. I tell or participate in humor that has sexual overtones.	<b>N</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>A</b>
7. I look for places and times to catch revealing glimpses under other’s clothing.	<b>N</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>A</b>
8. I do not bounce my eyes from sexual advertisements or commercials.	<b>N</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>A</b>
9. I go out of my way to be around people I find attractive or romantically stimulating.	<b>N</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>A</b>
10. I wonder if people are interested in me romantically after a conversation.	<b>N</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>A</b>
11. I am preoccupied with sexual thoughts or self-made romantic narratives.	<b>N</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>A</b>
12. I fantasize about ways I could become more desirable to others.	<b>N</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>A</b>
13. I place myself in the romantic plots of books, movies, or pornography.	<b>N</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>A</b>
14. I am often disappointed in real relationships.	<b>N</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>A</b>
15. I use romantic fantasy as a way to escape from stressful situations.	<b>N</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>A</b>
16. I masturbate.	<b>N</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>A</b>
17. I seek sexually arousing articles and pictures on the internet or in print.	<b>N</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>A</b>
18. I search for non-nude arousing images in magazines or print materials.	<b>N</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>A</b>

19. I visit non-nudity or non-erotic websites for their sexual content.	N	R	S	F	A
20. I surf social media websites for arousing images or conversation.	N	R	S	F	A
21. I keep a stash of images or stories with which I can entertain myself.	N	R	S	F	A
22. I visit websites with nude images and/or sexual stories.	N	R	S	F	A
23. I have preferred sexual websites I visit and keep up with their content.	N	R	S	F	A
24. I visit strip clubs, adult bookstores, or movie houses.	N	R	S	F	A
25. I have developed a preference for specific types of sexual content or stories.	N	R	S	F	A
26. I can name multiple porn stars or romantic story writers.	N	R	S	F	A
27. I have gotten a virus on my computer from visiting pornographic websites.	N	R	S	F	A
28. I chat with people I do not know on-line about sex.	N	R	S	F	A
29. I call 1-900 numbers for sexual conversation.	N	R	S	F	A
30. I have posted my personal information on dating websites.	N	R	S	F	A
31. I share the struggles of my marriage with a member of the opposite sex.	N	R	S	F	A
32. I do not tell my spouse about conversations with my opposite sex "friend."	N	R	S	F	A
33. I am more interested in talking to my "friend" than my spouse.	N	R	S	F	A
34. I put more forethought into conversations with my "friend" than my spouse.	N	R	S	F	A
35. I think my "friend" understands me better or judges me less than my spouse.	N	R	S	F	A
36. I give my "friend" gifts or serve them in ways I do not with other friends.	N	R	S	F	A
37. I have private, unknown to my spouse, channels of communication with my "friend."	N	R	S	F	A
38. Conversations with my "friend" are flirty and have sexual overtones.	N	R	S	F	A
39. I tell my "friend" how much I enjoy talking and being with him/her.	N	R	S	F	A
40. I hold hands, give tight hugs, or kiss my "friend."	N	R	S	F	A
41. I have touched my friend's face, legs, chest, or genitals.	N	R	S	F	A
42. I have had sexually explicit conversations with my "friend" with masturbation.	N	R	S	F	A
43. I seek opportunities to "inadvertently" touch others for my arousal.	N	R	S	F	A
44. I seek opportunities to see others nude without their awareness.	N	R	S	F	A
45. I am aroused by the thought of others seeing me nude.	N	R	S	F	A
46. I have had a one-time sexual encounter with someone who is not my spouse.	N	R	S	F	A
47. I have had multiple one-time sexual encounters.	N	R	S	F	A
48. I have paid for sex with a prostitute.	N	R	S	F	A
49. I have attended events or places knowingly pursuing sex.	N	R	S	F	A
50. I have proposed having sex with someone and been turned down.	N	R	S	F	A
51. I have put my personal information on a website looking for a sex partner.	N	R	S	F	A
52. I am in a sexually active relationship with someone other than my spouse.	N	R	S	F	A
53. I am hiding expenses that are incurred while courting this relationship.	N	R	S	F	A
54. I am pulling away from friends who would disapprove of my adultery.	N	R	S	F	A
55. The sex in the adulterous relationship is an expression of genuine affection.	N	R	S	F	A
56. I recognize what I am risking for my adultery partner and continue to do so.	N	R	S	F	A
57. I overtly express "I love you" to my adultery partner.	N	R	S	F	A
58. One or both of us have discussed leaving our spouses for each other.	N	R	S	F	A
59. I resent my spouse for being the reason I am not with my adultery partner.	N	R	S	F	A
60. I have researched the possibility of divorce.	N	R	S	F	A
61. I have thought about when and how to tell my spouse or kids I'm leaving.	N	R	S	F	A
62. I feel more sadness than guilt when I have to leave my adultery partner.	N	R	S	F	A
63. I view myself as belonging to my adultery partner more than my spouse.	N	R	S	F	A
64. I have forced another adult to have sex against their will.	N	R	S	F	A
65. I have touched or initiated a minor to touching me sexually.	N	R	S	F	A
66. As an adult, I have had sex with a minor or viewed child pornography.	N	R	S	F	A
67. I struggle with same sex attraction.	N	R	S	F	A

**Scoring Key:** Give yourself one point for an "S" response, two points for an "F" response, and three points for an "A" response. If your total score matches the total number of questions, that is an area of concern. If your total score comes close to doubling the total number of questions, it is a significant concern. If your total score more than doubles the total number of questions, it should be considered a life-dominating struggle.

A self-scoring version of this assessment can be found at: [bradhambrick.com/falselove](http://bradhambrick.com/falselove).

**Other Areas of Evaluation:** The N-R-S-F-A scale focuses primarily upon type or frequency of struggle, so beneath the description of each lust, there will also be questions that look at other ways (besides type and frequency of sin) to assess the severity of our struggle.

The progression of this evaluation goes from objectifying people, public visual lust, private narrative lust, soft pornography, hard pornography, interaction with a real anonymous person, emotional affair without touch, sexual touching without sex, one time affair, affair in an ongoing relationship, pseudo-marriage affair, illegal sexual activity, and same sex attraction (as we will discuss later, often same sex attraction is more about identity than lust, and if that is the case for you then we would suggest other resources to help you process this experience in a God-honoring way) . **However, this progression is not meant to imply that this is the developmental cycle of sexual sin.**

There is adultery that did not begin with pornography. Pornography does not necessarily lead to adultery. The purpose of the progression is to provide the rationale for why Jesus would teach that to look at someone with “lustful intent” is a form of or seed for adultery. While the progression is not an inevitable slippery slope, reading the descriptions of the full journey into lustful depravity should sober you towards your sin. Figure 1 provides a visual of the “small steps” between lust and adultery.

# Lust to Adultery

1. **Objectifying A Person:** Reducing people to a certain set of appealing features and measuring people’s value by how much they please you.
2. **Public Visual Lust:** Using the objectification above as a scoring system and savoring actual people.
3. **Private Narrative Lust:** Allowing the scoring system to develop into a story in which you interact with someone in your imagination.
4. **“Soft” Porn:** Using print, television, or internet to provide more “choice” but non-nude objects of lust and imagination.
5. **Full Porn:** Pursuing nude images and videos on the internet or other media forms and having the imagination expanded by professional “story tellers.” The frequency, duration, and perversion of this activity can vary.
6. **Interaction With a Real, Anonymous Person:** The other participant in the story becomes a real person with a real voice and a free will. This can be 1 (900) numbers, provocative chat rooms, strip club, or “sexting.”
7. **Emotional Relationship with a Known Person Without Touch:** No longer is the other real person unknown. They have a real name, face, and history. They know your real name, face, and history.
8. **Emotional Affair with Touch, Without Sex:** This is probably the rarest item on the list, although it is frequently said to exist. This is a relationship with a real person with kissing, caressing, fondling, and other non-intercourse affections.
9. **One Time Sexual Affair:** Now the intercourse barrier has been crossed, but (as in the case of a prostitute or drunken business trip fling) the relational connection may be low.
10. **Affair in Connected Relationship:** In terms of marital threat, the sexual affair is now secondary to the deepening “love” between the spouse and adultery partner. Sex is no longer a mere expression of passion, but also devotion.
11. **Affair as Pseudo-Spouse / Leaving:** No longer is the faithful spouse making the decision regarding divorce. The unfaithful spouse is the active party seeking to dissolve the marriage in order to pursue their adultery partner.

*Figure 1: Sample Progression from Lust to Adultery*

**Read Matthew 5:21-30.** In this passage Jesus deals with two subjects—anger and lust—in the same way: identify the heart issue, warn against the full grown sin, and call for radical action even at great personal cost. If your instinct is to argue that people should not face prison time or execution for common anger, you are both right and completely missing the point. Jesus is warning you not advocating public policy. Jesus is saying, “Take whatever steps are necessary to remove lust from your life. Unless your excuse is of greater consequence than losing an eye or hand, it is just that—an excuse.” Don’t continue to allow a pattern of behavior that will destroy your life and hurt those you love to persist in your life. Jesus’ warning to you is motivated by love, not anger.

## ➤ Questions 1-3: ( Total: \_\_\_\_\_ in 3 questions)

This set of statements describes sexual sin that expresses itself through **objectifying people**. A person is more than a body. A person is more than a source of physical and emotional pleasure. Lust begins by removing the soul or personhood from someone we want to enjoy. The possibility of an authentic relationship is lost when we do this.

What aspects of a person (i.e., body, personality, character) do you most highly value (i.e., “grade”)? How has this led to unhealthy relationships or unwise choices? How has this led to isolation or insecurity in your life?

## ➤ Questions 4-9: ( Total: \_\_\_\_\_ in 6 questions)

This set of statements describes sexual sin that expresses itself through **public visual lust**. Visual lust is when our criteria of objectification becomes the lens by which we see our world. It is less what we do (i.e., stare, ogle) and more how we evaluate life. Lust begins to define words like good, exciting, desirable, and worthwhile.

How does what “catches your eye” pass on values to those you love and lead? What do you honor, praise, ridicule, or disrespect because of the influence of your lust?

## ➤ Questions 10-15: ( Total: \_\_\_\_\_ in 6 questions)

This set of statements describes sexual sin that expresses itself through **private narrative lust**. The story (i.e., being strong, being pursued, escape, being rescued, etc...) can be more intoxicating than the visual; hence, romance movies and pornography use these themes in their plot development.

What narratives most excite your lusts? How does your entertaining these narratives increase your dissatisfaction with real life and real people?

## ➤ Questions 16-21: ( Total: \_\_\_\_\_ in 6 questions)

This set of statements describes sexual sin that expresses itself through **soft porn**. It is through non-nude images or non-erotic stories that unrealistic ideals are made to seem realistic, reasonable, and deserved without the emotional interference of guilt.

What are your sources of soft porn images or stories? How have you convinced yourself they are “not that bad” and allowed them to sustain the other expressions of lust in your life?

## ➤ Questions 22-27: ( Total: \_\_\_\_\_ in 6 questions)

This set of statements describes sexual sin that expresses itself through **hard porn**. Now both professional actors and professional story tellers are involved in bringing your romantic or sexual fantasies to life. This stretches your lust-based imagination and adds the sense that you are a connoisseur of something excellent to be refined rather than a participant in something vile to be destroyed.

How many hours per week do you spend watching pornography? What life situations have been highly sexualized in your imagination through the exposure to pornography? Are you trying to pressure your spouse to act, dress, or talk like what you see in the pornography?

## ➤ Questions 28-30: ( Total: \_\_\_\_\_ in 3 questions)

This set of statements describes sexual sin that expresses itself through **interaction with a real but anonymous person**. Now the object of lust (still rarely viewed as a real person with a soul) has a mind and will of his/her own. They still have a vested interest (financial or seeking companionship in the same venue) in pleasing you, but it is not a pre-recorded scene and, therefore, gives the façade of a real relationship.

How much money are you spending per month on this sexual talk or chat? How many hours are you spending per week in sexual talk or chat? Do you mostly enjoy the sexual talk or do you go to the anonymous sources to feel free to have a “normal” conversation?

➤ Questions 31-39: ( Total: \_\_\_\_\_ in 9 questions)

This set of statements describes sexual sin that expresses itself through an **emotional affair without touch**. Lust here is more for the person than their body, but you are still pursuing something that is not yours (Exo. 20:17, 1 Cor. 7:4) and, thereby, expressing discontentment with God and sinning against your marriage covenant. There is now a person who can pursue you back and ending the sin now feels like the betrayal of a friend.

“If you’re the infidel... even though you were in the driver’s seat in initiating the affair, at this stage you’re in the passenger seat (p. 117).” Dave Carder in *Torn Asunder*

How many choices do you make per day with conscious thought of your “friend” (i.e., what you will wear, arranging your schedule)? What social relationships are becoming strained or distant because of this emotional affair?

➤ Questions 40-45: ( Total: \_\_\_\_\_ in 6 questions)

This set of statements describes sexual sin that expresses itself through **sexual touch without sex**. This category contains both the progressing sexual affair and intentional “accidental” touching for sexual pleasure. Either way the sexual sin is becoming bolder and taking more risks in order to find its fulfillment. Risk adds to the stimulation of sexual sin and becomes a false standard by which real relationships and sex are measured.

What social risks are you taking that would have previously scared you? What lines have you crossed that you would have previously considered absolutely wrong?

➤ Questions 46-51: ( Total: \_\_\_\_\_ in 6 questions)

This set of statements describes sexual sin that expresses itself through **one time sexual encounter / affair**. There is no longer a line for you to pretend you won’t cross. The question now is: how long will you hide your sin and how close will you allow the extra-marital relationship to develop?

What parts of your lifestyle contributed to you having the freedom to have an affair without getting caught? Are you willing to put your spouse (or future spouse) at risk for STD’s in order to hide your sin by not getting tested?

➤ Questions 52-57: ( Total: \_\_\_\_\_ in 6 questions)

This set of statements describes sexual sin that expresses itself through an **affair in a committed relationship**. Sex now means something to you. You can no longer hide behind the lie “it’s only sex” (which was never true). Ending the sin now feels like it would require “closure,” which is a noble word for relapse.

In what ways has your adultery partner become the standard by which you measure your spouse? What do you criticize in your spouse and praise in your adultery partner in order to justify your actions?

➤ Questions 58-63: ( Total: \_\_\_\_\_ in 6 questions)

This set of statements describes sexual sin that expresses itself through an **affair as pseudo-spouse**. You are no longer thinking about how to tell your spouse the truth and wondering if he/she will take you back; you’re trying to figure out how to tell his/her it’s over and wondering what your “new life” will be like.

How has your happiness trumped the importance of the well-being of anyone else in your life? Can you really believe the lie that “nobody in your life can be happy unless you’re happy”? That mindset will also destroy any of the “happily ever after” stories you’re telling yourself about this new relationship.

➤ Questions 64-66: ( Total: \_\_\_\_\_ in 3 questions)

This set of statements describes sexual sin that expresses itself through **illegal sexual sin**. Your happiness is all that matters any more. No longer does the other person have to be a willing participant in or able to consent to your pleasure. It’s all about you and your desires are destroying you and anyone they can get their hands on.

As hard as it is to hear, you need to know that either (a) you can turn yourself in and receive the mercy that comes with a self-reporting sexual offender or (b) you can wait, destroy more lives, and face greater consequences. There is forgiveness and hope for change, but it begins with admitting your actions to those God has given the civil authority to protect the innocent. You need to immediately talk to your counselor, pastor, or other mature friend

about what you need to do and why. They can serve as a source of accountability and support as you take this difficult step.

➤ **Questions 67:** ( Total: \_\_\_\_\_ in 1 questions)

This statement describes sexual sin that expresses itself through **same sex attraction**. There are times when same sex attraction is the result of an increasing perverse sexual appetite, but can also be rooted in many other factors. If you can see that your same sex attraction has grown from a growing sinful sexual appetite, this study would benefit you. If not, it is advised that you consider resources from [sexualidentityinstitute.org](http://sexualidentityinstitute.org) seek or Christian counseling.

Did your attraction from the same sex develop as you sought more intense and diverse experiences of sexual pleasure or as you were exposed to homosexual pornography in an already aroused and spiritually compromised state? If not consider resources from the Sexual Identity Institute (see link above).

**Question:** Am I a sex addict? Is that even a real thing? Would that make my sexual activity not sinful? The relational dynamic of sexual sin complicates the traditional view of addiction, even if you adhere to a disease model. Many of the books referenced in this study use the language of addiction (we reference these books because they have valuable insight into the description and assessment of sexual sin struggles). The False Love materials use the term addiction to refer to a life-dominating sin struggle, but do not believe that all sexual sin addressed in this study necessarily mean you are an addict. If you wonder if your sexual sin has an addictive quality, answer the ten questions below. The more items you mark “yes” the more life-dominating your sexual sin has become.

- |     |    |  |
|-----|----|--|
| Yes | No | Repeated failure to resist sexual impulses   |
| Yes | No | The amount of time and degree of offensiveness of your sexual sin is increasing                    |
| Yes | No | Unsuccessful efforts to stop, reduce, or control your sexual sin                                   |
| Yes | No | Spend a significant amount of time obtaining sex or arousal  |
| Yes | No | Preoccupied with sex, sexual behavior, sexual humor, or planning for next arousal episode          |
| Yes | No | Engaging in sexual behavior when it interferes with job, school, home, or social expectations      |
| Yes | No | Continue sexual behavior when it negatively impacts marriage, social, emotional, or spiritual life |
| Yes | No | Increasing in intensity, frequency, depravity, or risk is necessary to obtain the desired effect   |
| Yes | No | Sacrificing social, recreational, or other healthy outlets for sexual release or relationship      |
| Yes | No | Experience distress, anxiety, restlessness, or irritability if unable to engage in the behavior    |

**Both Lust AND Lying**

Lust and lying go together, almost as if they are two sides of the same coin. Both involve living in a fantasy world (artificial reality) or our own making; created to suit our own self-interest and tailored to our specific desires. If lust is ever to be broken, then the inevitable companion sin of lying must also be admitted and overcome.

“I was beginning to realize that my problems were not just sexual but revolved around a lifestyle of lying and deceit. Up until this time, had I been asked if I was a liar, I would have been offended and would have answered with an emphatic ‘No!’ Sadly, I would have believed I was telling the truth (p. 29).” Earl & Sandy Wilson, et al in *Restoring the Fallen*

**Read Numbers 32:23, Proverbs 15:3, Job 34:21, Luke 8:17, and Hebrews 4:13.** Chances are you have already experienced the truth of these verses. We lie because we believe we can control the truth within the stories we tell and the information we do or don’t give. We believe we are larger than the truth rather than believing that truth is the reality in which we live. We can no more control truth than we can control the wind. As you read this section on lying, remind yourself regularly that honesty is not optional, only the timing and willfulness of honesty can be chosen. Truth will be known. The only question is whether your character will grow as you disclose it or whether you will live in fear and darkness until light invades your life against your will and to your shame. Pause and pray again for the courage to be honest, because truth-speaking and sexual purity are also two sides of the same coin. *You will never be more pure than you are honest!*

**Types of Lies**

We begin the process of deceit by so limiting our definition of lying that none of our deceptive behavior is “technically a lie.” As long as there was some element of truth in what we said and the answer contained some relevance to the question asked,

then we try to convince our conscience it can “plead the fifth” and we portray those who are dissatisfied with our evasive or incomplete responses as being “unreasonable.” That way of thinking will leave you forever trapped in your sin and loneliness.

What is truth-telling? Honesty is living without secrets. Honesty is taking the risk of being known rather than the risk of getting away with it. Honesty is being able to look into the eyes of someone who loves you and being able to say, “You know me.” Honesty is being one person all the time with all people. Honesty is the freedom that we are trying to find in our sin.

“If you tell the truth, you don’t have to remember anything.” Mark Twain as quoted by Lou Priolo in *Deception*

We are going to define twelve different types of lying (modified and expanded from Lou Priolo’s booklet *Deception: Letting Go of Lying*; bold text only). As you read through the list, reflect instead of debating technicalities. For the time being refuse to give yourself the benefit of the doubt. If it’s questionable, it’s deceitful. Begin now loving God and loving others more than you love yourself through self-protection.

“Often the one who has fallen is a powerful person who is able to intimidate those around him or her and convincingly present a distorted view of reality, seeking to impose it on others (p. 36)... Secret-keeping allows the person to perpetuate sinful patterns. It also facilitates the sinner’s denial about the full extent of the sin and its impact (p. 75).” Earl & Sandy Wilson, et al in *Restoring the Fallen*

If as you read through the list you begin to feel “I can’t say anything without it being considered a lie,” then allow that thought to sober you and prepare you for the next step – Acknowledge the Breadth and Impact of My Sin (step two).

1. **Changing Facts:** This is the heading under which all “active lying” falls. Here the story is true, but key pieces of the story are changed. Example – *Saying you were working on the taxes when you were looking at pornography or saying you were talking to your boss on the phone when you were talking to your adultery partner.* The fact that your lies are within a true story and hard to verify gives the false impression that you will be able to control the lying process.

How have you lied about your sexual sin by “changing facts”? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. **Omitting Facts:** This is the heading under which all “passive lying” falls. Here the story is true, but there are “dark spots” in the story. Example – *Telling what you did all day except for the 45 minutes you met up with your adultery partner, or telling about the work you accomplished on the computer except for the time looking at pornography.* Often people who “omit facts” get defensive when they are called liars. But omission of known, important facts is lying.

How have you lied about your sexual sin by “omitting facts”? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. **False “Facts”:** This is a step beyond changing facts. It involves making up an entire scenario and is a step away from a double life (lying type #5). Example – *While explaining why you were not home when expected, you make up a traffic accident that delayed you by an hour. In order to explain the virus or pop ups on the computer, you make up a story about letting your co-worker borrow your laptop.* Lying of this type is hard to pull off and requires the more elaborate efforts below in order to support these false “facts.”

How have you lied about your sexual sin by “false facts”? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. **False Emotion:** Now you have to play the part. If your lies are true, then they would require certain emotions. If you are going to remain “free,” then you must become an actor (the role itself implies lying when the “audience” does not know it’s watching a “show”). Tim Chester and Steve Gallagher give common examples of what this type of lying looks like.

“The secret that you hide from your wife will create a barrier in your relationship. You may criticize her in order to feel better about your own shortcomings. You will distance yourself from her to avoid any chance of exposure... In some cases you may even pick a fight or find fault with your wife, to justify your porn use (p.24).” Tim Chester in *Closing the Window*

“The man who is being controlled by sin will often be overly sensitive to criticism, blowing every imagined slight out of proportion (p. 26).” Steve Gallagher in *At the Altar of Sexual Idolatry*

How have you lied about your sexual sin by “false emotion”? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. **False “Story”:** False facts produce false emotions. Together they require a false story. Your lies are starting to create their own world in which they could be true. You are forced to try to live between these two worlds; reality won’t bend and your lies can’t break without you being found out. You and those that know you (those that are left anyway) are forced to live stretched between these two worlds. Example – *What you say about the nature of your job, daily routine, spending habits, and computer activity begin to be more and more fiction.*

How have you lied about your sexual sin by “false story”? \_\_\_\_\_

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6. **Minimizing:** Maybe you are “smart enough” not to take the false route. Everyone can see how that would inevitably blow up in your face. The “better” route is to not change the facts but the significance of those facts. Example – *You talk about “just porn” or being “just friends.” Or, you talk about your sexual sin in coded language such as a “slip” or having a “bad day.”*

Minimizing is one of the more popular methods of lying (to others and to yourself) about sexual sin. The following list of minimizing statements are modified and adapted from the works Joshua Harris in *Sex Is Not the Problem (Lust Is)*, Stephen Arterburn and Fred Stoeker in *Everyman’s Battle*, Steve Gallagher in *At the Altar of Sexual Idolatry*, and Earl & Sandy Wilson, et al in *Restoring the Fallen*. Mark the ones that you are prone to use to minimize or justify your sexual sin.

- Lust is no big deal (Job 31:11-12)
- A little sinful fantasizing won’t hurt (Rom 8:6, 13:14; Gal 6:7-8)
- Taking radical action against sin isn’t necessary (Matt 5:29-30; 2 Tim 2:22)
- God won’t mind a little compromise (Col 3:5-6; Eph 5:3)
- It’s my body and I can do what I want with it (1 Cor 6:18-20)
- I can’t control my sex drive (1 Thes 4:3-6)
- Looking at a few pornographic pictures won’t affect me (Prov 6:25-27; Psalm 101:3)
- I won’t experience any consequences for indulging in my lust (Rom 14:12; Heb 12:6; James 1:15)
- People get away with adultery (Prov 5:3-11)
- God is keeping something good from me (Psalm 84:10-12)
- The pleasure lust promises is better and more real than God’s pleasure (Psalm 16:11)
- Fulfilling my lust will satisfy me (Lam 3:24-26; Prov 19:23)
- Too much purity will keep me from seeing and enjoying beauty (Matt 5:8; Psalm 117:7; Isa 33:17)
- If anyone finds out you’ll be a laughingstock.
- Lust is impossible to conquer.
- You’re being too legalistic.
- I’m walking with God. I just have this one little problem.
- I’m going through a difficult period in my life right now. I’ll come out of it.
- God understands that I am a man and that I have natural passions.
- I deserve to have some fun.
- I’m tired of dealing with all this pain.
- I’m not in love anymore so why honor the marriage?

How have you lied about your sexual sin by “minimizing”? \_\_\_\_\_

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7. **Blame-Shifting:** Maybe you accept the facts and admit how serious the problem is, but you lie by shifting the responsibility. It’s true and it’s bad, but it’s not my fault.

“The truth is, before a person can ever hope to overcome habitual sin, he must first be willing to take responsibility for his own actions (p. 102).” Steve Gallagher in *At the Altar of Sexual Idolatry*

There are several strategies for lying by blame-shifting that are common. Mark the ones that you are prone to use in order to explain your sexual sin in a way that makes you less responsible.

- **My gender / needs** – This is the common pop-psychology blame-shifting method that is even endorsed by many popular Christian authors. Example – *That’s just how men / women are. I had to find a release. I had to fill my “love tank” somewhere.*

- **My spouse** – This is often paired with the “needs” blame-shifting method above. The summary of this method is: *If my spouse treated me the way I wanted to be treated, then I would not sin.* The responsibility for honoring God is shifted from self to spouse.
 

“The offending spouse sometimes blames the mate or a deteriorating marriage for the affair. Poor companionship and a lack of lovemaking make a couple more vulnerable, but there is still a choice. If you leave the keys in your car and someone steals it, it is still the thief’s fault. The adulterer chose to have the affair (p. 348).” Doug Rosenau in *A Celebration of Sex*
- **My history / personality** – Sexual sin may be influenced by a history sexual abuse, early sexualization, or personality factors such as compulsivity (such factors will be discussed in chapter three). But to blame these factors for one’s sexual sin is a deceptive form of blame-shifting.
- **Manipulation, Guilt, and Criticizing Others** – Blame-shifting is a form of manipulation. Few people want to admit this, but until you do attempts to reconcile your marriage (if married) will be severely hampered. Blame-shifting is the attempt to transfer guilt from self to another person. Within a marriage this is almost always done by criticism, condemnation, or implying your spouse thinks they are better than you.
- **“It Just Happened”** – No it didn’t. Sin requires a sinner, just as fishing requires a fisherman. For many this is an appealing form of blame-shifting because it allows everyone to be innocent (no manipulation, guilt, or criticizing).
- **“I Was Seduced”** – We are seduced because we want to be seduced. People fall for “get rich quick” schemes because they want to be rich. The salesman may be good, but people buy the product because they want the end result more than they believe the principles of God’s Word for how to attain it. In a marriage this blame-shifting tactic can be appealing because it allows you and your spouse to be “on the same team” against the other person. The adultery partner was equally to blame, but if healthy restoration is to occur they cannot be exclusively blamed.

How have you lied about your sexual sin by “blame-shifting”? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

8. **“I Don’t Know”:** It is legal to “plead the fifth” in a court room, but it is deceitful to do so in life. Laziness in response is not an exception clause for omitting important information. “I don’t know” is often used as a way to buy time while preparing to do a “better” job at one of the other forms of lying. “I don’t know” is also used to force the questioner to nag or badger so their action can become the focal point of the conversation.

How have you lied about your sexual sin by saying “I don’t know”? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

9. **Hidden Agenda:** This is deception by set up. Example -- *You do something nice for your spouse so that you feel less guilty (without having to repent or change) and (intentionally or not) your spouse feels guilty for addressing the sin in your life.* Self-pity is another common form of deception by hidden agenda. The essence of self-pity is beating yourself up over your sin instead of embracing repentance and change. The effect is that your sorrow becomes a guilt-shield (for you and them) against the hard work of change being engaged or words of timely truth being spoken.

How have you lied about your sexual sin by “hidden agenda”? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

10. **Verbalizing Suspicion:** This is the mild form of deception by counter attack. When you confront me in my sin, I attack you for your sins (real or fabricated). If I can’t prove my case, then I will try to change who is on trial. Example – *Asking questions like, “Can you tell me you’ve never been attracted to somebody else?” or “I don’t ask you about your credit card, why are you asking me about mine? Can I have the password to your e-mail accounts too?”*

How have you lied about your sexual sin by “verbalizing suspicion”? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

11. **Slandering:** This is the bold form of deception by counter attack. With slandering, the counter attacks are known to be untrue and are said not just to change the subject but to emotionally injure the person who raised the

question. The goal is to intimidate the questioner out of asking any more questions and to solidify the role of the slanderer as the only one who “really knows” the truth about things – strengthening all other lies told.

How have you lied about your sexual sin by “slandering”? \_\_\_\_\_

- 12. **Exaggeration:** This is deception by magnification. Unlike other forms of lying which seek to shrink or hide the truth, exaggeration makes truth larger than it really is. Truth moves from being an enemy to being a weapon; when it should always be a friend (even when it hurts; Prov 27:6). Example – use of words like: *always, never, only, just one time, a million times, etc...*

How have you lied about your sexual sin by “exaggeration”? \_\_\_\_\_

**Read Ecclesiastes 2:1-11.** The book of Ecclesiastes might be called “The Big Book of Step One.” In this book Solomon admits that he tried everything under the sun to find satisfaction and that it was all ultimately unfulfilling. One of the biggest hindrances to admitting our sin is that we believe we are going to “miss out” on the good life if we do, or that our sin has made the good life unattainable so sin is the best option we have left. These too are lies. But not lies you tell anyone else. Lies you tell yourself. And lies you must put away if you are ever going to put away your sin. God has promised that He came to give us a full life (John 10:10) and that nothing we have done can separate us from that good life because of what Christ did on our behalf (Rom 8:34-39). Doubting one or both of these truths is the ultimate reason people remain in their sin.

### Final Thoughts on Admitting

Now is a pivotal time in your process of change. If you remain alone in your efforts to pursue purity, you will fail. The most important thing you can do at this point is to involve someone else (preferably multiple people) in your pursuit of God’s freedom from sexual sin. If you are a part of a small group call several of your same gendered friends from the group. If you are still fearful of doing that, join one of our G4 -roups on the subject of purity (information can be found at [www.summitrdu.com/g4](http://www.summitrdu.com/g4)).

If you are in an extra-marital relationship, that must be ended immediately. Chances are you feel a great deal of conviction at this moment. However, if you delay in ending that relationship the affection you feel for your adultery partner will begin to muddle the light that penetrated your darkness in these pages. Appendix B walks you through how to end an extra-marital relationship. It will not be easy or pleasant, but it will absolutely be worth it.

### Accountability Focus (ADMIT):

With each step, we will provide questions you should invite another person to ask you openly and to confront any contradiction between your words and life.

- Do I admit all the forms my struggle with sexual sin takes?
- Do I admit all the forms of lying I have used to conceal or justify my sexual sin?

With each step, we advise you to confide at least one new element of your sexual sin struggle to your accountability partner and commit to restraining it. These commitments are preliminary to chapter six “life restructuring” but serve to build progress while you get to that point.

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## Chapter 2

### “Yes, We Need to Talk About That” ACKNOWLEDGE the breadth and impact of my sin.

**“I am beginning to see the extent and impact of my sexual sin.  
It is bigger than I wanted to admit [describe] and still may be bigger than I realize.  
Apart from God’s grace, I am a lustful person.  
I acknowledge that there is no safety and no freedom in minimizing my sin [describe].  
Before I can truly understand the greatness of Jesus I must acknowledge the magnitude of  
what His death and resurrection has conquered on my behalf and in my life.”**

**Memorize:** 2 Peter 2:17-19 (ESV), “These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm. For them the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved. For, speaking loud boasts of folly, they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who live in error. They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved.” As you memorize this passage reflect upon these key points:

- “Waterless springs” – The theme of this passage is “sin makes empty promises be long to believe.”
- “Entice” – For something to be enticing it must initially present itself as innocent (or at least safe) and good.
- “Live in error” – We do not fall into sexual sin when we are living wisely. Sexual sin begins with folly before lust.
- “Promise them freedom” – What freedom did your sexual sin promise you that you were willing to believe its lies?
- “To that he is enslaved” – Regardless of your view of addiction, we are a slave to any sin we will not forsake.

#### Teaching Notes

“Pornography has unique power to damage a marriage because it is ultimately about self, not union. Indulging in pornography is a form of psychological isolation, a withdrawal into a tiny world of self-gratification. It is a kind of sexual expression that makes your appetites much larger even as your world gets much smaller (p. 26).” Tim Challies in *Sexual Detox*

“A sex addict, however, uses fantasy to move toward the unreal world of false intimacy rather than toward the real world of accomplishment and intimate, but sometimes painful, relationships... All sexual involvement begins in the mind... Sexual fantasy is a worship of self (p. 38).” Harry Schaumburg in *False Intimacy*

“But what you’re doing is *stealing*. The impure thought life is the life of a thief. You’re stealing images that aren’t yours. When you had premarital sex, you touched someone who didn’t belong to you... It’s just like walking down Main Street behind someone who drops a one-hundred-dollar bill out of his pocket, and you pick it up. That money isn’t yours—even if he didn’t know he lost it (p. 72).” Stephen Arterburn and Fred Stoeker in *Everyman’s Battle*

“How can a real woman – with pores and her own breasts and even sexual needs of her own... possibly compete with a cyber-vision of perfection, downloadable and extinguishable at will, who comes, so to speak, utterly submissive and tailored to the consumer’s least specification?... Today, real naked women are just bad porn.” Naomi Wolf in “The Porn Myth” in *New York Magazine* (October 20, 2003)

“I recommend a two-stage confession: An initial, honest disclosure of the facts, followed by a reflective, thorough, God-centered confession. This approach recognizes the importance of an immediate acknowledgement to your spouse and pastor or counselor. It also recognizes that a more thorough and careful repentance is needed (p. 8)... Come clean completely. She may or may not forgive you. But if she later discovers you have held back or minimized important facts, the odds of her forgiving and trusting you severely diminish. If the adultery itself does not end the marriage, your half-truths may kill it (p. 9).” Robert Jones in *After Adultery*

### Embedded Study

The last chapter was painful. Looking at “what” types of sexual sin you struggle with is hard. This chapter will likely be equally uncomfortable as you examine the “extent” of those sins.

Unless you acknowledge the breadth and impact of your sexual sin, your efforts at change will be limited to the most overt and recent sins. Omitting this step also results in rooting your efforts at change in the powerful emotions you feel (shame in a “bad” moment; relief or pride in a “good” moment) rather than the reality of your history. Neither sincerity nor shame will sustain lasting change. You’ve probably already experienced that many times, if you slowed down enough to acknowledge it.

“Every Christian guy who looks at porn wants to stop, but many of us want to stop just a little bit less than we want to keep going... Here’s a promise. You will never stop until you begin to see the monstrous nature of the sin you are committing. You will never stop until the sin is more horrifying to you than the commission of the sin is enjoyable. You will need to hate that sin before you can find freedom from it (p. 17).” Tim Challies in *Sexual Detox*

In this chapter, you will be asked to examine three areas of your life.

1. The history and growth of my sin
2. The impact my sin has had on me
3. The impact my sin has had on others

The examination that you do in this chapter will be foundational for the effectiveness of the coming chapters. You will come to know yourself in a way that you have probably avoided. You will come to know your history in a way that will allow you to let others know you (especially your spouse, if married) in ways you have hidden. You will come to know other people in your life as real people as opposed to objects of pleasure to be exploited or sources of rejection to be avoided.

### The History and Growth of My Sin

Understanding the history and development of a behavior, even a sinful behavior, can be an important part of changing it. Often we forget, or never noticed in the first place, when and why we began to do something. When this happens that action feels completely “natural” and, therefore, its continuation is reinforced through our ignorance of ourselves.

“Recognizing how my pattern of sexual obsessions first developed its particular shape helped the tumbler fall into place for me in terms of understanding myself (p. 16).” Anonymous testimony in David Powlison’s *Pornography: Slaying the Dragon*.

There is another reason for this kind of examination in our day. Where do most people today learn about sex? Movies and internet. Or, conversations with friends who learned about sex from movies and internet. Romance movies/novels and pornography are defining our sexual expectations. Because this is “all we know” for so many people (enhanced further by how little we talk about sex in church or family), the deceitful and destructive messages of these media forms stay in place to fuel our sexual sin.

“The sexuality of a whole generation of children is being formed not by talks with their parents, not by reading the kind of book I was given as a young man, but by professional pornographers who will do anything—anything!—to fuel an increased desire for increased depravity (p. 13).” Tim Challies in *Sexual Detox*

As you go through this section, your goal is not just to identify when you began “doing” bad but when you began in “believing wrongly” about sex. As we will explore more in chapter three, sinful behavior is rooted in deceitful beliefs or expectations. We believe that other things (in this case relationships, marriage, sex, or sexual fantasy) can give us what only God can give. It is easier to surrender these beliefs (biblically called “dying to self” Luke 9:23) when we understand when they began and how they have been reinforced throughout our life.

Before engaging the primary exercise for this section, there is a caution that needs to be given. While overcoming sexual sin, it is easy to begin to view your sexuality as evil or as your enemy. As you examine the history of your sexual sin, this is likely correlated with but not the same as your history of sexual development. We become sexually aware and enter puberty before there is a holy expression for our sexuality. In recent decades with the advance of nutrition causing an earlier onset of puberty and our cultural age of marriage getting older, this gap is increasing. This means that the window of temptation is larger, but should not be used to mean that sexual sin is inevitable (I Cor 10:13).

“That’s why it’s so critical to understand that sexual drive isn’t the same as lust. For example: (1) It’s not lust to be attracted to someone or notice he or she is good-looking; (2) It’s not lust to have a strong desire to have sex; (3) It’s not lust to anticipate and be excited about having sex within marriage; (4) It’s not lust when a man or woman becomes turned-on without any conscious decision to do so; (5) It’s not lust to experience sexual temptation. The crucial issue in each of these examples is how we respond to the urges and desires of our sexual drive (p. 35)... Misplaced shame can be dangerous because it saps our strength for fighting our real enemy. A person who is wrongly ashamed of being a sexual creature with sexual desires will quickly feel overwhelmed and helpless because he’s trying to overcome more than just lust—he’s trying to stop being human (p. 37).” Joshua Harris in *Sex Is Not the Problem (Lust Is)*

**Exercise:** Using the outline and questions below create a chronological history of your battle with sexual sin. The outline will be built around the categories from the evaluation tool in chapter one.

Write out your answers on separate pieces of paper and leave room for questions raised by your counselor, accountability partner, or spouse. Be honest. Retreating back to lies or “partial truths” at this point destroys everything you are working towards.

If you are married, this exercise should be used as the basis for your “full disclosure” to your spouse. This full disclosure is not the same thing as the confession you will be asked to do in chapter five. But it is appropriate to ask your spouse’s forgiveness for the things you share and to let him/her know that you will be returning to them to further seek his/her forgiveness as you come to understand the spiritual and relational significance of your actions in the coming chapters.

Don’t try to convince yourself or your spouse that you fully “get it” at this time.

“An issue most people struggle with is the advisability of confessing undiscovered affairs, both past and present. Confession is vital in restoring honesty and rebuilding trust... Treating your mate as fragile or fearing conflict are inadequate reasons for not confessing (p. 349).” Doug Rosenau in *A Celebration of Sex*

**Read Proverbs 12:13-28.** Before you begin writing your full disclosure take time to consider this passage that portrays the difference between a life of honesty and a life of deceit. The honesty and transparency of your words will be the difference between peace and despair, joy and misery, life and death. You will likely be tempted to think that further deception and concealment is the only way you will know peace, joy, and life; but be wise and hear this advice – that is a lie (12:15). If you want to build enduring relationships, speak truth; if you want your world to continue to crumble, hide the truth (12:18). The Lord will delight in you if you are honest, even if that honesty is the confession of sin (12:22). Continued deceit will weigh you down with anxiety, but confession is the first step to joy (12:25). You have been headed towards death, but honesty is the path to life (12:28). Remind yourself of these things frequently as you work on your disclosure.

- **Objectifying People:** When did you first notice that you classified people by favorable-disfavorable physical features, had a strong pull towards certain relational qualities, or began to fear people who had certain “strengths” you desired? How did you begin to arrange your life to pursue, be liked by, or avoid these “better” people? How did these changes in your social life result in isolation, social fakeness, over dependent relationships, or serial relationships? How has sin led to shame then secrecy and ultimately isolation?
- **Public Visual Lust:** What features are you most prone to notice and linger upon? What locations or activities are (present sin) or have been (development of sin) the most frequent or concentrated sources of visual temptation? How have you (past or present) arranged your schedule to feed your appetite for public visual lust?
- **Private Narrative Lust:** What romantic or erotic themes repeat themselves most in your private narrative lust? What insecurities are calmed or desires met through these themes? What movies or books best capture the themes of your private narrative lusts? How much time do you spend consuming these kinds of romantic books or movies? How much time do you spend in private fantasy about these themes?
- **Soft Porn:** What was your first exposure to soft porn (catalog, magazine, commercial, fuzzy TV channels, lewd conversations with friends, etc...)? What current exposure to soft porn do you have? What parts of common life experience or conversation do you sexualize to the point of becoming soft porn?

“Sexual addiction seems unmanageable because acting out seems to just ‘happen.’ Sex addicts must learn that this is not true (p. 62)... Stopping rituals is key to stopping sexual acting out. Rituals are all the thoughts and actions that lead to sexual acting out (p. 153).” Mark Laaser in *Healing the Wounds of Sexual Addiction*

What rituals do you go through as you prepare to participate in soft porn (these questions on rituals apply to all types of sexual sin behavior)? How do you slowly move towards your sin, even if you are telling yourself you're not going to indulge this time? What lust triggers do you continue to expose yourself? What habits frequently precede your sexual sin? How do you use sexual sin as a “reward” for completing a task or doing good?

- **Hard Porn:** What was your first exposure to pornography with full naked bodies or sexually explicit scenes? How much time do you spend looking at pornography per week? How much money have you spent on pornography? Do you have any active subscriptions to pornography? In the last three years what is the longest period of time you've gone without viewing pornography? Do you have pornography hidden anywhere (physically or electronically)? Do you have any secret e-mail accounts?
- **Interacting with Real Anonymous Person:** What website, phone numbers, or other services do you use to connect with these people? Do you use a chat room, social networking sites, or match-making services to connect with people? How much time do you spend “fishing” for a “conversation” partner? Have you put your real name and contact information on any websites? Have you sent real pictures of yourself (nude or non-nude) or communicated with a webcam (casual or erotic)? As you get to know someone does the relationship become more or less appealing? Have you ever scheduled to meet someone? How many steps did you take towards meeting?
- **Emotional Affair without Touch:** [For single men or women these questions may not be relevant unless your dating partner is married or in a committed relationship with someone else.] How did the relationship begin and when did the conversations become more trusting and or self-disclosing? What negative statements have you made about your spouse, your marriage, or your family? Have the two of you told each other that you are attracted to one another? What means of hidden communication do you have? When and where do you talk? What steps have you made to hide this communication from your spouse? What life circumstances have made it easy to hide this relationship? Does your interaction include date-like activities? Could any actions you have taken jeopardize your employment? Was the relationship fueled by dissatisfaction with your spouse or attraction to the other person?

“We suggest that one of the first steps in extracting yourself out of an emotional affair is to come home and confess to your spouse. Some might think, *Wait a minute; this one I don't need to confess because nothing really happened. It'll only upset my spouse and cause even more problems...* This confession will accomplish three things. First... it diffuses the power of secrecy... Second, it helps prevent the escalation of the relationship... Third, it is a great motivator to immediately end the relationship and begin working to rebuild your marriage with your spouse (p. 238-239).” Gary & Mona Shriver in *Unfaithful*

- **Sexual Touch without Sex:** How much physical touch was involved: holding hands, massage, hug, kiss, removing articles of clothing, fondling sensitive areas, or oral sex? With how many people have these touches occurred? With each person, how many occurrences of sexual touch have there been? With each person, over what length of time did these touches occur? Who or what stopped the sexual touching from becoming more intimate?
- **One Time Sexual Encounter:** How many people have you had “casual” sex with? When and how have you been the pursuer in these sexual encounters? When and how have you intentionally placed yourself in compromising situations for these encounters to occur? Has there been reason to fear pregnancy resulting from these sexual encounters? Have you paid for sex? Have alcohol or drugs been involved in your sexual activities?
- **Affair in a Committed Relationship:** [For single men or women these questions would address fornication (pre-marital sex) rather than adultery (extra-marital sex).] Answer all questions pertaining to an emotional affair. When did the sex begin? What percentage of your interaction with your adultery partner was sexual? What expressions of love and commitment were exchanged (verbal, gifts, risks, trips, etc...)? Was the relationship considered romantic or merely “friends with benefits”? Who knew about, condoned, or encouraged the relationship?
- **Affair as a Pseudo-Spouse:** [For single men or women these questions would apply to situations of co-habitation.] What plans were made to leave your respective spouses? What research or other action steps were put into these plans? What family, friends, or children were introduced to your adultery partner? What actions have you taken to emotionally, financially, or otherwise protect your adultery partner at the expense of your spouse and family? What lies have you told yourself or others about your spouse in order to validate your choices?
- **Illegal Sexual Sin:** When and where have you gained access to seeing others nude without their awareness? When and where have you exposed yourself nude without the other person's consent? When and against who have you forced unwanted sexual activity? When and against what minors have you used sexual touch in any way?

- **Same Sex Attraction:** [Same sex attraction often results from factors other than an escalating sexual depravity. If your experience of SSA stems from causes other than an escalating sexual appetite, then please consult the resources listed in step one.] What on-line forums (pornography sites, chat rooms, dating sites, etc...) are you using to fuel this appetite? What public venues have you visited to explore potential same-sex romantic relationships? Whose contact information do you have on your phone or computer with homosexual friends? Answering the questions from emotional affair to affair as a pseudo-spouse would also apply to same sex romantic relationships.

### The Impact My Sin Has Had on Me

Sin changes us. We cannot sin and remain the same. We want to believe that we can, but that is only one of the many lies we tell ourselves about our sin. Because we believe this lie, we get upset with others who point out or are affected by how we've changed. We say they are exaggerating, judgmental, or simply don't know what they're talking about. That is a lie we tell ourselves to reinforce the first one. Soon we have convinced ourselves that we (and maybe those who participate in our sin with us) are the only one who truly understands anything.

In this section you will be asked to challenge those beliefs. This begins with admitting your sexual activity is sinful. As fallen people, all our sin feels “natural.” This is why it's so easy for us to defend our sin. We weren't trying to be bad. We just wanted comfort, peace, companionship, or some other good thing.

“In general, sin tends to amplify a person's fallen nature (p. 26).” Steve Gallagher in *At the Altar of Sexual Idolatry*

Acknowledging the sinfulness of your actions is only the first step of seeing its breadth and impact. As we explore the changes that sexual sin has on an individual, we will use a five stage progression: image to story to risk to conquer to isolation. No model captures every experience, but this conception should build from the “facts” of your full disclosure to seeing the breadth of “impact” on your personal life, character and relationships.

**Read James 1:12-15.** The Bible acknowledges that temptations come in the stresses and trials of our life (v. 12). Often we tell ourselves that God doesn't understand what we're going through. But instead of using our stresses as an excuse to sin or blame God (v. 13), like we often do, the Bible warns us from taking the step from stress to death. The progression below is meant to capture some of the unique dynamics that sexual sin has in the progression from desire through sin to death described by James (v. 14-15).

#### Progression One: Image

Sexual sin almost always begins with curiosity about the opposite sex. Pornography and romantic-themed media “teach” us what they look like, what they want, how romance is pursued, and how sex works. Initially it is the picture that attracts us and satisfies our curiosity. It may be the visual picture of a naked body, the active picture of the sex act, or the interactive picture of a developing romantic relationship.

However, the image changes from information to a standard; a criteria by which we measure members of the opposite sex... and ourselves. The curiosity becomes a burden or a sense of pressure. An appetite is born. No longer is the general command to “love you neighbor as yourself” enough. There is now a system by which we score our neighbor and our self. We gained a kind of knowledge that destroys freedom, peace, and vulnerability. The more knowledge we give this appetite, the more freedom, peace, and willingness to be vulnerable we lose.

**Read Genesis 2:15-3:24.** Adam had no “images” by which to measure Eve (or himself) so he was free to delight in her (Gen. 2:23). Satan tempted Eve with a kind of knowledge that promised freedom (3:4-5) but that ended in death and shame (3:6-7). This changed the way that men and women relate to one another (3:16-19). God graciously covered their shame (3:20) and took steps to limit the impact of the knowledge they had gained (3:22-24).

“(Referencing Genesis 2) To Adam she was glorious because she was all he had ever known. Practically, he had no standard of beauty to compare his bride... In creation, we see the wise pattern that for every man his standard of beauty is not to be objectified, but rather it should simply be his wife... Pornographic lust exists to elicit coveting and dissatisfaction that no woman can satisfy because she cannot be tall and short, endowed and waifish, black and white, young and old, like the harem laid out in pornography (p. 5).” Mark Driscoll in *Porn-Again Christian*.

As sexual sin progresses, our appetite can both become refined and broaden. The appetite may refine to a particular kind of relationship or body type. In this case, the “ideal image” becomes the basis for discontentment in all real relationships.

The appetite may also broaden to an appreciation for all romantic qualities or body types. In this case, all things become attractive and the world becomes literally filled with temptation. In either case the “image” becomes the ruling filter by which information is processed and determines what people are “interesting” and how interesting they are.

**Question:** How has the “image” of lust changed your relationship with self, others (especially spouse), and God?

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### Progression Two: Story

Images are too static to be exciting for long. Information needs a story to come alive. This is why we like movies; they’re “moving pictures” with voices and a sound track. This is why most media forms incorporate stories. Even benign clothing catalogs for winter apparel show their models doing something fun (like have a snow ball fight) in order to increase the reader response rate. This is why Victoria has a “secret,” it adds a suspenseful story to her attractive apparel.

Pornography’s biggest selling point is its story. Sexual sin is more narrative than it is visual.

Men are aroused not merely by bodies of their preferred proportions, but by placing themselves in the story of a woman who finds them so attractive she is powerlessly drawn to him and his every touch or kiss elicits an arousing response. The man is powerful and revered. Pornography puts these images in both common daily interaction points (office, neighbor, or babysitter) and in themes of fictional media (parodies of movies, adventure themes, or music videos) so that every moment of life can be a trigger for an erotic story.

Romantic-themed media has a very similar approach. There is a story of ideal romance. Two characters are drawn together in such powerful ways that, even if they are not married or are married to other people, you feel yourself rooting for them to be together. The entire narrative is about their struggle to be together and the ecstatic joy they find when they finally belong to one another. Risk, struggle, adoration, disappointment, and waiting are all woven into the suspense that ends “happily ever after.”

The result of both is a “story” that “reality” can never match. No marriage comes with a sound track. Noticeably absent from pornography and romantic-themed media is every-day life. There is no mundane, only variety and excitement. There is no real waiting or disappointment, only foreshadowing. The characters do not have personal weaknesses. The characters do not have to make difficult decisions together with limited resources of time and money when their personal goals conflict. Nobody ever gets tired or has head-ache. Who wouldn’t want to live in that world?

“[Testimony] Because, see, if I’m going to have sex with my wife, I’ll have to put down the novel, brush my teeth, and find out how she’s really doing. And I guess we should use birth control, just in case. Then I’ll have to ask what she’s thinking about, how her day has gone, whether she bought the new dress after work, and things like that. I’ll have to tell her a few things about my day, too, even though I’d rather not think about most of it. I’ll have to hold her, caress her, let her know she’s important, and undertake an act that I may not be able to consummate. Or, I’ll be left feeling that I didn’t care enough about her sexual needs. No, I think I’ll stick with the marching words on the next page and masturbate (p. 40).” Harry Schaumburg in *False Intimacy*

It can be easy for those who are caught in the sin of adultery to look down on the fiction world of pornography because of pornography’s fantasy basis. But adultery is every bit as much of a fantasy as pornography. Adultery may be a relationship with a real person, but it is not a “real relationship.”

You put far more time, energy, planning, and preparation into adultery sex than you ever would marital sex – the deceptive nature of adultery demands it. You get to be “on” every time you see one another. There is a “villain” against which both of you can fight (your spouses or whatever else prevents you from being together). The fact that your interactions have to be secret adds an element of delightful suspense that would evaporate when/if they were no longer forbidden. You cannot criticize one another at this stage because you are sinning “for” one another rather than “against” one another.

**Question:** How has the “story” of lust changed your relationship with self, others (especially spouse), and God?

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### Progression Three: Risk

Sexual sin is not willing to merely look at the “image” or watch the “story.” It wants to be part of the story and eventually is willing to take the “risk” to make that happen. The end goal of sexual sin is excitement; hence we call its effect on the body “arousal.” For this reason, it only makes sense that a risk element would elevate the pleasure gained.

While it is more natural to think of the risk involved with adultery or hiring a prostitute, even pornography has a risk. There is not just the thrill of the screen, but also suspense of finding a time when you can be alone on the computer and listening to make sure that no one is coming. These add to the level of risk-thrill even with a private partaking of pornography.

Risk is one of the primary contributing factors to why sexual sin inevitably grows in its expression. Once something has been experienced it becomes tame (risk-factor reduced). So you will look at pornography at times that you are not “as alone” in the house or allow communication or flirtation with your adultery partner to be had in more open settings or channels.

“There is no such thing as ‘all the way’ with lust. Ultimately, lust doesn’t want sex. It wants the forbidden, and it’s willing to take you deeper and deeper into perversion if you’ll indulge its latest request (p. 93).” Joshua Harris in *Sex Is Not the Problem (Lust Is)*

“Danger and excitement are kissing cousins in affairs (p. 46).” Harry Schaumburg in *False Intimacy*

“Sex addicts sexualize most situations and see some sexual humor in it. Sexual jokes can be used to recruit new sexual partners. Sex addicts can gauge the reaction of a person hearing their sexual joke, and if that reaction is favorable, the level of sexual engagement might be taken one step higher (p. 66).” Mark Laaser in *Healing the Wounds of Sexual Addiction*

Risk may be the main reason why sexual sin always gets exposed. Sexuality is addicted to risk. Even in a healthy marriage the “risk” of sexual sin has its counterpart—vulnerability (which as you go through these materials you will learn is a good word). The risk that fuels your sexual sin has its equally powerful counterpart that comes without the after taste of shame once you learn to live in the light of sexual integrity.

**Question:** How has the “risk” of lust changed your relationship with self, others (especially spouse), and God? When have you been scared or disgusted by the extent your sin reached?

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### Progression Four: Conquer

Sex is not only powerful it is about power. **Read I Corinthians 6:15-7:4.** When we have sex with someone we unite with them (6:16) and we, in a sense, belong to each other (7:4). This is why the expression of lust from one person to another is, “I want to *have* them.” This is why people believe that they will feel more confident or secure if they can have sex with someone they esteem as beautiful or important.

This lie (sex will make me confident or secure) is why the victory of sex is never satisfying and continually begs for more. Even when we sexually conquer and win the “prize,” we realize the treasure we wanted wasn’t in the box. So like a foolish pirate we keep conquering other “ships” looking for the treasure that will make us not want to steal any more.

“Instead of the image of the pressure cooker needing periodic release, the Bible speaks of sin as slavery, entanglement, and captivity. Sin crouches at our door waiting to control us (Genesis 4:7). The more we indulge our sinful desires, the stronger they become. When we give in to temptation, the temptation goes away, but only for a short time. Lust comes back, sooner and stronger than it did before (p. 91)... Masturbation does not relieve sexual tension, except on the most short-term bases. It fuels it. It reinforces sexual thoughts and so usually makes temptation come back sooner and stronger (p. 92).” Tim Chester in *Closing the Window*

**Question:** How has the “conquer” of lust changed your relationship with self, others (especially spouse), and God?

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**Progression Five: Isolation**

Sexual sin is like drinking salt water. When you are thirsty, salt water looks satisfying. But when you drink salt water you only get thirstier. When you are lonely, bored, stressed, or angry, sexual sin looks like companionship, entertainment, relief, or revenge (more will be said about these motives in chapter three). But when you partake of sexual sin you only become lonelier, more bored with real life, more stressed, and more angry or defensive.

“Trying to cure distress with the same thing that caused it is typically the mechanism that closes the trap on an addict (p. 131).” Cornelius Plantinga Jr. in *Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be*

The inevitable result of sexual sin is more of what you are trying to escape. This happens as you sense your distance from God and real relationships with real people with whom you could share and celebrate. Until you take a definitive step to openly confess your sin and forsake it, you will continue to drink the salt water of sexual sin to perpetually curb and exacerbate the thirst you’re seeking to quench.

**Question:** How has the “isolation” of lust changed your relationship with self, others (especially spouse), and God?

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**The Impact My Sin Has Had on Others**

Sin is not tame. It will not “stay” on command and only play in the arena of life we allot for it. Sin is wild and once it is unleashed in our life, we can no longer control the damage it will do. This means whether you “meant to” or not your sin has affected many people in your life. Acknowledging the breadth and impact of your sin will involve you considering others in ways you have not when your focus was on your sin.

“Addicts aren’t deeply concerned about the other people who are affected by their actions. Ultimately, meeting their own needs is most important (p. 28).” Harry Schaumburg in *False Intimacy*

In this section you will be asked to look at four groups of people who could be affected by your sexual sin: friends who don’t really know you, the opposite sex for whom you have warped expectations, your spouse and children (if married), and your adultery partner and his/her family (if extra-marital sex). The reflection you do in this section will set the stage for chapter five when we confess to those affected by your sin.

**Friends Who Don’t Know You**

Begin by making a list of the secrets you have or the lies that you’ve told about your sexual sin (column one). Don’t cop out by saying you’ve got too many. The longer you wait to get honest, the longer the list gets. To begin compiling this list go back to the section “Both Lust AND Lying” in chapter one and review the notes you made there.

Then make a list of people who have been affected by your secrets and lies. In the sample chart below, you might list multiple names in column two for each secret or lie. Finally, describe how the absence of information or the presence of false information has negatively impacted each relationship (column three).

**Read Hebrews 3:12-14.** You might be tempted to think that this list is something you are making as a way of “taking your punishment.” That is not true. Transparent relationships are one of the primary ways God intends to protect us from sin. Whether it feels comfortable to you now or not, you want people to know you. Until you are willing to be known by the people who love you, the fiction-story of sexual sin will be too strong for you to resist alone. It is by allowing people to know you daily that you will avoid being “hardened by the deceitfulness of sin” (v. 13).

Secrets / Lies	Relevant People Who Don’t Know	Impact on Our Relationship
Attracted to a co-worker or spouse’s best friend	Spouse Boss Small Group	Boss makes unwise work assignments “Secret” creates a wedge with spouse Small group conversations and accountability become superficial

## Expectations of the Opposite Sex

Sexual sin changes our expectations of the opposite sex. When sexuality is used for self rather than to serve, our perspective on both sex and gender get distorted. One of the unnoticed impacts of sexual sin is the way it magnifies the natural differences in gender.

As men engage in sexual sin (fueled by professional porn story-tellers or a mistress on her “best” behavior) it mutates natural male distinctives to the point that it becomes increasingly incompatible with a real woman in a real relationship. Similarly, as a woman engage in sexual sin (fueled by the professional story-tellers of romance or a man on his “best” behavior) it mutates natural female distinctives to the point it becomes increasingly incompatible with a real man in a real relationship.

“What’s often overlooked here is that pornography and God-honoring sex within marriage are completely different things. The ‘marriage will fix everything’ idea assumes a measure of equality between illegitimate, selfish sex, and legitimate sex within marriage (p. 28).” Tim Challies in *Sexual Detox*

**Question:** How have your expectations of your spouse and the opposite sex changed?

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## Spouse and Children

This is not a guilt card. If you are married, you must face the effects of your sin on your family or your attempts at restoration will be as selfish as your sexual sin. You cannot just say that you know what you did was wrong and move on. That forces an undue amount of the consequences for your sin upon your family and allows you to abdicate helping to bear the burden your sin placed upon them.

At this stage, the most important thing that you can do for your spouse is to do a thorough and honest full disclosure. In step five the section “How to Confess (More than Disclosure)” has additional guidance for how to confess your sexual sin to your spouse in way that is honest but does not allow the confession itself to contribute to the trauma he/she experiences.

“[Testimony of a spouse] There were several major disclosures over six months. I was completely devastated. He continued to disclose half-truths, only increasing my pain and making the situation worse. Each new disclosure was like reliving the initial pain all over again. I wish the truth had been disclosed all at once and not in bits and pieces (p. 27).” Stephanie Carnes in *Mending a Shattered Heart*

For your children, the most important thing that you can do is to actively engage the process of change and to begin having the kind of honest, age-appropriate conversations with your children about your sin and sexuality as outlined in Appendix C. Do not put your spouse in the position to have these conversations alone or leave your children to make sense of the impact on their home on their own.

“Porn also endangers your children. More than one in ten men in my survey said they first encountered porn when they found their father’s ‘secret’ stash... [Survey testimony] ‘That did two (contrasting) things. First, it made me think what I did was OK. Second, it made me resent my dad because he made me think it was OK.’ The effect on your children will be broader than this. Whether your children ever find it or not, porn will erode your moral authority within the home (p. 26).” Tim Chester in *Closing the Window*

## Adultery Partner and Family

While this should be at the bottom of your priority list, it is often the top concern for people coming out of an adulterous relationship. You sinned against your adultery partner and his/her family. If your adultery partner was married, you should have greater remorse for his/her spouse and children than your adultery partner. If that is not what your emotions say, then you need to receive that as a strong warning concerning the lack of emotional clarity you are experiencing.

Regardless of how bad you feel, unless your sexual sin resulted in the birth of a child, you should not have any contact other than what is necessary to end the relationship as described in Appendix B. The greatest “blessing” you can give your adultery partner’s family is to remove the temptation for further sexual sin from their spouse and parent.

Do not even pray for you adultery partner’s well-being. The best answer to that prayer God could give would be that he/she would become irrelevant to you and you to them. Praying for your adultery partner’s well-being only serves to interfere with how God would answer your prayer.

**Accountability Focus (ACKNOWLEDGE):**

With each step, we will provide questions you should invite another person to ask you openly and to confront any contradiction between your words and life.

- Have I carefully and thoroughly completed my full disclosure?
- Have I carefully and thoroughly considered the impact of my sexual sin on myself and others?

With each step, we advise you to confide at least one new element of your sexual sin struggle to your accountability partner and commit to restraining it. These commitments are preliminary to chapter six “life restructuring” but serve to build progress while you get to that point.

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## Chapter 3.

### “I Didn’t Realize...”

UNDERSTAND the origin, motive, and history of my sin.

**“I do not know all I need to know about myself or my struggle with sexual sin.  
I do know that my heart resists being known (Jeremiah 17:9), and  
that lust reveals the things that are most important to me (Luke 6:45).  
I am coming to realize that [list] desires lead me to sexual sin, and  
that [list] experiences have contributed to the strength of those desires.  
I believe God is more satisfying than those desires could ever be without Him.”**

**Memorize:** James 1:14-15 (ESV), “But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desires. Then desire gives birth to sin and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.” As you memorize this passage reflect upon these key points:

- “Each person” – You must refute the lie that your circumstance is unique in a way that makes sin acceptable.
- “Lured and enticed” – Temptation rarely feels like sin-chasing. We pursue the bait and ignore the hook.
- “His own desires” – The end of the “why trail” will always be rooted in personal desires that have become too large.
- “Gives birth to sin” – Desire is more than a feeling; it is worship that will either conceive life or death in us.
- “Brings forth death” – Something is about to die in your life; your soul and marriage or your sin. You choose.

#### Teaching Notes

“Adultery is an equal opportunity sin. It transcends social standing, intelligence, age, race, religion, and spiritual maturity (p. 101).” Gary & Mona Shriver in *Unfaithful*

“Fantasy can produce chemicals called catecholamines in the pleasure centers of the brain that positively alter mood and even have a narcotic-like effect. The addict then uses these effects to escape unpleasant emotions, to change negative feelings to positive feelings, and even to reduce stress (p. 29-30).” Mark Laaser in *Healing the Wounds of Sexual Addiction*

“Each of us is unique in how we’re tempted to lust (p. 62)...It helps me to remember that my eyes are actively obeying my heart. They don’t have a mind of their own (p. 74).” Joshua Harris in *Sex Is Not the Problem (Lust Is)*

“It is not difficult to see how porn feeds off these cultural expectations. It creates a fantasy that perfectly matches each of these fears. If you fear failure, then porn promises success—you always get the woman. If you fear rejection, then porn promises approval—a woman worships you. If you fear powerlessness, then porn promises potency—women are under your power (p. 50).” Tim Chester in *Closing the Window*

“We see something (a person or fantasy) we think will change our situation. Our deceitful heart buys into a false and empty promise: the promise of relief, of acceptance, of fulfillment. Once the deceived heart believes the promise it conceives a sin that leads to death (p. 64).” Harry Schaumburg in *False Intimacy*

“Those who have experienced the unquenchable flames of burning lust can understand why the fathers of the early church regarded the worst aspect of hell to be that a person is left to his own lusts with no possibility of satisfying them (p. 78).” Steve Gallagher in *At the Altar of Sexual Idolatry*

“Adultery is often not centered on sex. Sex becomes part of it, but it may have begun as a supportive friendship or an office flirtation that guaranteed ego strokes. For some, it is the thrill of the illicit and a strange sense of adventure. Often after the chase is over, the excitement and attraction are gone. Sexual curiosity and frustration initiate some extramarital liaisons, but sex is just one of many reasons affairs occur (p. 347).” Doug Rosenau in *A Celebration of Sex*

### Embedded Study

Why? Why? Why?! This is a vexing question. As soon as you say “because...” you run the risk of blame-shifting and we’ve already spoken to the dangers of this. But in the absence of a “because...” it sounds like you should just be able to “Stop it!” and if that were the case you wouldn’t be reading these materials.

Part of this confusion begins with how we commonly view people. It is popular to think of ourselves as basically good people who apart from outside interference would not do bad things; act selfishly, betray, sacrifice more important things for less important things, or otherwise be foolish.

“The power of all temptation is the prospect that it will make me happier. No one sins out of a sense of duty (p. 334).” John Piper in *Future Grace*

We are born twisted, broken, and out of order. We are born with a bent towards self and we experience life self-centeredly (trapped within our bodies; literally only seeing the world through our own eyes and interpreting it through our own experiences and desires). This does not mean that we cannot love. It does mean we must be both commanded and enabled to love God and love others because of our sin-nature causes us to innately center on self.

Some would take this to mean that personal history (i.e., experiences of abuse, rejection, failure, or neglect) is inconsequential to sexual sin. But this draws an unnecessary distinction between our sin nature and personal history. While we sin because we are sinners, our appetite for and bondage to particular sins have histories. Understanding these histories can enhance our ability to cooperate with or apply God’s power to change.

There are two truths you must keep in balance as you work through this chapter or you will fall into shame/despair or blame-shifting. First, sin reveals our heart so we are responsible for our sin and change will require dying to self. Second, our heart has a history and God wants to do more than eliminate a sin; God wants to redeem your history by replacing lies with truth, despair with hope, and self with Him.

This chapter is divided into three major sections:

1. Learning the History of My Sin
2. Identifying the Motive(s) of My Sin
3. Capturing the Present Struggle

### Learning the History of My Sin

The goal for “learning the history of my sin” is to collect relevant portions of your life experience. As you do, there may be many questions for which you have no answers (e.g., clear, practical actions to counter the influence of your history). That is fine. But when you do have answers keep a running list of the experiences that sparked the question.

There may not be a time when you “connect the dots” and find out what the picture is. But even just reflecting on relevant parts of your history in light of the damage your sinful choices caused should make the plausibility of the lies that undergird your sin (and all sin tempts us to believe lies to make it seem acceptable or appealing) less convincing.

“Making sense” does not justify your sin, but it is helpful to see why the lies (that now are obviously false and destructive) seemed compelling and attractive during times of temptation. It is like the “aha moment” when someone realizes that their frequent upset stomach is related to lactose intolerance or their constant fatigue is correlated with sleep apnea. Understanding doesn’t remove the problem but it makes the needed changes more obvious.

- **Learning about Sex:** How you learn about something has a large impact on what you do with it. The impact may be because of what you learned. Inaccurate information, when it is the first thing you “know” about a subject, has a large impact. The tone of the learning experience is also powerful. It teaches you whether a subject is safe, good, clean, dirty, casual, secretive, or sacred.

- How did you learn about sex?
- Who taught you about sex?
- Was it wholesome, accurate, and age-appropriate or dirty, inaccurate, and premature?
- Were you allowed to ask questions or did you have to learn through curiosity and exploration?

- **First Sexual Experiences:** First experiences make an impression. They set the tone for an experience and become the basis for expectations. First experiences are the “normal” we know until something significant changes our perspective on that event or activity.
  - When was the first time you remember being attracted to a member of the opposite sex?
  - When did you begin to experiment with masturbation and how was the practice introduced to you?

“First, I think Christians make too big a deal of masturbation in that we obsess over the act and neglect the more important issues of the heart (p. 99)... Masturbation isn’t a filthy habit that makes people dirty. It only reveals the dirt that’s already in our hearts (p. 101)... Masturbation is built on a self-centered view of sex. This wrong attitude says that sex is solely about you and your pleasure (p. 103).” Joshua Harris in *Sex Is Not the Problem (Lust Is)*

  - When was your first “dating” relationship and how did it go?
  - What were your first sexual experiences with holding hands, kissing, petting, and intercourse?
  - Were you ever touched inappropriately as a child?
  - Were you exposed to sexual material (pornography) or sexual activity (abuse) as a child or young person?

“There was a time when sexual addiction was strongly correlated to childhood abuse or trauma. But the saturation of our culture with sex and pornography means this is no longer the case (p. 8).” Tim Chester in *Closing the Window*
- **Family History Related to Sex and Affection:** Family is where we develop our sense of belonging and our sense of whether love is available, has to be earned, or is dangerous. Particular styles of interaction or types of affections can gain prominence in our life based upon their availability, scarcity, or role within the family.
  - Were your parents affectionate to one another and their children?
  - Were compliments freely given in your home?
  - How often did your family talk about their day and express interest in each other’s lives?
  - What was your family’s style of discipline: power, guilt, example, none, etc...?
  - Did your parents talk about sex comfortably, crudely, or not at all?
  - Were you aware of any infidelity between your parents or sexual sin by your parents?
  - What family rules or patterns made authenticity and vulnerability more or less appealing?
- **Personal Style of Relating:** All personalities and temperaments struggle with sexual sin. But the values that are expressed in our personality and temperament influence the way in which a particular sin is attractive. For example, an extrovert might like the variety of pornography while an introvert is prone to be more attracted to its anonymity.
  - Are you energized by being with people or drained?
  - Do you prefer fiction over reality?
  - Do you prefer to pursue or be pursued in a relationship?
  - How do you handle emotions like guilt, shame, and disappointment?
  - How comfortable do you feel expressing emotions or putting yourself into words?
  - How many meaningful same sex friendships do you have?
  - To whom do you confide your fears, struggles, and temptations?
- **Use of Time and Level of Stress:** Sexual sin requires time. More specifically, it requires time away from people, especially those people who would be a good influence in your life. One of the most common “reasons” to engage in sexual sin is to relieve or escape stress. For these reasons, your schedule and use of time matter.
  - To whom are you accountable for how you use your time (friend, spouse, boss, etc...)?
  - Do your current, personal expectations fit within a 168 hour week? Are you trying to do more than can be done within the time God has provided? Do you have expectations of yourself that exceed God’s?
  - Have you examined your schedule to ensure that the most important parts of life have “first dibs” on your time? What do the things you give yourself to first reveal about the godliness of your desires?
  - How much sleep do you get per night? Are you honoring the fact that God made you a finite human being and graciously called you to rest or are you trying to be super-human?

- **Ongoing Sexual History:** This is the information you completed in the full disclosure of chapter two. That active document (meaning you should be updating it as God and this study brings more to mind) is meant to help you get to know yourself better. It may also be used in confession, but its initial purpose is to serve as a mirror to help you see yourself accurately as you go through this study.
- **Meaning Given to Sex:** This is where history bleeds into motive. It is ultimately out of our history that we give meaning to sex: sex is power, sex is love, sex is free, sex is meaningless, sex is a weapon, sex is leverage, etc... Sex doesn't have to have just one meaning, but as you transition from this section to the next recognize that you are not leaving history behind. Rather you are discerning the meaning your history has assigned to your sin.

### Identifying the Motive(s) of My Sin

Often triggers and motive are treated as two distinct things, and there are differences. But those differences are more akin to two sides of the same coin than apples and oranges. In this section you will examine the things that trigger your sexual sin and the motives attached to those triggers.

**1. Boredom (Sin as My Joy):** When boredom is our trigger to sexual sin, then sin has become our joy. When there was a moment to be filled with something of our choosing, we pursue sin to fill the void rather than God or any of His legitimate pleasures. We begin to lose our appetite for godly pleasure like the child who eats sweets stops wanting healthy food. Even as they feel sluggish from the ups and downs of sugary “treats” they fail to connect this to their diet but go instead for another sugar high as the “obvious” solution.

“Sex is not ultimate... Idols begin as good things to which we give too much importance, and few things slide over into idolatry with greater frequency or greater power than sex. We allow a good gift of God to supersede the God who gave it. Sex is good, even great, but it's not ultimate (p. 61).” Tim Challies in *Sexual Detox*

**Read Nehemiah 8:9-12.** God is a God of great joys and pleasure. Too often we view God as so serious that we believe “fun” must be in the opposite direction of God. When God called Israel to repentance through Nehemiah and Ezra, He asked them to express their repentance in celebration. If the motive of boredom leads you to sin, then allow this passage to challenge your view of God.

**2. Loneliness (Sin as My Friend):** When loneliness is our trigger to sexual sin, then sin has become our friend. Sexual sin is always relational whether the relationship is fictional or physical, so it fits loneliness well. It is as if our sin (a person, a chat room, or a video) calls to us, “Tell me your troubles.” We are glad to pull up a chair and unload. As we unburden our heart through sexual sin, talking to a real person or one who is not part of our sin becomes too risky. We now fear being judged or known by anyone but our “friend.”

“It's a perfect world that I can create. Things always go exactly my way. People do exactly what I want. I'm always on top. Fantasy is a great ego-feeder (p. 19).” Anonymous testimony in David Powlison's *Pornography: Slaying the Dragon*.

**Read Proverbs 27:6.** During sexual sin we write this proverb backwards. We believe, “Faithful are the kisses of any enemy; profuse are the wounds of a friend.” When sin reverses the roles of friend and enemy, it has trapped us until we return the right labels to the people in our lives. If the motive of loneliness leads you to sexual sin, then prayerfully examine who or what you are calling “friend.”

**3. Stress (Sin as My Comforter):** When stress is our trigger to sexual sin, then sin has become our comforter. We run to it, her, or him. Sin makes things better (at least as long as it, she, or he remains hidden and keeps us to themselves). Yet the comfort takes on an addictive quality. The stress from which we are relieved is multiplied by the stress our sin creates. This keeps us in a cycle of stress and returning to a primary source of stress for relief.

**Read John 14:25-31.** Jesus describes the Holy Spirit as “the Helper” or “the Comforter” (v. 26) and as the source of peace that is distinct from the world's peace which always returns us to fear (v. 27). If a source of comfort does not allow you to be more real with more people, then it is not true comfort. It is a drug that numbs you before it makes you sick. If the motive of stress leads you to sexual sin, then examine whether your “comfort” is real or a form of relational self-medication.

**4. Frustration (Sin as My Peace):** When frustration is our trigger to sexual sin, then sin has become our source of peace. Sin is treated as an “oasis.” When this happens we label sin as our “safe place” as compared to the parts of life that are upsetting. This makes sin our friend and anyone or anything that opposes or interferes with our sin our enemy.

**Read Romans 16:17-20 and I Thessalonians 5:22-24:** Notice that each of the passages refer to knowing the God of peace as the alternative to falling into temptations. Where you turn for peace reveals your character. Once you declare something or someone as the source of your peace, you will be loyal to and obey it.

**5. Fatigue (Sin as My Source of Life):** When fatigue is our trigger to sexual sin, then sin has become our source of life. We turn to sin for a boost to get through the day. The thought of our sin keeps us going when we feel like giving up. The adrenaline of sexual satisfaction (physical or romantic) becomes a drug that we use to artificially stimulate ourselves and one that we begin to wonder whether we could live without.

**Read 2 Corinthians 4:7-18:** This passage uses many words that can be synonyms for or create fatigue: afflicted (v. 8), perplexed (v. 8), persecuted (v. 9), struck down (v. 9), and wasting away (v. 16). Fatigue can make you feel alone and sexual sin becomes your life giving companion. Paul says that only Christ can be the life in us that counters the fatiguing death around us (v. 10-12). To doubt this truth reveals that we are believing (or at least listening attentively to) lies.

**6. Hurt (Sin as My Refuge):** When hurt is our trigger for sexual sin, then sin has become our refuge. In our moments of sinful escape we feel protected from life and a growing allegiance develops towards our sin. In actuality our sexual sin provides as much protection as a child pulling the covers over his/her head, but in our moment of hurt we are appreciative for even the pseudo-refuge of sin.

**Read Psalm 31:** This Psalm alternates between a cry for help and a song of confidence. In this the Psalm reveals the realness with which Scripture speaks to life. Sexual sin is a pseudo-refuge on demand. Even when we cannot have the sin, we can fantasize about his/her presence. However, the real refuge of God is available through the same type of prayerful-meditative exercise as our fantasy, but is able to actually deliver us through the guidance of Scripture, the presence of His Spirit, and the involvement of His people.

**7. Betrayal (Sin as My Revenge):** When betrayal is our trigger for sexual sin, then sin has become our revenge. We know how powerful betrayal is (especially sexual betrayal), so we decide to use its power for our purposes to avenge those who have hurt us. Blinded by pain we try to use pain to conquer pain but only multiply pain. We continue this potentially infinite domino train that pummels us with alternating experiences of betrayal's pain and betraying's shame in spite of knowing how it perpetuates pain.

**Read Romans 12:17-21:** It is so tempting to read this passage as God “holding you back” from sweet relief and satisfaction. But, in reality, it is God “holding you back” from turning another's betrayal into self-destruction. God is not removing vengeance. God is simply saying He is the only one who can handle its power without being overcome by it. Sin can never conquer sin; any more than oil can remove a stain from your clothes. It is foolish to believe that your sexual sin could do what only Christ's death on the cross could do – bring justice to injustice.

**8. Bitterness (Sin as My Justice):** When bitterness is our trigger for sexual sin, then sin has become our justice. If sin-as-revenge is fast and hot, then sin-as-justice is slow and cold. No longer are we seeking to hurt another by our actions; now we are merely nursing our wound. If we tried to explain our sin in words, we would have to say we believed our sin had some healing power. But because that seems foolish, we are more prone to just excuse our sin by the sin done to us.

**Read Hebrews 12:15-17:** In this passage a “root of bitterness” is directly linked to sexual sin (v. 16). When bitterness distorts our perspective we will trade things of great value (our integrity and/or family unity) for things of little value (a sexual release or fantasy briefly brought to life) like Esau who sold his birthright for a bowl of soup.

**9. Opportunity (Sin as My Pleasure):** When opportunity is our trigger for sexual sin, then sin has become our pleasure. Often sexual sin requires no more trigger than time alone with a computer, a free moment to text, or an available member of the opposite sex to “talk” (i.e., flirt or allow to carry my burdens). When this is the case, sexual sin has become our default recreation; our preferred hobby. The more our sexual sin seeps into the common parts of life the more pervasive the lifestyle and heart changes necessary to root it out.

**Read Philippians 3:17-21:** Paul is addressing those whose “god is their belly” (v. 19). These are people whose basic appetites, the mundane parts of their life, were at odds with God. Paul wept at the thought of people in this condition (v. 18). Chances are they had become so comfortable serving their appetites that it would seem odd that Paul was crying for them and “radical” to change. If mere opportunity has become a primary trigger for you sin, let this passage shock you awake!

**10. Rejection (Sin as My Comfort):** When rejection is our trigger for sexual sin, then sin has become our comfort. Our culture has made things done from a “fear of rejection” seem neutral; as if the defensive motive negated the badness of sin; as if we become the victim of our own sin when we fear rejection. The problem with a fear of rejection is that it makes us foolish. Only the fear of the Lord can make us wise (Prov. 1:7). When we react from a fear of rejection, we naturally seek the comfort of people rather than the comfort of God.

“Once we understand that the primary goal of sexually addictive behavior is to avoid relational pain—essentially, to control life—we can begin to uncover the core problem (20)... Several tiers below the surface is a pervasive, integral force that demands the right to avoid pain and experience self-fulfillment. This self-centered energy is the very essence of what the Bible calls ‘sin’ (p. 24).” Harry Schaumburg in *False Intimacy*

**Read Proverbs 29:25:** Scripture calls the “fear of rejection” the “fear of man.” It is not innocent because it replaces God as the One for whose approval we live. It is the values, character, and preferences of the one we fear that influence our decisions, emotions, morality, and instinctive responses. If rejection is your primary motive for sexual sin, allow this passage to challenge the orientation of your life.

**11. Failure (Sin as My Success):** When failure is our trigger for sexual sin, then sin has become our success. In the fantasy world of sexual sin (porn, romance media, or adultery), you always win. You get the girl. You are the beauty who is rescued. No part of real life can compete with the early success rate of sin. Sin pays up front and costs in the back. Real success costs up front and pays in the back. In healthy marriages sacrifice is a primary part of the joy. As you give into sexual sin as a form of success it will drive you to desire the kinds of successes that destroy a family. Even if the adultery relationship is made permanent, it will then become “real” enough that it will no longer play by your preferred rules of success.

**Read Matthew 21:28-32:** Why would the second son say, “I go, sir” and not do the assigned task (v. 30)? One potential reason is the fear of failure. Doubtless he would then view his father as upset with him and feel closer to someone who only asked of him what he wanted to do (i.e., porn, romantic media, or adultery partner). Using sexual sin as cheap success results in harming real relationships, lying, defensiveness towards being “judged,” and retreating to unhealthy or fictitious relationships. Rather than grading others by how they make you feel, repent of your fear of failure.

**12. Success (Sin as My Reward):** When success is our trigger for sexual sin, then sin has become our reward. Has your sexual sin become what you do when you need a break or what you have “earned” after completing something difficult? Has your sexual sin become the carrot you dangle in front of yourself in order to maintain motivation? When sin becomes how we reward ourselves we feel cheated by repentance. God and anyone who speaks on His behalf becomes a kill-joy.

**Read Hebrews 11:23-28:** Moses was faced with a choice between which reward he believed would be most satisfying: the treasure of Egypt or the privilege of being God’s servant (v. 26). Sexual sin gives us a similar reward choice: easy treasure or humble servant. Unless Christ is our hero and God our admired Father, then the choice seems like a no-brainer in the direction of destruction.

**13. Entitlement (Sin as My Deserved):** When entitlement is our trigger for sexual sin, then sin has become what we deserve. When you are confronted with your sexual sin, do you think or say, “How else am I going to get what I need... deserve... earned?” Can you see how sexual sin has become your measure for a “good day” and whether someone is “for” or “against” you? Are you willing to allow anyone other than Christ who died for the sin you are trying to squeeze life out of to be the measure of “good” in your life?

**Read Jeremiah 6:15 and 8:12:** The people of God had lost their ability to blush at sin. Why? One possible explanation, is they believed they deserved their sin. When this happens, we believe we know better than God. We believe the unique features of our life trump the timeless truths of God’s created order. Our confidence to debate robs us of the humility necessary to blush.

**14. Desire to Please (Sin as My Affirmation):** When the desire to please is our trigger for sexual sin, then sin has become our affirmation. It is easy to please a porn star or an adultery partner. They have a vested interest in being pleased. The entire relationship is based upon commerce (“the customer is always right”) or convenience (“if I am not pleasing to you, you have somewhere else to return”) rather than commitment (“I choose you unconditionally and faithfully in good times and in bad”). Too often sexual sin becomes a place of escape when we don’t feel like we can make everyone/anyone happy.

**Read Ephesians 4:25-32:** Notice that the type of relational interaction described in these verses is incompatible with an overly strong desire to please others. We cannot live the life God called us to (regardless of whether we are sinning sexually

or not) if our driving desire is the affirmation of others. Our conversation must be gracious and good for building up (v. 29), but that assumes that we are willing to speak into areas of weakness with those we love.

**15. Time of Day (Sin as Pacifier):** When time of day is our trigger for sexual sin, then sin has become our pacifier. Do you use your sexual sin to help you sleep, get the day started, serve as a pick-me-up, fight boredom, or kill dead time? What are the common times of day or week when you struggle with sexual sin? When has your sexual sin become routine?

**Read I Timothy 4:7-10:** When you use sin as a pacifier you are training yourself for ungodliness (contra. v. 7). Often, because these occurrences happen during down times or transitions of our day, we view these occurrences of sin as less bad. We view them more like a child who is still sucking his/her fingers rather than a child who is defying a parent’s direct instruction. If disciplining ourselves for godliness means anything, it must be relevant when we feel undisciplined.

**16. Location (Sin as My Escape):** When location is our trigger for sexual sin, then sin has become our escape. The fantasy nature of all sexual sin makes it a perfect escape from an unpleasant location. We can “be there” and “not be there” at the same time. We get credit for attendance (or at least avoid the discredit of absence) without having to attend. We can mentally be with our lover while enduring the boring meeting, stressful kids, uninteresting spouse, or lonely apartment.

**Read Psalm 32:** Notice that the Psalm begins talking about an unpleasant place or time (v. 1-5). But rather than escaping David ran to God (v. 7) and found the joy you are seeking through escape into sexual sin (v. 10-11). When we escape through sexual fantasy we are using our fantasy as a substitute God. We are, in effect, praying to and meditating on our sin during a time of hardship seeking deliverance.

**17. Negative Self-Thoughts (Sin as My Silencer):** When negative self-thoughts are our trigger for sin, then sin has become our silencer. In sexual fantasy (porn, romance media, or adultery partner), we are always desired and see ourselves through the eyes of the one desiring us. We give ourselves to them not just physically but also imaginatively. Because we know the relationship is short-lived we are willing to do this. If the relationship were permanent the power of silencing-effect would be diluted over the expanse of time and contradicted by our growing number of failures in his/her presence.

**Read Psalm 103:** Sin will never do (or even a healthy human relationship) what only God can do. The ultimate “Peace, be still” to our negative self-thoughts is Christ’s death on the cross – affirming that we were as bad as we thought, but replacing our deficiency with His righteousness. Sexual sin provides fantasy righteousness. It provides the kind of covering mocked in the classic children’s book *The Emperor’s New Clothes*.

**18. Public (Sin as My Carnival):** When public is our trigger to sexual sin, then sin has become our carnival. We walk through life like a kid at an amusement park; gawking at every person we see like a new ride or romantic adventure, making a clownish sexual innuendo out of every comment, or treating everything present as if it existed to entertain us and stimulate us sexually. Our private thoughts of fantasy become fueled by a hyper-sexualized interpretation of our surroundings.

**Read Romans 1:24-25:** Can you hear in the description of sex as carnival what it means to have “exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator (v. 25)”? God will give us over to this kind of lustful heart (v. 24). This is why a radical amputation of sin is a necessary and wise response to prevent sexual sin from becoming our carnival (Matt 5:27-30).

**19. Weakness (Sin as My Power):** When weakness is our trigger to sexual sin, then sin has become our power. The stimulation (both the physical and chemical changes associated with arousal) of sexual sin gives a façade of strength. Having another person delight in you also provides a veneer of significance. As with most of these motives/triggers, sex becomes a means to an end. Sex is no longer an expression of love but an attempt to gain something. That is *always* a recipe for dysfunctional, unsatisfying sex.

“My pastor has preached that the primary issue in adultery is that you want someone else to worship you and serve you, to be at your beck and call. That resonated with me. I could see that theme in my fantasies (p. 15).”  
Anonymous testimony in David Powlison’s *Pornography: Slaying the Dragon*.

**Read 2 Corinthians 11:30:** Are you willing to boast (verbally put on public display) your weakness as a way to make Christ more known and live in more authentic relationships? That is the only freedom that will allow you to enduringly enjoy what you are seeking in sexual sin. If that sounds backwards to you read what Paul said in his first letter to the Corinthians (1:20-25) and ask yourself if your “wisdom” is getting you closer or farther from where you want to be.

List and rank the top five motives/triggers for your sexual sin.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

“Porn is always about a symptom of deeper issues. It’s about lust, but it’s also about anger, intimacy, control, fear, escape, and so on. Many of these problems will show up in other areas of a person’s life (p. 109).” Tim Chester in *Closing the Window*

It is important to realize that these motives will be active in other areas of your life besides sexual sin. If you are married, it is important to begin to examine how these motives have influenced other areas of your marriage. However, this is not the time to begin focusing primarily upon marriage enrichment. Personal purity and marriage restoration come before marriage enrichment and are the best “marriage enrichment” you can do at this time. But you do need to openly discuss how your distorted motives impacted the marriage.

Question: What other areas of your life are driven and disrupted by the same motives/triggers as your sexual sin?

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### Capturing the Present Struggle

It is one thing to reflect back on your life and begin to see the patterns and motives that emerge. That is the equivalent of critiquing a sporting event on television with instant replay or devising what you should have said in a past argument. It is another thing to use the information gleaned in real time to defuse temptation.

On the next page you will find a journaling tool designed to correspond with these materials. A PDF copy of this journal can be found at [www.bradhambrick.com/falselove](http://www.bradhambrick.com/falselove). A copy of this journal should be completed whenever you are tempted to return to sexual sin or have an opportunity for contact with your adultery partner. Each journal entry should be shared with your counselor or accountability partner.

The questions are grouped under headings that correspond with the steps of this seminar. The majority of the instrument is devoted to steps that have already been covered. However, as you reflect on and gather information for the last three questions you will be preparing yourself to engage in the upcoming steps more effectively.

#### Accountability Focus (UNDERSTAND):

With each step, we will provide questions you should invite another person to ask you openly and to confront any contradiction between your words and life.

- Did I take the time to transparently share about each aspect of the history of my sexual sin?
- Did I “own” the motives for my sexual sin without minimizing their significance?

With each step, we advise you to confide at least one new element of your sexual sin struggle to your accountability partner and commit to restraining it. These commitments are preliminary to chapter six “life restructuring” but serve to build progress while you get to that point.

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_



# PURSUIT OF PURITY JOURNAL

## ADMIT:

**What was the situation?** Summarize the who, what, when, and where of your sexual temptation or sin.

**How did I react?** Summarize what you thought and felt in the situation.

**What lies did you tell before during or after your temptation?** To whom did you tell these lies?

## ACKNOWLEDGE & CONFESS:

**What are the consequences?** Who was affected (directly or by changed expectations) by your sin?

**What forms did your lust take?** Circle all that apply

- |                          |                        |                    |                           |
|--------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Objectifying People      | Private Narrative Lust | Soft Pornography   | Hard Pornography          |
| Real Anonymous Person    | Emotional Affair       | Sexual Touch       | One Time Sexual Encounter |
| Adultery in Relationship | Pseudo-Spouse          | Illegal Sexual Sin |                           |

## UNDERSTAND:

**What are my motives?** Circle or write in your motive/trigger.

- |                               |                               |                                     |                             |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Boredom (Sin as Joy)          | Loneliness (Sin as Friend)    | Stress (Sin as Comforter)           | Frustration (Sin as Peace)  |
| Fatigue (Sin as Life)         | Hurt (Sin as Refuge)          | Betrayal (Sin as Revenge)           | Bitterness (Sin as Justice) |
| Opportunity (Sin as Pleasure) | Rejection (Sin as Comfort)    | Failure (Sin as Success)            | Success (Sin as Reward)     |
| Entitlement (Sin as Deserved) | Pleasing (Sin as Affirmation) | Time of Day (Sin as Pacifier)       | Location (Sin as Escape)    |
| Public (Sin as Carnival)      | Weakness (Sin as Power)       | Negative Thoughts (Sin as Silencer) |                             |

**Other:**

## REPENT:

**How can I turn to God for help?** What do repentance and faith look like *now*?

## RESTRUCTURE LIFE & IMPLEMENT:

**How did I leave myself susceptible to temptation?**

**Is there anything I am tempted to hide, ignore, or cover up about this temptation?**

\*\*\* When sharing this with your spouse consult chapter five's section "How to Confess (More than Disclosure)."

## Chapter 4.

### “Where Freedom Begins, Self Ends”

REPENT TO GOD for how my sin replaced and misrepresented Him.

**“My lust is a counterfeit god mocking my Savior.  
I am beginning to see how offensive my lust is to God and  
how much pride I express trying to be/replace God.**

**I repent not merely because my lust hurts other people or disrupts my life, but  
because God is superior to my lust and lovingly enables me to love Him (1 John 4:19).”**

**Memorize:** Joel 2:12-13 (ESV), “‘Yet even now,’ declares the Lord, ‘return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments.’ Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and relents over disaster.” As you memorize this passage reflect upon these key points:

- “Even now” – Do not let the shame associated with sexual sin convince you that you are beyond God’s forgiveness.
- “Return” – Repentance is about more than the emotions of remorse; it is ultimately a change in life direction.
- “Rend your hearts” – Repentance is a heart change where your primary allegiance changes from self to God.
- “Not your garments” – Joel did not want the outward expressions of verse 12 to be confused with true repentance.
- “For He is” – The effectiveness of repentance is rooted in God’s character that God’s law embodies (Exo. 34:6-9).

#### Teaching Notes

“People should repent, change their ways, and get right with God. I always agree with these statements. The sexual behaviors that become addictive are sinful... Repentance, behavior change, and a deeper relationship with God are all goals of the healing journey for the sex addict. I usually respond to this question with another question: How long do you expect repentance and change to take (p. 24)?” Mark Laaser in *Healing the Wounds of Sexual Addiction*

“Here are three common reasons why people want to kick their porn habit: (1) to prove ourselves to God – so he will bless us or save us; (2) to prove ourselves to other people – so people like us or approve of us; (3) to prove ourselves to ourselves – so we feel good about ourselves... None of these reasons work, because they put ‘me’ at the center of my change project. And putting myself at the center is pretty much the definition of sin (p. 68)!... For some people, porn offers redemption, in terms of acceptance and affirmation, an alternative forgiveness. ‘I just want to feel that I’m OK. I turn to porn instead of God because the gospel doesn’t tell me that I’m OK. It tells me I’m a wicked sinner and Jesus died in my place. The gospel demands that I change. Porn says, ‘You’re OK just as you are (p. 57).’” Tim Chester in *Closing the Window*

“The fantasy partner is all caring, all attractive, perfectly nurturing, and completely sexual... The addict believes in the illusion of control because he or she controls the illusion (p. 30)... The fantasies of a sex addict are feeble attempts to gain what only God is capable of giving, which we will experience partially on earth and fully in Heaven (p. 31).” Harry Schaumburg in *False Intimacy*

“All that we call human history – money, poverty, ambition, war, prostitution, classes, empires, slavery – [is] the long terrible story of man trying to find something other than God which will make him happy (p. 53-54).” C.S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity*

“Confession can be a helpful part of repentance, but it can’t take its place. It’s possible to feel bad about something and even tell someone else but not genuinely turn from our sin (p. 142-143).” Joshua Harris in *Sex Is Not the Problem (Lust Is)*

“A repentant person is freed from defensiveness (p. 50)... Repentance needs to be understood as both an event and a lifestyle change. The event is like having a tooth pulled; the lifestyle change is like entering a total dental care program: it’s a lifetime commitment (p. 69).” Earl & Sandy Wilson, et al in *Restoring the Fallen*

### Embedded Study

You probably feel like your soul has been laid bare in the first three steps. You have looked at yourself, your behaviors, and your life as a whole in ways that you have likely resisted doing for a long time. In this chapter you are going to bring that honest self-awareness before God. You are not bringing Him something (by way of information) that He needs in order to act. You are placing yourself in a position to receive what He has already done on your behalf.

If you *presume upon God's forgiveness* (i.e., “God has to forgive me. He’s already sent Jesus to die. It would be a waste if He didn’t follow through. Besides, God would be a liar if He promised to forgive and didn’t honor His Word. I’ll go through the ritual to get what’s coming to me if that is what He wants.”), then you are not repenting. You are making a legal transaction with someone you believe to be too stupid to know better. Additionally, you are prone to use God in a manipulative fashion with anyone you offended in your sin (i.e., “If God has forgiven me, why can’t you?”). If this fits you, receive the strong warning of Galatians 6:7, “God is not mocked.”

If you *neglect seeking God's forgiveness* (i.e., “I don’t deserve to be forgiven. I should have to pay for what I’ve done wrong. I’ve made enough people suffer because of my selfishness, so I shouldn’t add Jesus to the list.”), then you are wallowing in self-pity and will remain in the same shame-cycle that has likely fueled your sin for a long time. Relationally, you are remaining an “unsafe” person who will either betray again (sexually or through deceit) or by virtue of your self-pity become manipulative of others with your use of guilt.

The only way out of sin is through genuine repentance. All lasting change is built upon repentance. Repentance is when we change our primary allegiance from self to God. Repentance is when we turn from trusting our ways to trusting God’s ways. Repentance is when our primary goal changes from self-satisfaction and self-protection to glorifying God and loving others.

“If the problem were simply with our eyes, then the solution would be to avert our eyes. But if the problem begins in the heart, then the solution must be much more fundamental (p. 41).” Tim Chester in *Closing the Window*

“A common flaw in dealing with the sinful patterns of viewing sexually explicit material is to focus solely on employing methods to stop the behavior (behavior modification) to the exclusion of addressing the root issues of the heart (p. 9).” Brian Croft in *Help! He’s Struggling with Pornography*

This chapter solidifies all the work you have done so far and serves as the foundation for each step remaining in the process. You have learned a great deal about yourself and your sin in the first three chapters. Repentance is when you commit to quit trying to make your broken ways work. You are about to make some significant changes to restructure your life (Step 6). Repentance is what allows these changes to be life giving rather than exercises in self-punishment or to reinforce shame.

The subject of repentance will be discussed in four sections.

1. The Barrier to Repentance: Pride
2. The Key Elements of Repentance
3. To Whom Are You Repenting?
4. A Sample Prayer of Repentance

#### The Barrier to Repentance: Pride

**Read Proverbs 3:34, James 4:6, and I Peter 5:5.** “Okay already, I get the point,” is a common response to these passages. God repeats Himself when there is a message we are prone to ignore, resist, or think we can live without. This is one of the most repeated messages in Scripture. For the humble, there is always more grace. But the proud march face first into the chest of God disgruntled that anyone, even God, would get in the way of what he/she wants. If you are wondering how you will ever gain the strength to sustain the changes that are ahead, it requires humbling yourself so you can receive the perpetually available supply of God’s grace.

“Remember the way porn reinforces pride and pride reinforces porn. Regular porn users can study the Bible and come away prouder as a result (p. 97).” Tim Chester in *Closing the Window*

Pride is not a one-size-fits-all disposition. Pride comes in many flavors, colors, styles, and sizes. Steve Gallagher in *At the Altar of Sexual Idolatry* gives seven manifestations of pride (p. 113-117; bold text only). As we examine each one, we will consider how it uniquely keeps us from repentance and embracing God’s grace.

1. **Haughty Pride:** This “classic” expression of pride believes that I am “better than” or “above” others. Sexual sin becomes a way to validate my superiority by allowing each partner to be a trophy evidencing my prowess. Sexual

exploits prove that I am irresistible. In order to repent, I would have to admit that I am “less than” or “below” the line of acceptability. I would have to live on the basis of grace rather than my reputation, attractiveness, or charisma. I would have to place myself in the category of “the least of these” (Matt. 25:31-46).

2. **Self-Protective Pride:** This is “passive” pride that refuses to be vulnerable. Typically this form of pride prefers sexual sin that does not involve a real person. If the sexual sin is with a real person, then the more “real” the relationship becomes the less attractive it becomes. The pride says that, “I must protect myself. I am the only one who can or will do the job.” In order to repent, I would have to entrust myself to the care and protection of God. That somehow seems more scary than continuing to entrusting ourselves to the destructive practices of sexual sin.
3. **Unapproachable Pride:** This is “abrasive” pride that pushes against anyone who cares enough to confront our sexual sin. This pride results in people isolating themselves as their sin becomes known. The pride expresses itself by labeling those who speak up as being “judgmental” or respond to them as “the bad guys.” This leaves the one sinning to be “the good guy” and those who remain silent or condone the sin as “understanding.” In order to repent, this person has to allow others to speak truth into his/her lives.
4. **Know-It-All Pride:** This is “always has an answer” pride that can give a reason or exception for their every action. They can hide behind the false humility that if they were “convinced” they were sinning, then they would gladly repent. The pride exists in the fact that they remain their own “objective standard” for what is “reasonable.” In order to repent these people would have to humble themselves to receive on God’s authority that their actions violate His purpose for sexuality. They would have to admit that they will not be “convinced” until they are willing to submit to a moral authority higher than their own judgment.
5. **Self-Exalting Pride:** This is “center of attention” pride that sins for the thrill of attention or to ease the insecurity that comes when attention is not “adequate” to assuage their desire. Often these people can be quite talented or attractive and their ability to “perform” by social standards feeds their belief that attention is a “need” that must be met or its absence “explains” their sin. The ability to get what they want fuels the idea that they can become self-sufficient in fulfilling their own desires. In order to repent, this person must be willing to give their “glory” to Christ. They must embrace the words of John the Baptist, “[Jesus] must increase, but I must decrease (John 3:30).”
6. **Unsubmissive Pride:** This is “must be in charge” pride that resists the possibility of allowing anyone else to be an authority over their life. Even God is seen as an intruder when their sin is said to be something that “must” change. God was fine as a “moral compass” as long as they got to choose the path. Now that following God means giving Him “Lordship” of their life, they are not sure they want a Savior with whom they might disagree about the sin for which He died. In order to repent, they would have to humbly acknowledge that they no longer belong to themselves but were purchased by Christ’s blood (1 Cor. 6:18-20)
7. **Spiritual Pride:** This is “holier than thou” pride that gives a list of good things they have done or are doing to change the subject from their sexual sin. Guilt becomes a tool of manipulation used against those who believe they have the “moral authority” to question these people’s lives. Often the solution to sin for these individuals is to make a longer list of spiritual activities to engage in (i.e., read their Bible, pray, go to a conference, be generous, etc...) rather than repenting of their sin. For this person, repenting requires humbly acknowledging that none of their spiritual activities wins them enough “points” with God to avoid repenting.

### The Key Elements of Repentance

There is no formula for repentance. The six points below are merely meant to help you experience the full redemptive impact of repentance. In this sense, repentance and God’s forgiveness can be like a smart phone. They have many features that we may not know are present or how to utilize. When we buy the phone, we get them all; but we do not get the full benefit of them until we realize they’re there and how to use them.

After each point, we will offer an area of self-assessment. These questions are meant to help you determine whether you are placing yourself in a position to receive the benefits God intends to provide through each aspect of repentance.

1. **A desire to live for God and submit to His Lordship.** Repentance does not begin with remorse. Remorse may have nothing to do with God at all. Mere unpleasant consequences can spark remorse; the more unpleasant the consequences the more intense the remorse. Repentance begins with a passionate desire to submit to God’s Lordship and resemble His character. It is the “falling short” of this desire that sparks the genuine remorse of true

repentance. Only this life-orientation change can provide the foundation for change that will endure once the unpleasant consequences subside.

“They like to think they are in control, but they are not. Indeed, their inability to give up the illusion of control is precisely what prevents sex addicts from healing. It is the same with any sin. Our attempts to control our lives prevent us from trusting God to care for us (p. 24).” Mark Laaser in *Healing the Wounds of Sexual Addiction*

- Self-Assessment: Are you surrendering to the Lordship of Christ over your life or are you only seeking relief from disturbance that sexual sin has brought into your life?

2. **An understanding of how our sin sought to replace God.** It is not just actions or distorted motives for which we repent. We repent for having replaced God with ourselves. Sexual sin does not want God to be God. As sinners we want the world to exist for our pleasure, peace, and satisfaction. Repentance acknowledges this false worship as affront to God’s position.

“But sex addicts spurn the promises of God. They are compelled to use sexual behaviors to meet their needs on demand (p. 68).” Harry Schaumburg in *False Intimacy*

- Self-Assessment: Were you able to see the “against God” nature of your sin in the motive assessment from chapter three? What did you learn and what was hardest to acknowledge?

3. **Brokenness over the nature of our sin.** Healthy sexuality begins with recognizing our fallen human condition. Ultimately we sin because we are sinners. The myriad of bad choices that led to our sin are not the root cause of our sexual sin. The root is that our nature has been distorted by the Fall (1 Cor. 15:21-22). True repentance is not just sorrow for our acts of sin but being broken over our condition as a sinful person. When we acknowledge our depravity, we gain an accurate self-assessment that allows us to rely on God in the way that genuine repentance requires and creates the non-shame-based honesty that real relationships require.

- Self-Assessment: Do you resist seeing yourself and allowing yourself to be known as someone who is in perpetual need of God’s sustaining grace?

4. **Expression to God.** After sin our instincts cause us to hide from God rather than talk to God (Gen. 3:8). Too often we think that a directionless sense of regret for sin is the same thing as repenting to God. You will not feel restored to God as long as you are avoiding God because of your sin. It does no good to address your repentance to “to whom it may concern.” Ambiguously addressed repentance is little more than talking to yourself differently. Talk to God when you repent so that you can know His response to your repentance.

- Self-Assessment: Have you talked to God in your repentance or allowed your repentance? If you have not addressed God in your repentance, might it be that your repentance seems ineffective because the “no one” you spoke to can have no power to forgive?

5. **Faith in God’s willingness to forgive.** Repentance is an expression of faith. We come to God with nothing to offer in exchange for our forgiveness. If we do not believe God will forgive, we will continue in our “try harder” or “hide more effectively” approaches. All this does is inadvertently reinforce the idea that our sin is good and God is mean. Unless we believe that God is willing to forgive on the basis of His grace and Christ’s death, then repentance becomes the continuation of an unhealthy relationship with a never-pleased, always demanding deity lover.

“I went through that cycle a thousand times: the excitement of sin, the misery, and then the craving would come back. It was intoxicatingly powerful because it was more than just sex. It was worship, self-worship. But Jesus Christ is more powerful. Once I got honest, I found grace (p. 20).” Anonymous testimony in David Powlison’s *Pornography: Slaying the Dragon*.

- Self-Assessment: How do you view God (i.e., expression on His face, posture of His body, tones when He speaks, words that He says, gestures of His hands) when you come to God in repentance? This question will be very important for the material below. Take extra time to reflect on it.

6. **New direction of life usually expressed first by confession.** These themes will be developed in Steps 5 and 6. For now, realize that the Hebrew word for repent is a vivid word meaning “to change direction.” Repentance is our part of entering into or recommitting to a covenant relationship (i.e., like marriage) with God. This is why sin is frequently called spiritual adultery. Repentance is our vow-renewal ceremony that expresses our renewed commitment to covenant fidelity.

- Self-Assessment: Does it startle you to think of repentance as a vow-renewal ceremony? How does that image extend the implications of repentance beyond the moment of prayer?

### To Whom Are You Repenting?

We can avoid repentance because we think too much of ourselves. That was covered under the seven forms of pride. We can avoid repentance because we confuse it with remorse. That was covered under the six key elements of repentance. But a third reason we avoid repentance can be because we think too little or wrongly about God. We will look at two forms this final reason to avoid repentance can take.

#### God as Not Enough

We often do not repent to God for our sexual sin because we find God to be less desirable than our sin. We only repent when we value the relationship with the one to whom we are repenting more than the “gain” we received from our sin (this same principle applies to confession). If our conviction to repent is low, then this means our value for our relationship with God is also low.

“Consequently, the one who is dedicated to the pursuit of sin has accepted the lie that a relationship with God is not sufficient enough to bring fulfillment. He is convinced that there must be something more to life (p. 77).” Steve Gallagher in *At the Altar of Sexual Idolatry*

This is why repentance must begin with a great love for God rather than an intense sorrow for sin (in the end both are required). Without a great love for God, then when life begins to improve it will not be long before the relief we feel brings our sorrow for sin below our love for God. Then repentance and change will end at the point of our comfort.

“The fire of lust’s pleasures must be fought with the fire of God’s pleasures. If we try to fight the fire of lust with prohibitions and threats alone – even the terrible warnings of Jesus – we will fail. We must fight it with a massive promise of superior happiness. We must swallow up the little flicker of lust’s pleasure in the conflagration of holy satisfaction (p. 336).” John Piper in *Future Grace*

In our culture, we also buy into the “God is not enough” lie through the concept of self-forgiveness. It is common to hear people say, “I know God has forgiven me, but I just can’t forgive myself.” The direct implication is that God’s forgiveness comes at a cheaper price than our own. We turn to ourselves for the ultimate and final forgiveness that frees us from our burden of guilt. We become our own god in guilt in ways very similar to how we tried to be God in our sexual sin.

“Why is this so hard? Because your natural instinct is to turn to yourself, instead of to Jesus. Sexual sins are all about you: what you want, what you hope for, and what you long for. When you are facing hard or disappointing circumstances—boredom, loneliness, money problems, fighting with a spouse, distance from a friend—it’s easy (and instinctive) to turn in on yourself (p. 15)... After you sin, it’s easy (and instinctive) to stay turned in on yourself, but in a different way. Now, because you feel guilty, you chew on yourself, kick yourself, and are dismayed with yourself. But even your guilt is all about you. Your only hope for deliverance from this never-ending cycle of turning in on yourself is to go out to Jesus (p. 16).” David Powlison in *Sexual Addiction*

Finally, we believe the lie that “God is not enough,” when our sexual sin has deceived us by confusing “God is love (1 John 4:8, 16)” with “God is lust.” One of Satan’s primary tactics has always been to masquerade as God (2 Cor. 11:14). In our weakened spiritual condition we are ineffective at discerning between lust and love (1 Cor. 2:14-16).

This is especially true in prolonged adultery relationships where people often say they are “in love” and ask, “Would God want me to remain in an unhappy marriage?” The question screams of self-centered sin-blindness that has lost regard for honoring God and loving family. The tables have been turned to the point that they now believe that God exists for their happiness rather than people existing for God’s glory.

The following retelling of a fictional story by C.S. Lewis captures both the self-deception of sexual sin and the relationship that exists between love and lust. As you read it, realize that repenting will require you to die to self in ways that are intensely painful. Sin sets its roots and talons in our life and makes no plans to leave until it has drained all the life from our souls. But it is by dying to ourselves that we gain what we were foolishly looking for in our sin and truly live (Luke 9:23-25).

“In *The Great Divorce*, C.S. Lewis tells an allegorical story about a ghost of a man afflicted by lust. Lust is incarnated in the form of a red lizard that sits on his shoulder and whispers seductively in his ear. When the man despairs about

the lizard, an angel offers to kill it for him. But the fellow is torn between loving his lust and wanting it to die. He fears the death of the lust will kill him. He makes excuse after excuse to the angel, trying to keep the lizard he says he doesn't want. (Are you starting to see yourself?) Finally the man agrees to let the angel seize and kill the lizard. The angel grasps the reptile, breaks its neck, and throws it to the ground. Once the spell of lust is broken, the ghostly man is gloriously remade into a real and solid being. And the lizard, rather than dying, is transformed into a breathtaking stallion. Weeping tears of joy and gratitude, the man mounts the horse and they soar into the heavens. In this story, C.S. Lewis shows the connection between killing lust and finding life. It feels as if destroying our lust will destroy us. But it doesn't. And when we destroy our lustful desire, we come not to the end of desire, but to the beginning of pure desire (p. 27-28).” Joshua Harris in *Sex Is Not the Problem (Lust Is)*

### God as Angrily Unapproachable

Some people avoid repentance because they believe the lie that “God is not enough.” Other people avoid repentance because they view “God as angrily unapproachable.” They fear God, but not in the healthy sense of the fear of the Lord (Prov. 1:7). They fear God as One who does not receive repentant sinners with love. They fear God as if the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-24) was one of Aesop's fables instead of a true picture of God's character told on the authority of the testimony of God's own Son.

“To win the battle against porn, you need to keep drawing near to God, and that movement starts with confidence in his gracious welcome (p. 73).” Tim Chester in *Closing the Window*

In order to repent well and consistently we must believe that God delights in forgiving and being restored to His children. We must believe that God's love for His children is greater in intensity and quantity than His hatred for sin. We must also read our Bible as if what it says about sin, speaks to our specific sin. Consider the following two passages paraphrased by Tim Chester to speak to sexual sin. Allow them to be shockingly uncomfortable and change your view of God from “angrily unapproachable” to a loving Father deeply desiring His children to accept His invitation to be restored to Him.

Romans 8:3-4, “For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”

“For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be an offering for the sin of pornography. And so he condemned the sin of pornography in sinful man, in order that the requirements of sexual purity might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit (p. 70).” Romans 8:3-4 paraphrased by Tim Chester in *Closing the Window*

2 Corinthians 5:21, “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

“God made Jesus, who never looked with lust, to be a porn addict for us, so that in him we might become sexually pure (p. 70).” 2 Corinthians 5:21 paraphrased by Tim Chester in *Closing the Window*

### Sample Prayer of Repentance

There is no magic in these words or this outline. The intent is to help you take the material from these first four chapters to God in repentance for forgiveness before you take it to other people in confession for restoration (Step 5) or craft an action plan to restructure your life (Step 6).

Take this sample and use it as a conversation outline with God. As you talk with God, review through your notebook and verbalize what you have learned. Know that God is interested in what you are saying; not because you have finally “learned your lesson” but because you have come to your senses and are coming home (Luke 15:17, 20).

### Heavenly Father,

**I am glad I can come to you even after I've sinned by lust and lying so many times. I have been hesitant to come to You, because...**

[describe your inaccurate views of God and/or repentance]

**I also haven’t wanted to admit the full extent of my problem with lust and lying.**

[describe what you saw about yourself in chapters one and two]

**I can see that I have served and lived for many lesser things than You.**

[list your motives from chapter three and describe how you have lived for them]

**You know how those things came to be so precious to me. You know what I need (Matt. 6:8). Where my desires are good, I trust you to provide. Where my desires are bad or excessive, I ask that you would change me by whatever means necessary.**

[talk about how this scares and/or confuse you]

**I have replaced You in my life with my lust. I have declared myself more capable of caring for me than You. I see how wrong and foolish that is. Please forgive me.**

[talk with God through the six elements of forgiveness]

**Only You do true love right. I look forward to learning more about Your character as I strive to represent You in my daily life. Lord, help me remain passionate about learning Your character and Your way so I do not return the self-centeredness of my lust.**

**Amen.**

**Accountability Focus (REPENT):**

With each step, we will provide questions you should invite another person to ask you openly and to confront any contradiction between your words and life.

- Was I willing to admit the various forms of pride I struggle with and humble myself in front of you?
- Have I evidenced a willingness to embrace each of the six elements of repentance?
- Do I seem to view God as “better than” my lust and as a loving Father receiving my repentance?

With each step, we advise you to confide at least one new element of your sexual sin struggle to your accountability partner and commit to restraining it. These commitments are preliminary to chapter six “life restructuring” but serve to build progress while you get to that point.

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- \_\_\_\_\_

## Chapter 5.

### “Planting Lamp Posts in Dark Places”

CONFESS TO THOSE AFFECTED for harm done and seek to make amends.

**“I have not represented God well in your presence. [Describe]  
You have been hurt by my un-God-like actions, attitudes, and beliefs. [List]  
My goal in life is to make God’s character of love known.  
That starts with this request for forgiveness.  
I value our relationship more than my pride.  
I am currently working on submitting my life to God’s control and  
understand if you need time to consider my request for forgiveness.”**

**Memorize:** I John 1:6-10 (ESV), “If we say, we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sin, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.” As you memorize this passage reflect upon these key points:

- “If we say” – Part of your confession needs to acknowledge that verses six and eight were true of you.
- “Walk in the light” – True confession is a lifestyle and not an event; not just something to “get it over with.”
- “Deceive ourselves” – You should begin to see how you deceived yourself and why it’s important to finish the study.
- “Faithful and just to forgive” – Confession to others does not add to your forgiveness, but it is a fruit of repentance.
- “Make [God] a liar” – Unconfessed sin makes life confusing and God’s Word seem false to those who love you.

#### Teaching Notes

“Making oneself transparent to another person is one of the difficult things that must be done. A man may institute all of the other steps outlined in this book into his life, but if he hedges on this one, all other efforts might prove to have been in vain (p. 63).” Steve Gallagher in *At the Altar of Sexual Idolatry*

“I hadn’t asked her before bringing this sin into our home. If she was going to live with the consequences of it, then she had the right to determine what she needed to know. If we had any chance of rebuilding this marriage, there was no more room for lies or half-truths. In our groups, we answer more questions related to talking during adultery recovery than any other subject. We might have thought trust or forgiveness or even sex would come up most often, but, in reality, conversation is the bridge that can deliver trust, forgiveness, and sex (p. 148).” Gary & Mona Shriver in *Unfaithful*

“Confession includes two important aspects: (1) Confession brings secrets to the light of day so we drain them of their power... (2) Confession allows God and a caring person to see our ugliness and still love us... It is usually not healthy to make our wives our only accountability partners or our primary confessors (p. 339).” Doug Rosenau in *A Celebration of Sex*

“I have heard people tell me many times that they do not have anyone to confess to. What they were really saying is that they were not desperate enough to seek out someone that might be able to assist them (p. 75-76).” Steve Gallagher in *At the Altar of Sexual Idolatry*

“Building real relationships of love with real people is crucial to the transformation of your imagination. You have spent way too much time in your private fantasy world. A world of honest, constructive relationships await (p. 24)... The Bible is full of stories about sexual sin, and they are told in a way that leaves us without illusions, but is never arousing or morbid (p. 27).” David Powlison in *Sexual Addiction*

### Embedded Study

When we looked at the development of sexual sin in Step 1, we said a major threshold was crossed when sexual sin goes public (moving from images or conversations with anonymous people to arousing interaction with a real, known person). The same is true in the destruction of sexual sin; a major threshold is crossed as sexual integrity goes public (moving from private dialogue with God to public confession with real, known people).

If you have made it through the first four steps with integrity then change has happened, but it is starting in Step 5 that you lay the foundation for change to last. Privacy kills change and fuels sin. Transparency kills sin and fuels change. Chances are this step may scare you as much as any step you have taken since the first one. But remember it is not nearly as scary to move forward as it is dangerous to go backward. Don't allow fear to make you forgetful.

This is a stage in the change process when many people want to only deal with their sin privately. But to deal with a private sin privately is like trying to wrestle an alligator in a swamp. You would be in its home turf. Every situational advantage would go to your sexual sin. If, however, you chose to wrestle the same alligator in a tree every situational advantage would go to you. Confession is when you cease fighting sexual sin on its home turf.

“If you want to stay stuck in your sin, confess it only to God. If you want to overcome it, confess it to someone else (p. 37).” Steve Gallagher in *At the Altar of Sexual Idolatry*

Remember, sin is not tamed. It is either killed or it kills. There are no “pet sins.” It is usually at this stage in the process when we begin to doubt this truth. Sin has been weakened. Life is probably getting better. A sense of hope should be emerging. These are good things, unless they cause us to relax and cut our journey towards God's freedom short. Do not be deceived; unless your sin is exposed not only to the light of God's truth but also Christian community, it will regain its strength.

“It is possible that Christians may remain lonely in spite of daily worship together, prayer together, and all their community through service—that the final breakthrough to community does not occur precisely because they enjoy community with one another as pious believers, but not with one another as those lacking piety, as sinners. For the pious community permits no one to be a sinner. Hence all have to conceal their sins from themselves and from the community. We are not allowed to be sinners (p. 108).” Dietrich Bonhoeffer in *Life Together*

As we examine what confession should look like and what it requires of us, we will do so in three sections: (1) to whom to confess; (2) how to confess (more than disclosure); and (3) preparing for confession.

### To Whom to Confess

Let's state the obvious: confession is going to make you uncomfortable. If you allow, “I'm not really comfortable sharing with [name],” to be a reason not to confess, then you will study this chapter in a purely academic way. Don't start to get defensive and reply, “I'm not telling everybody my business.” That is a fearful exaggeration (see type of lying number twelve from Step 1). There is wisdom for how far you expand your circle of confession, but even wisdom will make you uncomfortable.

“There is only one thing that clearly is universal: those committed to ruthless honesty consistently overcome their sin and make great strides in holiness. In stark contrast, I have never encountered an individual that overcame sexual struggles if they were unwilling to bring the sin fully into the light, with an ever-increasing number of individuals. Those who refuse this path of ruthless honesty stay stuck in their sin or return to it after a short period of ‘white-knuckled’ abstinence.” David White in “Living in the Light” *Harvest USA*, 2006

### Your Spouse

If you are married or engaged, this confession should occur first. If your sexual sin involved a real, known person (emotional affair or physical adultery) this is doubly imperative. Without confession to your spouse you are protecting the illicit relationship over your marriage. You are also maintaining secrets that will be powerful bonding agents with the other person and be damaging to the marriage when they come out. *If there was anything left out of or minimized in your full disclosure now is the time for that information to come into the light.*

“Once we justify lying in order not to hurt someone, we've opened the door to speaking truth only when convenient and comfortable (p. 80).” Earl & Sandy Wilson, et al in *Restoring the Fallen*

During confession it may feel like your marriage initially takes a step backwards, because of the unpleasant memories and emotions stirred. But it is necessary. There is also a sense of protection your spouse will gain as you show the courage to take uncomfortable steps to improve and restore a solid foundation for the marriage. If there is an initial emotional loss, there will still be a net-gain from this important step.

This confession should not be viewed as making your spouse your primary accountability partner. Combining the role of spouse and primary accountability partner will stifle long-term trust building. Your spouse will be forced to either ask you regular questions or leave you alone to battle your sin. That is why it is essential for married people to still confess to close friends (see next section).

Three points must be made to clarify what it does and does not mean for your spouse not to serve as your primary accountability partner. First, your spouse should be free to ask you about your sin and temptation. Your spouse not serving as your accountability is merely so they don't “have to” ask, not so that they “cannot” ask. Second, your spouse should be free to speak to your primary accountability partner(s) if he/she has concerns. Third, if you succumb to temptation, your primary accountability partner(s) should insist that you confess to your spouse.

**Read I Peter 4:17-19.** God begins judgment with his household. Based on this, we should begin confession in ours. Confession should begin with those to whom you most want to be restored. This is why we put repentance to God ahead of confessing to others. Even if your confession makes things temporarily more difficult in your marriage, this shows a willingness to entrust yourself to God while doing the right thing (v. 19). It is better to suffer—gaining a negative response for doing the right thing—according to God's will than to live pleasantly (for a short time) following your own counsel.

### Your Close Friends

You were able to get as deep into sin as you did in large part because you hid from those who truly loved you and wanted the best for you. You trusted your sin more than you trusted your friends. Without an awareness of your struggles, your Christian friends cannot fulfill the function in your life that God designed for them to play.

“Secret-keeping renders the body of Christ impotent to fulfill its responsibility to each member when it comes to dealing with temptation and sin (p. 76).” Earl & Sandy Wilson, et al in *Restoring the Fallen*

The only way to combat your fears about confessing to your friends is to confess to your friends. Until you have experienced confession gone well, your imagination will create scenarios of misery and scorn. Until we obey God in a particular area of life our imaginations are limited by our sin and fears (Psalm 34:8).

“I think you'll be surprised at what an incredible release the simple act of confession brings. There's something about stepping out of isolation that begins the process of freeing a person from the chains of sexual sin (p. 139).” Joshua Harris in *Sex Is Not the Problem (Lust Is)*

“A key step is to bring your porn into the light, confessing your sin to someone else, no longer living with the fear of exposure, no longer hiding from God and his people, no longer pretending you can do it on your own (p. 103).” Tim Chester in *Closing the Window*

The question is, “To which friends should I confess?” Here are three people or groups of people to whom you should confess. There may be some overlap, but you want to make sure these areas are covered.

- **Your Small Group** – This will ensure that you have a regular time when confession would “fit” with the expectations of the relationship. Without a base of accountability that meets regularly and sets aside time for open confession and accountability, you will inevitably be most alone when accountability is most needed.
- **Your Best Friend** – The values you instill in your closest relationship will have a large impact on your life and character. Openly emphasizing purity and marital fidelity in your closest friendships is an important way to marinate your life in these virtues. Character is not something we can sequester to a private or therapeutic sector of our life.
- **Someone from Each Area of Life that Sin Festered** – This is a direct implication of John's instruction to “walk in the light” during your battle with sin (1 John 1:7). Go back through your full disclosure. What areas of life (i.e., work, gym, social club, etc...) did your sin begin and grow? Put lamp posts of accountability and awareness in those areas to dispel the darkness of anonymity or privacy.

**Read Hebrews 3:12-15.** The author of Hebrews takes confession very seriously. He takes it seriously because he knows the condition of our hearts when left to their own devices and he knows the great skill of sin in making itself attractive. Do not fall into the lie that you are stronger than Scripture says you are. Unless you take immediate, active steps to begin establishing accountability outside your G4 Group or counseling relationship, then you are falling into that lie.

### Not Your Attraction

If you are married, the only affected person you should not confess to is the person(s) with whom you have sinned sexually. The only exception to this is if your sexual sin was an act of rape or other form of sexual abuse. In these cases confession may be appropriate (if not traumatic for your victim) but should be done with the guidance of an experienced counselor.

Your act of ending the relationship is a clear indication that you believed the relationship was evil. Your continued non-communication with that person is the fruit of repentance that reveals your opinion has not changed and is an act of protection for both of you. Any words of compassion for how your sin affected them, would only serve to stir a temptation in both of you.

### How to Confess (More than Disclosure)

Confession is disclosure that follows repentance to God with an awareness of sin’s impact, a growing hatred for the sin, and a humble request for forgiveness. In the shock of being “found out” these pieces are rarely in place during the initial full disclosure. Even in the shame of the initial full disclosure, we are generally too self-centered to have the other-mindedness necessary to confess effectively. That is why we are only now ready to confess.

That is also why relational healing only begins once everything has been confessed. Up until now the steps that have been taken have disinfected the relational wounds of sin, but the process of cleaning them, while setting the stage for healing, has not allowed the healing to begin. Picking the gravel out of a wound is vitally important, but no healing happens until after the picking is complete. Confession is the conclusion of the cleaning and disinfecting process for sexual sin. Under “how to confess” we will look at five aspects of confession.

#### I. Admit Specifically Your Sin Story

Confessing your sin is more than disclosing a series of wrong actions. It involves revealing who you really were and who you are becoming. Secret sin builds a false picture of who you are. Your secrets made everyone around you live a lie. Confession allows them to live in the truth again or maybe for the first time.

This raises the question, “How specific should I be when confessing sexual sin?” The narrative of David’s sin with Bathsheba is very instructive for this question. In David’s repentance to God he said he would speak of his sin and restoration with others (Psalm 51:13-14). Much of the detail in the biblical account could have only been gleaned from David’s personal confessions. We find here the things that God divinely inspired to be confessed about sexual sin.

**Read 2 Samuel 11-12.** What follows is an attempt to outline key elements of confessing sexual sin. This material may overlap significantly with other portions of this False Love study, but hearing the key points again through David’s life should reinforce the biblical foundations of what has been taught and make the “big picture” of each step clearer.

**11:1** – You should confess the actions that left you vulnerable to this sin. This is especially important as you involve others in restructuring life to be more dependent upon and honoring to God (Step 6).

**11:2-3** – You should confess the steps that you took as you entered into the sin. Sin does not “just happen.” You need to see where you chose to be blind. Confessing this shows the other person that you are taking the pursuit of holiness as seriously as the consequences of sin.

**11:4** – You should confess sin to the full extent to which it reached. Few things are more damaging to any relationship than allowing the severity of sexual sin to slowly leak out. Trust begins to build and then is broken time after time. Don’t allow a relationship to die the death of a thousand confessions.

**11:5** – You should confess all consequences of your sin that occurred. Did you lose your job, get demoted, contract an STD, take out a secret credit card and rack up undisclosed debt, etc...? Unconfessed consequences will be sources of shame and temptations to deceive in the future.

**11:6-27** – You should confess your methods of deception, others involved in the cover up of your sin, other sins you committed in tandem with the sexual sin, and the impact the sin has had on your overall character. Notice this section is the longest part of the narrative. Sin maintains its life and mutates into other expressions when we hide our methods of lying and resist reflecting upon its impact.

**12:1-15** – You should confess how you were brought to repentance. As you confess this, remember it is God's grace (although painful) that you were brought to repentance. If you were “found out,” you can still share how you came to the conviction to be completely truthful and committed to change.

**12:7-15** – You should accept the consequences that emerge after your confession.

**12:16-23** – You should be willing to walk through the emotional ups and downs of those affected as they learn of your sin, forgive, and work to restore the relationship. Don't vomit your sin on them and walk away leaving them to clean up the mess alone. This is a key part of loving your others well during and after confession. It will not feel loving to either of you, but choosing to comfort them over your own comfort is love (Philippians 2:4-5).

## 2. See Your Sin through Their Eyes

In Step 3 you “acknowledged the breadth and impact of your sin.” At that time you were looking at the size and impact of your sin in general. Now you are reflecting on that same information, but considering it in light of this person's experience. Then you were just being honest. Now you are seeking to add compassion and empathy to your honesty.

It is wrong to confess as self-centeredly as you sinned. If you do not consider how your sin affected the other person, you are still the center figure of your own imagination; they are again forced to live in your world. Repentance makes us more like Jesus and Jesus came to live in our world as evidence of His desire for a restored relationship with us.

This is different from groveling. Groveling is still all about you; how bad and sorry you are. This aspect of confession is about the other person. It restores trust because you talk about the effects of your sin on them without blame-shifting. You begin to see and respond to the other person as a real person. It protects you because it forces you to think about your sin other-mindedly and sin is only appealing when we think about it self-centeredly.

If you are married, taking the time to listen to the True Betrayal seminar ([bradhambrick.com/truebetrayal](http://bradhambrick.com/truebetrayal)) would be an excellent way to gain a fuller understanding of how your sin affected your spouse. After listening to this seminar do not begin by telling your spouse what you learned. Instead, ask your spouse what he/she is learning. Then share how you understand the material covered better after hearing your spouse.

**Read Galatians 5:14.** How would you summarize the whole law of God? Paul says it can be summarized in the command, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” In light of the discussion above, hear that command this way, “If you look at your sin through the eyes of the person you are about to sin against, sin will lose its appeal.” Self-centeredness is both the root of sin and the adversary of confession. If you want to confess well, love well.

## 3. Embrace the Consequence of Your Sin

Confession is never a negotiation. It is a contradiction of confession to “present your terms.” If you begin to view the emotional impact of your sin upon others (especially your spouse, if married) or their mistrust as punishment – instead of consequences – you will quickly begin to view yourself as the victim of your own sin. What started as confession would mutate into bitterness. Rather than seeking to understand in confession you would demand to be understood.

It is important to remember that in sexual sin, you took risks. Taking a risk implies knowing (even if you were living in denial) that a loss was probable. So, in confession, you will likely have to accept those losses of freedom or preference in order to appropriately honor the impact of your sin on the other person.

Labeling those losses as “personal sacrifices” would be absolutely wrong. You are not doing the other person a favor or “going the extra mile” when you accept the consequences of your sin. If you allow yourself to think this way, you will turn confession into martyrdom. You would begin to view the person you hurt as being cruel for being hurt by your sin.

#### 4. Offer a Plan for Change

Sorrow and compassion alone offer no hope for change. This is why confession also includes a declaration of your intent to change with a reasonable plan. You offer a plan to show that you have given thought to what lasting change will require. “I won’t do it again,” without a plan is an insult and a request of blind faith on the part of the other person.

As you offer your plan for change during confession, invite the other person to speak into the plan. This does two things. First, it communicates that a primary purpose of the plan is to restore the relationship. If their ideas are met with defensiveness, then the plan is shown to be more important than the person to whom you are seeking to be restored. Second, it may improve the plan by addressing areas you overlooked or establish trust more efficiently by calming a concern you did not know to consider.

Remember you are offering a “plan for change” not a “compensation package for sin” (i.e., offering to mow the yard, work overtime, et...). If you confuse a plan for change with a compensation package for sin at least three negative things will happen. First, you will be attempting to change through a system of works righteousness rather than the gospel. Second, you will insult the other person by declaring what you think your sin was “worth.” Third, you will feel offended if they do not accept your “fair” offer and feel entitled to their repentance for “rejecting” your misguided confession.

In the next step you will develop a robust plan for life restructuring. In this confession, you are stating those things which are obvious and related to the ways that your sin affected the person to whom you are confessing. It is wise, during the confession, to confide that you are still learning what a God-honoring life looks like and ask for their suggestions. This shows humility, a key component of confession, and demonstrates the level of value you are placing on that relationship.

#### 5. Patiently Wait for Forgiveness

God’s command for others to forgive is not a license for you to demand forgiveness. If you become God’s spokesman, confession degenerates into a manipulative role reversal (yes, whether you mean to be manipulative or not, it would be manipulation). You recast the relationship to where your confession makes you the “good guy” and the other person the “bad guy” if forgiveness is not immediate.

If you study the biblical passages on interpersonal forgiveness, you will notice that God does not place a time table on this response. God says we are to forgive from the heart (Matt. 18:35) and as Christ forgave us (Eph. 4:32). When we take on any character quality of Christ, it usually takes time (this is called the doctrine of progressive sanctification). If the person to whom you repent responds with forgiveness immediately, that is grace upon grace.

As a general rule, you should be willing to wait without complaint for at least as long as it took you to admit your sin and come to repentance. You resisted and battled allowing God to be Lord of your life in the area of your sexuality for some time. If this person has trouble receiving from God the grace to forgive, you should view them with compassion. You know the misery that comes with struggling to surrender to an area of obedience. Your rushing them only makes their struggle harder. Pray for them as you would have wanted to be prayed for in your sin.

### Preparing for Confession

A bad confession can do as much, sometimes more, damage as the original sin. For this reason, it is wise to think through what you want to say and organize your thoughts so that your words convey a true and healthy confession. Too often the awkwardness of these conversations and the sense of shame that can re-emerge disrupts a confession to the point that the actual conversation is not a confession. It may degenerate into an informational news conference, a blame-shifting session, or something else. Preparation is important to keep confession as confession.

**Read Philemon.** This entire book is an example of confession preparation. Onesimus was a servant who stole from Philemon when he ran away. As a free man on the run his paths crossed with Paul and he became a Christian. While being disciplined, they decided Onesimus should return to Philemon and make right his offenses against Philemon. This letter was written by Paul to be given to Philemon with Onesimus’ confession. It is obvious from this that Paul and Onesimus prepared for the time of confession. It would have been easy for Onesimus to “explain” his actions based upon the injustice of his social class and role in Philemon’s household. In the same way, it may be easy for you to begin “explaining” your sin as you confess. Preparation is the key to keeping confession, confession.

Use the following five points to help you make a plan to complete this step of confession. As you do so, remember, you are not closing a chapter of your life as much as you are starting a new lifestyle that values integrity and transparency over

pleasure and reputation. While the type of sin that you are confessing should change, these types of confession conversations should become a normal and regular part of your life as you learn the joy of living in real relationships.

1. **Make a list of those to whom you need to confess.** Your list should include those you have offended and those who are important people to include in your accountability team. To that list you should add those to whom you lied (see relevant chart you made in Step 2). You should also add those whose life has been affected by your sin. Read through your full disclosure again and think about the people who were affected by what you wrote.

Make a list of the names of people to whom you should confess. Number those based upon the order in which you will confess. If you are married, the first person should be your spouse. From there you should repent next to those with whom you have the closest relationship and those most affected by your sin.

2. **Complete a “confession guide” for each person.** A sample copy of the confession guide is on the next page. Additional copies can be found at [bradhambrick.com/falselove](http://bradhambrick.com/falselove). Taking the time to outline your confession in a way that captures the key elements of confession is an important part. This is the way that people talk in a healthy, godly relationship. So as you complete each confession guide, do not view it as an academic worksheet, but as “language school” for healthy relationships.
3. **Rehearse your confession with a counselor or trusted Christian mentor.** You are not memorizing a speech or learning to play a role. You are getting comfortable saying something uncomfortable without getting off message. The person with whom you rehearse needs to be someone with whom you have shared your full disclosure. As they listen, they are offering feedback on a few key questions.
  - Did you leave out relevant information from the full disclosure?
  - Were you defensive or begin to speak in a way that was blame-shifting or minimizing?
  - Do you seem ready to receive this person’s feedback or possible negative emotions?

4. **Schedule a time meet with the person to whom you are confessing.** It is a bad idea to “wait for a good time” to confess for at least two reasons. First, a good time rarely comes when you are ready. Impromptu confessions are prone to procrastination and being so informal that they are either offensive or incomplete. Second, impromptu confessions create an imbalance in the conversation. You are prepared. The other person is not.

Once you have completed the confession guide, contact the person and say something similar to, “I know that I have offended you by my actions. I have been giving thought to how I have hurt you and others. I would like to meet with you to seek your forgiveness. If possible, I would like to meet in person. What I have to say should not take more than five to ten minutes. How long we talk after that will be up to you. Is there a time soon when we could meet?”

If the relationship was affected in major ways the confession might take longer and this should be noted in your invitation. If the person to whom you are confessing is unaware of the sin you are confessing, it is fine to omit the first two sentences and begin your request with, “I would like to meet with you to seek your forgiveness for ways that I have sinned against you.”

5. **Follow through while your commitment is strong.** Don’t put off completing the step of confession. The longer you wait the weaker your resolve to completing this step will become. Contact your accountability partner now and tell him/her to ask you tomorrow if you have completed the first confession guide. Decide to whom you will rehearse your confession with and set a time to meet with them.

**Accountability Focus (CONFESS):**

With each step, we will provide questions you should invite another person to ask you openly and to confront any contradiction between your words and life.

- Am I resisting confessing to someone to whom I should confess?
- Can I rehearse my confessions without getting off message (i.e., self-pity or blame-shifting)?

With each step, we advise you to confide at least one new element of your sexual sin struggle to your accountability partner and commit to restraining it. These commitments are preliminary to chapter six “life restructuring” but serve to build progress while you get to that point.

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_



## CONFESSION GUIDE

Name of the person to whom you are confessing: \_\_\_\_\_

**“I have not represented God well in your presence. You have been hurt by my un-God-like actions, attitudes, and beliefs. My goal in life is to make God’s character of love known. That starts with this request for forgiveness. I value our relationship more than my pride. I am currently working on submitting my life to God’s control and understand if you need time to consider my request for forgiveness.”**

**I am now willing to admit that I sinned against you by... [list specific sins and avoid words like if, but and maybe]. These actions were my choice and wrong.** Review your full disclosure and include items that affected this person.

**I am learning to see how much my life was ruled by the desire for [list motives for your sin]. You did not cause my sin.** Refer to the relevant motives from chapter three.

**I am beginning to see how my sin has affected you. [Describe]** Describe what you can understand of how your sin negatively affected the life, emotions, trust, and relationships of this person.

**I know I must change to honor God and to bless those I care about. Because I see my need for change, I will [list obvious needed changes]. I am still learning what other changes honoring God will require of me.** State those changes that are foundational.

**Are there other ways I can show you the sincerity of my desire to change or make you feel safe? [pause and take notes on their answer]** This section should be blank until you speak with the person.

**I understand if it will take some time but I am asking for your forgiveness for my sins against you. Thank you for showing me the honor of listening.**

## Chapter 6.

### “Becoming a Bad Host/Hostess for Sexual Sin”

RESTRUCTURE MY LIFE to rely on God’s grace and Word to transform my life.

**“I have learned a great deal about my self [list with examples], my sin [list examples], and my Savior [list with examples]. Because of these truths I want and need to make the following changes [list]. My temptation is to see these changes as ‘what I do’ rather than merely cooperating with and celebrating God’s grace in my life.”**

**Memorize:** 2 Timothy 2:21-22 (ESV), “Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work. So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace along with all those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.” As you memorize this passage reflect upon these key points:

- “Dishonorable” – To overcome sexual sin you must have a commitment to put away all things that are dishonorable.
- “Useful to the master” – The motivation to make wholesale changes comes from a desire to have Christ as Lord.
- “So flee” – The “stop it” advice is clear and emphatic. If there is a debate about whether something is bad, get away.
- “Pursue” – Unless you actively pursue these things, ceasing sexual sin will create a void rather than a satisfying life.
- “Along with” – The changes will not be made alone. When change is private it is fragile and most often temporary.

#### Teaching Notes

“Fleeing temptation may not be the complete solution, but it does buy time while we fight the fight of faith (p. 94).” Tim Chester in *Closing the Window*

“Suppose your Biology 101 professor handed you a live wolverine and asked you to dissect it—but you had no anesthetic and no way to tie the beast down. What if you talked nicely to the wolverine: ‘Now, sir, if you just sit still, I’ll try to get this over as quickly as possible?’ All you’d see would be bare teeth and flying claws in violent resistance to your experiment. Your flesh won’t sit still for meditation and prayer any more than a wolverine would submit to surgery (p. 73).” Kris Lungaard in *The Enemy Within*

“You see, sexual impurity isn’t like a tumor growing out of control inside us. We treat it that way when our prayers focus on *deliverance*, as we plead for someone to come remove it. Actually, sexual impurity is a series of bad decisions on our part—a result of immature character—and deliverance won’t deliver you into instant maturity. Character work needs to be done (p. 92)... You will have to take by faith that once you get your eyes and mind under control, the sexual pressure will drop off dramatically. You bring most of the sexual pressure onto yourself through visual sensual stimulation and mental fantasy (p. 118).” Stephen Arterburn and Fred Stoeker in *Everyman’s Battle*

“If you are a man, start viewing women as your sisters, as people to protect instead of prey upon. If you are a woman, start treating men as your brothers rather than turning them into romantic-erotic objects... If you are married, begin the hard work of building an honest relationship where sexuality becomes one of the fruits of your unity as a couple (p. 25).” David Powlison in *Sexual Addiction*

“Our view of sex becomes detached from relationship and intimacy. Sex in porn is just a physical activity, nothing more. But real sex, sex as God intended, is the celebration and climax—quite literally—of a relationship. Godly sex is part of a package that includes talking together, sharing together, deciding together, crying together, working together, laughing together and forgiving each other. Orgasm comes at the end of a process that began with offering a compliment, doing the chores, recalling your day, unburdening your heart, tidying the house. Sex that disregards this is hollow... If you view sex as personal gratification or a chance to enact your fantasy, if you have sex while disregarding intimacy or unresolved conflict, then that sex will be bad in both senses of the word: poor quality and ungodly (p. 18).” Tim Chester in *Closing the Window*

### Embedded Study

To this point you have admitted, acknowledged, understood, repented, and confessed. Each of the previous steps are vital parts of the change process, but are incomplete to create a lifestyle where purity and honor are defining marks of your life and relationships. Each of the steps to this point have been about “putting off” sin (Eph 4:22) or changing how you think about your sin (Eph. 4:23) more than “putting on” God’s character (Eph. 4:24). Lasting change replaces what it rids and builds something new in the place of what it tears down. That will be the focal point for the rest of this journey.

As you move through the remaining steps you will be asked to address more than sexual sin. Rarely does sin restrain itself to one area of life. Therefore the notion that you will conquer sexual sin without addressing other areas of life is a naïve approach to change. It would be wasteful of the effort you have put into change this far. Failing to look at the rest of your life would be like getting braces to align your teeth and then refusing to wear the retainer to maintain those changes.

“I have found that most people who are addicted to one particular thing also fail to exercise control in other areas of their lives (p. 110)... Often this occurs because the underlying problem is not sexual addiction, but rather the lack of control, restraint, and discipline that comes from a life of self-gratification... As the person learns moderation in every area of life, he will find that the temptation to indulge in sexual sin will be weakened. Pursuing other forms of pleasure only serves to strengthen the addiction because gratifying oneself simply reinforces self-centeredness (p. 111)... A true overcomer must part with certain relationships, places, and things that were intimately associated with his sinful lifestyle. This is extremely difficult and often traumatic to the sex addict who, for many years, has looked to his sin for comfort, pleasure, and as an escape from the real world. The man invariably finds himself grieving the loss of, not just the pleasure of the sin, but also the other elements which accompanied the lifestyle of that sin (p. 124).” Steve Gallagher in *At the Altar of Sexual Idolatry*

You will be called on to love and rely on God more. Sexual sin is always the pursuit of something more than we can find in ourselves or a relationship with another person. Unless we address this deeper craving of the human soul we will become the slave of some other (possibly more functional) pleasure that will eventually leave. You were made for something greater than sex and nothing less than God will functionally satisfy you for long.

The changes required will take time. It is easy, at this point in your journey, to grow impatient and think, “I’ve done what I was supposed to do. Now let’s get on with it.” You have not yet done what you were supposed to do. You have only acknowledged or begun to make right what you should not have done. You have weeded your life. You are, in this step, beginning to plant seeds of honor and tend them to a lifestyle of godly character. The work ahead will take as much humility, faith, and reliance as the work you have already done.

“Faith in Jesus is not a quick fix. It’s certainly not a case of ‘just believe.’ There’s no ‘just’ about it. Yes, the message is ‘believe.’ But it’s never ‘just believe.’ We’re called to the fight of faith. So instead of ‘just believe,’ the message is ‘fight to believe.’ And it will be a fight, a daily fight. Some days you’ll be wounded; some days you’ll lose this battle. Then you’ll have to pick yourself up, fight to believe in God’s grace and reenter the fray... This is why so many people speak of turning to porn when they’re tired. It’s not because they think porn will be a pick-me-up—otherwise they’d make themselves coffee instead. It’s because they don’t feel they have the energy for the fight of faith (p. 60).” Tim Chester in *Closing the Window*

In this chapter we examine how life needs to be restructured under three headings: (1) Commitment to Live in God’s Reality; (2) Self-Control in All Areas of Life; and (3) Applying Wisdom to Relationships

### Commitment to Live in God’s Reality

Sexual sin always jettisons real relationships. Even adultery in a pseudo-marriage relationship does not come with the covenant cementing mutual ownership (1 Cor. 7:4) of sex that God intended. Sexual sin is always expressed in relationships in which we have leverage, selfish gain, or the ability to leave that is foreign to God’s design for marriage. Sex was meant to serve as glue and make relationships permanent (1 Cor. 6:15-18). When you put glue where it does not belong first things get jammed, then they get torn. The same is true of sex.

In order to realize the importance living in God’s reality we must understand that we are not just bought by Jesus’ blood we were designed by God. Bill Gates’ (C.E.O of Microsoft) computer does not just “obey” him because he bought it. The computer “obeys” Bill Gates at a much deeper level because he designed it. Whenever that computer tries to function outside of his design, it breaks.

We are the same with God. When we try to operate outside God’s design, we get mad, and we blame the “Manufacturer.” In this section, you will be asked to examine how well you live in God’s reality (1) physically, (2) emotionally, and (3) logistically.

**Physically Live in God’s Reality**

We should not think that we will neglect our physical bodies and then live in those same bodies as God designed. We must remember that we have fallen hearts bent towards sin, live in a fallen world where sin is readily available, and have an enemy who manipulates life to bring temptation to our moments of greatest weakest. Why do we think we can live physically and mentally depleted lives and survive morally?

Do you live a balanced life in the areas of:

- **Sleep** – getting between six to eight hours of continuous sleep per night? \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No
- **Diet** – eating regular, healthy, balanced meals? \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No
- **Exercise** – stimulating, strengthening, and maintaining your body in healthy ways? \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No
- **Time Management** – living productive but not overly filled days? \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No
- **Substance** – abstaining from alcohol or drugs that lower you inhibitions? \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No

When we are depleted in our physical bodies we look for artificial pick-me-ups. For some people this is over eating. For others it may be stimulants, shopping, procrastination, distractibility, mindlessness, carelessness, or other similar activities. For you, there is a strong likelihood that this artificial stimulation (escape) would be some form of sexual sin.

The time necessary to be healthy is the time you have devoted to your sin. How would your physical health be different if you devoted the time you spent sinning and preparing to sin to care for the body God has given you? How would your spiritual life be different if you were physically and mentally stronger? How would your relational life be different if you were physically stronger, mentally sharper, and spiritually refreshed? Hopefully you get the point. Choosing to live in God’s reality with our physical bodies has profound impact on all of life.

**Read Mark 14:38 and 1 Timothy 4:7-10.** The body is a friend of the soul, or at least it is when the body is cared for. When the body is not cared for, it becomes an enemy of or at least an obstacle to the soul. Jesus prayed for His disciples because their flesh was weak – they were sleeping, probably from the effects of all the work that went into preparing the Passover and the large meal they had just consumed. Paul told Timothy there was a connection between bodily training and spiritual training. In this case Paul was referring to the principle that a well-disciplined life is one in which self-control is easier to express in all areas. Will an exercise routine, healthy diet, and regular sleep schedule remove temptation from your life? No. Will the absence of these things increase temptation in your life? Yes.

How do you need to take better care of your body?

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We must also recognize that sexual sin a **powerful multi-sensory escape**. Sexual sin can capture multiple senses in the pleasurable escape it creates. During the moments of sin all the world is blocked out, because all of our sensory receptors are receiving sin’s stimulation. This is true for both pornography and adultery. It is true for both the acts of sin and the powerful anticipation of sin. Unless we learn to care for our body, then the powerful multi-sensory nature of sexual sin will make this form of escape preferable to all others.

**Emotionally Live in God’s Reality**

At this point it is important to acknowledge the unique struggle that teens and single adults face with sexual temptation. They are sexual. God made them male or female (Gen. 1:27). All their sexual anatomy is ready for sex and responsive to sight, smell, sound, and touch. A primary focus of life is finding a spouse. Yet it will be years, in our culture, before they are married and have a legitimate place to express this facet of personhood.

It is important for singles not to feel condemned for their natural attractions and arousal. When we embrace this sense of condemnation we are not emotionally living in God’s reality. Attraction and arousal are not necessarily lust and should not be considered sin in the absence of lust. Lust is when we entertain ourselves with attraction and arousal. In the same way that hunger and food preferences are not necessarily gluttony, attraction and arousal are not necessarily lust.

Single or married, when we struggle with sexual sin we must **redefine “reward”** and similar words. When sexual sin is the “good thing” you get when you completed something difficult or what you “deserve” after making a sacrifice, then you will feel cheated when you abstain from sexual sin. God will become a cosmic killjoy holding out on you.

**Read Psalm 84:7-12.** It is hard to believe that “No good thing does [God] withhold from those who walk uprightly (v. 11)” when we are believing sin’s lies about what is “good” for us. Sin makes righteous living feel like a burden that saps our strength rather than a well of life that takes us from “strength to strength (v. 7).” A primary part of change is gaining a definition of good that agrees with God’s definition of good.

Where, when, and how do you need to change your definition of words like “good,” “reward,” and “deserve”?

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We must also realize that it is **easier to resist temptation than sin**. When we wait and try to resist the act of sin rather than the moments of temptation that lead to sin, we place ourselves at an intense emotional disadvantage. We cannot run on the wet, thin ice of temptation and expect not to fall into the pond of sin. While it is true that temptation is not sin, it is equally true that temptation is not safe or wise. Let us not deceive ourselves into thinking that we can be reckless, foolish saints for long.

“A lot of us have developed a diet mentality towards lust. We really want to cut back on lust because we know it’s not healthy and it makes us feel bad (p. 25).” Joshua Harris in *Sex Is Not the Problem (Lust Is)*

Where are the points of temptation that you need to eliminate or place strong protections in your life?

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We must **stop our sexual fantasies earlier** and earlier in our imaginations. Any story requires some building before it becomes compelling. It is at least three lines after “once upon a time” that a fairy tale becomes interesting. Even if we want to escape to “Never, Never Land” the fictional beginning does not grab us until some story begins to develop. But with every detail added and character developed the story becomes harder to put down. Too often, before we know it, we’ve read the whole book.

The same is true with sexual sin. The more our imaginations run – watching pornography, placing ourselves in a romance movie, fondly thinking of our emotional affair partner, planning the next rendezvous or conversation with our adultery partner – the harder the story is to let go. Too often we tell ourselves that “it just happened” when we completed the whole act of sexual sin.

“True change that comes from God starts with your imagination and your desire life. That is where your struggle with compulsive sexual behavior begins (p. 4).” David Powlison in *Sexual Addiction*

What are the common triggers and early portions of your sexual fantasies that you need to “nip in the bud”?

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### Logistically Live in God’s Reality

Sin doesn’t “just happen.” By the time that a particular sin has become life dominating, it has made itself at home in our life. Too often we tailor our life in such a way that it is easier to sin than not to sin. Pursuing God and forsaking sin entails may literally require rearranging our lives. Your new-life will be more different than your current-life-minus-sexual-sin. It will be a life minus all of the structures your sin requires and new structures that focus on loving God and loving others.

The suggestions below are not meant to be exhaustive. Rather they are meant to spark your thinking and the thinking of those you have allowed to walk with you at this time (there is no going back to the darkness of individualism masked as foolish “privacy”). However, if any item on the list would help you resist sexual sin, then you should consider it mandatory. You have not come this far on your journey to begin doing things “good enough” now.

Three factors have made pornography a rapidly increasing struggle with the advent of the internet: accessibility, affordability, and anonymity. Porn can now be accessed with no shame, no cost, and no risk (at least that is what is thought in the moment

of temptation). If sexual sin is going to be combated in the hyper-sexualized culture that has ensured, then you must pay attention to the details of your life.

- **Internet Filter:** This is also known as “blocking software.” These types of programs can be set for both pornographic sites and chat rooms. Their purpose is to prevent a computer from being able to access particular kind of sites. Filters are never sufficient by themselves. If you put a filter on your computer, someone else should have the password to adjust the settings or the tool is useless.
- **Accountability Software:** These types of programs send e-mail reports whenever a questionable site is visited or if the program is manually turned off while the computer is running. Their benefit is that they never allow you to be “alone” with your computer. While there are many versions of this software available [covenanteyes.com](http://covenanteyes.com) is recommended as a quality option.
- **Move Your Computer to High Traffic Area of Home:** If you would keep a pet snake in a cage (as opposed to letting it loose in your house), the same idea applies here. An extension of this principle is to only use the internet in public places and to stay off the computer when your family is not home. If necessary, don’t be home alone when your spouse is out and go to bed at the same time as your family or roommates. The main point – *no technological convenience is worth compromising your character or hurting your family.*
- **Cancel Tempting Media Access:** Cancel magazines with lingerie or swimwear images. Refrain from watching late night television or shows with sexual content. The main point – being entertained and avoiding boredom is not worth compromising your character or hurting your family. These are excuses that prove hollow when you consider the consequences of sexual sin.
- **Put Scripture Near Your Temptation Settings:** Where darkness and lies lurk put candles of truth and light. Look back over your full disclosure and make a list of the places that are referenced. Look back over your motives/triggers for sin and find passages of Scripture that counter these points of deception. The most effective passages of Scripture many have little to do with lust. If you only use lust passages, then the Bible could be used to remind you of your struggle.
- **Don’t Gaze at What Is Not Yours:** Think of lust as sexual stealing. You are taking what has not been covenanted to you. You are forcing someone to do in your imagination what they would not voluntarily do.
- **Don’t Shop or Browse At/Near Suggestive Stores/Sites:** Enough temptation will find you. Don’t make its hunt easier. If you rely on these “hedges” of protection as your solution, that is legalism. However, if you don’t have these protection in place, that is foolishness. Discuss these limits with those in your circle of confession and ask them to ask you about your follow through on these commitments.
- **Have Activities You Enjoy:** You are not merely trying to extricate lust from life. You are discovering the life God intended you to enjoy. If overcoming lust is only about what you “don’t do,” then you will begin to feel strongly discouraged. As your desires are purified, you should be finding things you enjoy “within God’s reality.”

What changes do you need to make that came to light from reading this section?

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### Self-Control in All Areas of Life

Life will not stay “neat” in segments for long. We cannot root out sin like we used to clean our rooms as children – piling everything in the closet or under the bed. Sin is not an object like a toy. It will not stay where we put it. Sin is part lion and part rabbit – it hunts and it multiplies. Unless it is killed it will overtake the entire life of the person who hides, ignores, or minimizes it.

This is true of sexual sin. There are countless testimonies of those who live undisciplined lives and try to take their sexual sin seriously. By will power and possibly some accountability they quit looking at porn or break off an inappropriate relationship, for a while. But through unaccounted for time, unaccounted for money, bad attitudes towards authority, lazy spiritual disciplines, or riding the waves of non-sexual pleasures, sexual sin finds its way back into the lives.

We are not saying that organized people are holy and unorganized people are unholy. Actually, being organized can be a detriment to the recommendations made in this section. It may help you hide unaccounted for time or money. It may allow you to appear more honoring and compliant with authority than you are. The point is that the gravity of sin works against our pursuit of holiness, so we must be intentional if we are going to grow in our ability to love God and love others.

In terms of self-control, we will look at five areas that you need to evaluate and monitor.

## I. Money

If you are married, there should be no money that is spent of which both spouses are not aware. That is not because “you’ve been bad” and “this is a consequence of your sin.” That is just part of a healthy, one-flesh relationship. Part of restructuring your life will entail learning a household system for managing money that allows for personal spending within a jointly-prioritized, mutually-aware budgeting system.

There are many connections between money habits and sexual sin.

- Pornography is an industry that’s purpose is to make money and it’s very good at it.
- Adultery costs money.
- Secret spending creates shame and division that makes it easier to be close to an “outsider.”
- Unaccounted for money feeds the lie, “I can get away with this. No one will know.”
- Unaccounted for money feeds the lie, “This is my money and I should be able to do with it what I want.”

Having disciplined and (if married) transparent financial management requires something that is very unpopular – sacrifice. When decisions are made jointly, then you run the risk of not getting what you want. You might have to say “no” to self to say “yes” to the marriage or God. This is the essence of sexual sin’s appeal – never having to say “no” to self because the person (or God) I am in relationship with disapproves.

“Lust is equal to normal sexual desire plus selfishness... Purity is equal to normal sexual desire plus selflessness (p. 124).” Mark Laaser in *Healing the Wounds of Sexual Addiction*

Does your current financial management allow for the kind of self-control described above?     \_\_\_ Yes           \_\_\_ No

## 2. Schedule

Does your sexual sin occur when you have blocks of unaccounted for time? Obviously. Does your sexual sin occur when you are wasting time that was intended for another purpose? Of course. Does the pursuit of sexual sin consume the time God would have you enjoy legitimate pleasures? Yes. Does sexual sin as an escape create distortions in your priorities that make sexual sin seem harder to live without? Affirmative.

In the previous section we discussed matters pertaining to sleep and time management. But it is worth repeating, sin messes with your schedule. Here we want to add two pieces to the time-sin relationship.

First, in order for your schedule to be transparent it needs to be communicable. Many people who struggle with sexual sin have spent years convincing themselves and everyone else that their schedule was unknowable to protect their pockets of secret pleasure. Other people should know your schedule and you should become skilled at communicating it.

Go back to your full disclosure. Read through it again thinking through the scheduling elements involved. When were the most common times of temptation? What parts of your schedule did you hide or mask as “too complex”? Who should have known where you were and what you were doing during those times?

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Second, your schedule should include innocent pleasures. When we do not make time for legitimate pleasures in our schedule we will steal illegitimate ones in the margins of life. As you think through this, do not merely think of hobbies; think of the activities that leave you feeling most refreshed.

“In your experience, what has proved truly restful? What has left you feeling nourished afterwards?... What is the invigorating opposite of your workaday life (p. 19)?” David Powlison in *Breaking the Addictive Cycle*

### 3. Authority

When we have a bad attitude towards authority we begin to think that we are the exception. Sexual sin, like all sin, requires a strong personal distaste for the word “no.” In order to consistently overcome sexual sin you must humble yourself to the authority of God to define right-wrong and good-bad.

Where do you see resistance to authority in your life?

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Another form of authority we have talked about several times in this study, but by another name, is accountability. Knowledge is power and when we let someone know our areas of weakness and failure they gain a degree of power over us. They can now ask the very questions we worked hard to prevent anyone from asking. If we are going to overcome sin by God’s design, we will submit to the authority of living in the accountability of Christian community.

### 4. Spiritual Disciplines

Accountability without daily fellowship with God is as effective as a car without gasoline or a journal with no writing utensil. You can use the car to stay out of the cold wind or make paper airplanes with the pages of your journal, but they will never serve the purpose for which they were created. Accountability cannot become a substitute for the daily fueling of God’s presence and having His Word written on our hearts.

What is your pattern of **daily Bible intake**? As you go through this study there are Bible studies embedded throughout which you can use to foster this time of daily Bible reading and reflection. The purpose of these Bible studies and memorization passages is not merely to illustrate points, but to create a habit of Bible study and teach you how to read/apply the Bible while overcoming life’s struggle.

What is your time and place for daily Bible study? How are you deciding what portions of the Bible to read?

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What is your habit of **daily prayer**? Chances are fantasy has become the replacement for prayer in your life. When stress arises you turn to the romantic or erotic instead of God. This is one of the primary mental reflexes that must be restructured in your life. When we turn to sex to relieve stress we are expecting it to answer what should be our prayers. With this in mind, each time you are given to a sexual fantasy, remember to pray to God about whatever that fantasy is intended to be an escape from.

How can you strengthen your stress-prayer reflex? What are other ways prayer can be a regular part of your life?

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### 5. Pleasure/Desire

Most of this study has been about curbing the exaggerated desires of sexual sin. Most of the rest of this study will transition towards cultivating wholesome desires. But “wholesome” can be a misunderstood word in this context. Any desire can be “unwholesome” when it becomes too large. Therefore “wholesome” cannot simply mean “wanting a good thing.” Rather, “wholesome” must mean “wanting a good thing to the right degree.”

“Recovering sex addicts also need to learn how to play... Recovery is not all pain and blackness. It is about enjoying life and the world God has given... This may sound a bit trite, but addicts are searching for joy and spontaneity and sometimes a toy can help them rediscover these things (p. 165).” Mark Laaser in *Healing the Wounds of Sexual Addiction*

This is where sexual sin is particularly disruptive; it is a desire-steroid. Arterburn and Stroeker discuss the biology behind this statement. The neurotransmitter discussed is not exclusively male. Sex generates a similar excitement response in both genders when sex is engaged in a way they find satisfying.

“Men receive a chemical high from sexually charged images—a hormone called epinephrine is secreted into the bloodstream, which locks into memory whatever stimulus is present at the time of the emotional excitement (p. 30).” Stephen Arterburn and Fred Stoeker in *Everyman’s Battle*

Other than sexual sin, what areas of pleasure or desire do you struggle to express self-control?

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In order to exhibit healthy self-control you must **look beyond the moment** of pleasure to the lives being destroyed. Impulsivity is very moment-focused. Discipline considers consequences. Sin is highly self-focused. Self-control is other-focused. Personality is no excuse. Every personality-type can be mature and make healthy decisions that pursue honoring God over self-gratification.

Read through your full disclosure again (this is not punishment, but transforming what Satan meant for your destruction as a tool God uses to bring you freedom). Make notes on how you could call your attention beyond the moment-focused mindset of temptation. Summarize the key truths you've learned that are more appealing than when you avoided them before.

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You may experience **withdrawal symptoms** from your sexual sin. It may be facing the stress you escaped through sin, grief over the absent relationship with your adultery partner, boredom as you learn what to do with the time given to sin, distance in your marriage as your spouse processes his/her hurt, or a sense that life is not as exciting without the artificial stimulation.

In moments of weakness the question becomes, “Do I really want to live this way for the rest of my life?” You do or you would not have come this far. You do because there was no lasting hope or joy in a life built on fantasy. If you are asking this question, it is only because you are comparing the front end of holiness with the front end of sin while morally hung over. When you compare the back end of sin with the back end of holiness you will wonder why you ever asked the question.

For those whose sexual sin took on addictive qualities (see evaluation in Step I) it is recommended that you take a **90 day sexual fast** even if you are married. Marital sex is not the cure for sexual addiction. As long as sex is ultimate it will never be satisfying or serve the function it was intended to serve within marriage. You can have sex that is both moral and addictive.

This 90 day fast is meant to prove to yourself that you don't “need” sex, to help you detox from the chemical cycle you've gotten into through sex, force you to begin facing problems you might escape through moral sex, and create a relational climate in which sex can be re-engaged with your spouse with wholesale expectations.

This type of fast would involve no sexual intercourse, no masturbation, and only mild affection (simple kiss or hugs) exchanges for three months. Your spouse should be told of the fast and what you hope to gain from it. During the fast you are not just trying to get through the days as a form of self-punishment or grand achievement. Rather the focal point of the fast is to prove to yourself experientially that sex is not ultimate and that real, vulnerable relationships are worth having even without sex.

### Applying Wisdom to Relationships

Sexual sin is relational sin even if no one else is involved, because sex is relational and any sexual expression affects our relational capacity, expectations, and skills. Even if your struggle is “just porn” (hopefully you hate that phrase by now), then this section is still very relevant to you.

You will not be sexually pure and relationally unchanged. Sexual sin attacks the foundation of healthy relationship – honor. Purity restores that foundation. As you strive for personal purity and relational honor you will interact with others in new ways. This will allow for the true intimacy (healthy friendship and marriage) and vulnerability that was sought through lust.

This began with your confessions, but those confessions now need to bear fruit in order to see your relationships become a source of strength. In your confession you spoke of being committed to changing. It is in this section that you define and follow through on that commitment. As you seek to apply wisdom in all relationships, we look at three areas: unhealthy relationships and patterns, healthy relationships and patterns, and marriage (read this section even if you are single).

### Unhealthy Relationships / Patterns

Relationship and relational patterns can be unhealthy in one of two ways. Either they can feed our sin or they can hide our sin. In this section you are looking to remove all feeding and hiding relationships and relational patterns. This is broader than don't masturbate, quit talking to your emotional affair partner, or don't have sex with anyone but your spouse.

“Do not share intimate details of your marriage with a person of the opposite sex. Never complain about your partner or air your dirty laundry... Mentioning your mate and children positively, refraining from long eye contact, avoiding intimate settings (riding alone in a car), including the whole group rather than seeking intense personal interactions—all help set limits with casual contacts (p. 345).” Doug Rosenau in *A Celebration of Sex*

- **Don't Participate in Crude Humor:** Lust is not just visual. It includes any use of sex for selfish personal entertainment. What is the implication? Refrain from sexualized humor. When you joke about sex in unwholesome ways you are portraying lust to yourself and others as good, appealing, and desirable. You begin to blur the line between wholesome sex and lust with the pleasant vehicle of humor and laughter.

**Read Ephesians 5:3-8.** If you are given to crude humor involving sexual themes, then this is another passage you should memorize. Notice that Paul connects crude joking (v. 4) with allowing ourselves to be deceived (v. 6). Humor is powerfully convincing. This is why many of the most successful commercials are funny. With each sexual joke that you tell or listen to realize you are watching a commercial for Satan's agenda for your life.

When and with whom are you most prone to participate in crude humor?

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- **Don't Play the “Six Degrees of Separation” Conversation Game:** When we are living in sin we do not want to talk about (1) our sin or (2) anything connected to our sin or (3) anything connected to anything connected to our sin. Hence our relationships with people who would speak God's truth into our lives became superficial and or strained. Whenever you find yourself avoiding a subject because it is related to something you want to hide, you should consider this a HUGE RED FLAG!!! At that moment you should speak, even if the subject is not relevant, just to prevent the habit or living in comfortable secrecy from re-emerging.

When have you recently caught yourself playing the “six degrees of separation” conversation game?

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- **Don't Feed the Gender Stereotype Story Lines:** We live in a culture where gender stereotypes are largely shaped by the narratives of the lust-industry: both pornography for men and romances for women. Neither talks about real people in real relationships sharing real life. Both feed an unrealistic or exaggerated style of relationship centered upon our greatest desire and make it harder to experience other-minded, servant-oriented contentment in relationships.

What gender stereotype story lines most feed your struggle with lust and what promotes them?

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- **Don't Use Secondary Emotions of Anger or Self-Pity to Express Hurt:** Secondary emotions are often the first step back into fantasy, because it causes real people not to really know you. Secondary emotions are how you feel about how you feel. If you are angry because you feel neglected, then neglect is the primary emotion and anger is the (safer) secondary response to feeling neglected.

“It means trusting my welfare to God when my wife doesn't do what I want... I've become less angry. I don't withdraw into self-pity and lick my wounds... Not falling into self-pity has been one more nail that keeps that door shut tight. I think I've become more honest and constructive, instead of either avoiding my wife or attacking her (p. 13).” Testimony in David Powlison's *Pornography: Slaying the Dragon*.

When you use secondary emotions, you become convinced that no one really understands you. As this belief becomes solidified (because you only expressed secondary emotions), it becomes easier and more “logical” to escape into a fantasy relationship with porn (which has the advantage of being a story in your mind and therefore automatically “understands” you) or another person (who hears you complain, usually expressing more primary emotions than with your spouse).

When and with whom will it be most important for you not to use secondary emotions?

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- **Don’t Flirt:** What is flirting? A beginner’s rule of thumb is if you have doubt or are questioned about it, stop it. *Flirting is any behavior that creates or attempts to create romantic interest, sexual tension, an emotional high, emotional dependence, or exclusive bonds of trust with a member of the opposite sex.* If flirting has been something that has contributed to your sexual sin, then these are things you need to closely monitor or avoid.
  - **Having Time Alone or Inside Jokes:** Anything that create an “us” dynamic as opposed to everyone “else” can be flirting. There is something “shared.” Making innuendos during conversation (even non-sexual ones) can contribute to this dynamic.
  - **Mimicking the Other Person:** When the mimicking behavior is non-offensive, it communicates “I am paying attention to you,” “I remember how you do things,” or “What you do stands out to me.”
  - **Making Choices to Match Known Preference:** If you catch yourself changing your day-to-day choices (i.e., what you wear, cologne/perfume, topic of conversation) to match the preference of another person, then you are seeking affirmation and an emotional high that would meet the definition of flirting.
  - **Complimenting Non-Functional Actions or Attributes:** Functional compliments have to do with affirming good work on a necessary interaction (i.e., “Your presentation was clear and helpful. Thank you.”). Complimenting appearance, attire, sense of humor, ease of conversation, or other non-functional actions or attributes should be avoided if flirting has contributed to your sexual sin.
  - **Touching:** Welcomed, friendly touch moves a relationship to another level. It expresses that the relationship is closer, more comfortable, and increases the amount of informational disclosure that is deemed to be appropriate.
  - **Smiling at Ordinary Times:** If flirting has contributed to your sexual sin, then you will need to be willing to feel “unfriendly.” While there is nothing wrong with smiling it communicates a sense of enjoying the other person’s presence and invitation to a deeper relationship.
  - **Drawing Attention to Your Face:** Touching your face or playing with your hair makes most any expression or posture inviting.
  - **Eye Contact:** When you look into someone’s eyes it communicates a deeper level of interest and respect. Eye contact builds a bond. In the absence of words, eye contact communicates that you find the person alone worthy of your full attention.
  - **Closeness:** Going out of your way to be near another person is a way of expressing affection. Standing closer than is common in conversation adds to the sexual energy or tension (depending on whether the closeness is welcomed) even in a casual conversation.
  - **Initiating Unnecessary Conversation:** “For no reason” conversations or “just wanted your opinion” questions indicated that the other person is “special.” It does not require a significant topic to spark a reason to talk. This opens the door for conversation to digress to more personal subjects which are dangerous for the person for whom flirting has added to his/her sexual sin.

What aspects of flirting, in what settings, and with whom do you need to change? \_\_\_\_\_

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- **Don’t Interact with the Opposite Sex While Consuming Alcohol:** If you struggle with a sin requiring self-control (sexual sin fits that category), then it is unwise to partake of any substance that lowers your inhibitions and decreases your self-control.

What commitments do you need to make with regards to alcohol or drugs? \_\_\_\_\_

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- **Limit Interaction with Those Who Exhibit These Patterns:** If you have friends who regularly engage in the things recommended to be avoided in this chapter, then it would be wise for you to limit your interaction with them. The efforts to overcome sexual sin require more than breaking a habit; it requires changing a lifestyle. This will likely result in changes to your sphere of friends.

Who do you need to limit your interaction with in order to pursue a life of purity? \_\_\_\_\_  
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**Healthy Relationships / Patterns**

Overcoming sexual sin is about more than what you don’t do. Becoming a hermit who has no impact on the world may displease God as much as sexual sin. Merely removing sin creates a void in our life that will be filled with something. Unless we intentionally fill it with God-honoring relational patterns then other sinful patterns will fill the void.

In this section we will look at general patterns for healthy relationships. In the next section we will look at healthy relationship patterns for marriage.

**Read Matthew 22:37-40.** Notice that Jesus says the entire Bible depends upon these two positive commands (v. 40). The Bible is not built on negative commands (what we should “not” do). As you begin to restructure your life after a life-dominating struggle with sexual sin, this will be important for you to remember. You are not emptying your life. You are allowing God to restore the holes and give you a full life (John 10:10).

- **See People as Real People:** View members of the opposite of sex as people rather than objects of lust or romance partners. When we lust, we view people as created for our pleasure rather than God’s glory. When you are tempted to lust, remind yourself of the roles and relationships in the other person’s life.

“When you are at the mall and notice an attractive woman, look at her face and notice if she is tired. Observe the packages she is carrying and think, ‘I get she’s a great mom.’ Make the woman a person and give her a life... One of my clients, after seeing a great body and struggling with lust, asks himself, ‘I wonder if she knows Jesus?’ Giving her a spirit and praying for her gets him back on track (p. 355).” Doug Rosenau in *A Celebration of Sex*

Given your struggle with lust how can you discipline yourself to view attractive people as real people?

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- **Love in a Real Life Story:** As we stated in Step 3, sometimes the “story” is as tempting as the “person.” This is especially true if you use lust for escape more than pleasure. Love that is not imagined with real life struggles and willing sacrifice is fantasy and, therefore, a form of lust. Lust is love minus life; that is why lust is never satisfying for long – it has no substance.

Given the fantasy stories you are prone to lusting within, how can you gain a more accurate view of love?

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- **Learn Real Friendships:** Real relationship require things from us. Lust’s appeal is that it seemingly asks for nothing and offers everything. Learning to engage and enjoy friendship (non-sexual relationships) is a vital part of breaking free from the fantasies of lust and preparing to enjoy sex in a real relationship with a real person.

**Read these “one another” passages** from the New Testament and note what is expected in a real friendship: Romans 12:10, 16, 14:13, 15:7, 14; 1 Corinthians 12:25; 2 Corinthians 10:12, 13:11; Galatians 5:13-15; Colossians 3:9, 13, 16; 1 Thessalonians 4:18, 5:11-15; Hebrews 3:12-14, 10:24-25; James 5:9, 16; 1 Peter 1:22, 4:8-10, 5:5; 1 John 1:7, 4:7.

What changes do you need to make in your life and expectations to engage and enjoy real friendships?

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- **Cultivate Adequate Same-Sex Friendships:** It is not enough to know what a real friendship is or that you need more real friends. In order to experience the refinement of character that God intends to bring about through relationship with others, you must be and have friends. More will be said on this point in Step 8 if this is a difficult point for you to apply.

Who are the people that you need to reach out to as a real friend in the ways described above?

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## Marriage

Sex was made for marriage; marriage was not made for sex. It is similar to saying garages were made for cars, but cars were not made for garages. Lust tends to make all of life about sex. Often the hardest place for sex to take its appropriate size and priority is in marriage. But unless this change is made then cramming the oversized desire for sex/romance created by lust into marriage is like overfilling a water balloon—the marriage busts.

In this section we will cover four points that are important to marital restoration after sexual sin or proper anticipation of marriage after a struggle with sexual sin.

- **Marital Restoration Is Not Marital Enrichment:** It is important for you and your spouse to keep these two activities distinct in your minds. This has been discussed with your spouse in the True Betrayal materials. When these two activities are enmeshed then your efforts to improve the marriage get reduced to penance and your spouse’s efforts become lust-prevention. Once you complete these materials, then you should approach your spouse and express your desire to improve the marriage by working on the areas of marital weakness you discovered during the course of this study. An indicator that you are confusing these two activities is when your spouse responds, “I’m not ready for that yet,” to an act of kindness from you.

How are you prone to confuse marital restoration and marital enrichment? What affects has this confusion had?

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- **Marital Sex Is Not a Lust Replacement:** Marriage was not created to satiate whatever appetite a life of lust may have created. A spouse is not called to obey sinful demands or demands generated from a sinful life style. This degrades sex and marriage. Sex was made to be an expression of love not food for an appetite. When you seek to initiate sex to quiet an urge instead of expressing affection, realize that you are merely succumbing to the desire of lust in a morally acceptable relationship.

How and when have you tended to treat sex as an appetite rather than an expression of love?

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- **Resist Reducing Marriage to Sex:** Lust can be “scored.” How good was that movie? How attractive is that person? Loved should not be “scored.” When we score something we deem ourselves superior or above that which we score; a professor grades a student or a coach evaluates an athlete. This mindset has no place in marital affection or intimacy. When you think this way you are approaching life as if you are the “author” or “judge” and others are a “character in your story” or “contestant vying for your approval.” Either way you are in a position to get pleasure without giving yourself because you are the “safe” one speaking from “above.”

“Consider the example of the sex addict who never engages in sexual activity with anyone except his wife, yet uses sex with his spouse as an escape from intimacy, not as an expression of it. In this case, the sex addict treats his spouse simply as a body and not as a spirit. Here, sex, although it is with a spouse, is really not different than masturbating... The question is whether or not sex is an expression of intimacy or an escape from it (p. 26).” Mark Laaser in *Healing the Wounds of Sexual Addiction*

How have you “scored” sex/romance (i.e., frequency, intensity, variety) as you standard of contentment?

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- **Keep Your Spouse Informed:** We have already said that your spouse should not be your primary accountability partner. This is still true. But this should not require your spouse to live in the dark. You do not have to wonder if your spouse is thinking about your purity or fidelity. They are. Honor this concern by giving your spouse a regular update on your struggle, your accountability relationships, or ways that you are modifying your life structuring plan. This is an act of love as you put their peace of mind ahead of your personal comfort.

Do this until they say, “I trust you. There is no need to update me again unless you are facing temptation or have fallen.”

When and how would your spouse most appreciate being informed of your struggle with sexual sin?

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**Chapter Summary Project:** Read back through all the notes that you made in this chapter and make a list of the changes you need to make. Share them with your accountability partner, group, counselor, spouse (if married), and relevant people from your confession list. Then make a prioritized plan for implementing these changes.

**Accountability Focus (RESTRUCTURE LIFE):**

With each step, we will provide questions you should invite another person to ask you openly and to confront any contradiction between your words and life.

- Did I diligently answer each question and compile a list of the changes required to restructure my life?
- Have I shared those changes with the relevant people to complete confession and ensure change?
- Have I prioritized my list of changes and created a workable plan for implementation?

## Chapter 7

### “Fighting for Holiness Harder Than I Hid My Sin”

IMPLEMENT the new structure pervasively with humility and flexibility.

**“Plans are easier than life. Plans exist outside my sinful heart and broken world. Trying to live out my plan has taught me more about my self, my sin, and my Savior. As I have had victory, the old expressions of lust/escape have taken new forms. I have had to remember that my plans are merely how I intend to rely on God and not, themselves, my deliverer.**

**Here are the unexpected challenges I faced [list], how I failed [list], where I succeeded [list], what I learned [list], and how God was faithful [list]. I now see that [list] is really the most important part of my plan.”**

**Memorize:** Romans 6:12-13 (ESV), “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments of righteousness.” As you memorize this passage reflect upon these key points:

- “Let not” – Overcoming sexual sin requires persistent willfulness that continually opposes new forms of temptation.
- “Reign” – You must remember that sin’s desire is to rule (Gen. 4:7). Its initial returns will seem innocent. Beware!
- “Obey its passions” – In God’s design for life your passions/desires are made to obey you as you seek to honor Him.
- “Members... yourselves” – Sin compartmentalizes and divides life. God wants your whole life to be whole and holy.
- “As those” – Remember you fight as one who has already been brought back from the death of sin to life in Christ.

#### Teaching Notes

“Chaos occurs when we become willing to change and make real efforts to do so. Since this is new ground, we don’t know how to act or what to do. The old behaviors are gone, but we haven’t learned new ones yet. Chaos is confusing, frightening, and painful (p. 133).” Mark Laaser in *Healing the Wounds of Sexual Addiction*

“Going in the right direction in your struggle with sexual addiction means learning to fight your temptation to sin, learning to handle your guilt when you fail, and learning to understand and deal with the circumstances in which you are tempted (p. 8).” David Powlison in *Sexual Addiction*

“As most adults have learned the hard way, reality is rarely as wonderful as fantasy. Many people create expectations for sex that reality cannot meet. I dare say that rarely has a teenage boy created a fantasy in which his partner rebuffs his advances because she is too tired (p. 40).” Tim Challies in *Sexual Detox*

“When things get tough at home, and they most certainly will, Satan will be right there to tempt you to run back to the partner. Rejection of these desires is imperative and will be a vital part of your recovery. Denial that these desires exist will only increase your vulnerability and risk. Be honest with yourself and with God. Recognize that the source of these desires is based on a lie. And the relationship you’d be running to is based in fantasy. Focus on the commitment you’ve made that is based on truth (p. 51).” Gary & Mona Shriver in *Unfaithful*

“Paint yourself into a corner by telling others of your plans for change (p. 340).” Doug Rosenau in *A Celebration of Sex*

“Porn is a sin of imagination. We need to counter it by enlarging our imaginations. The answer to porn is to believe the truth. But that’s so much more than an intellectual process. We need to let the truth capture our imaginations: to meditate, ponder, wonder at, and sing the truth. We need to feel the truth, glory in the truth, delight in the truth (p. 64).” Tim Chester in *Closing the Window*

### Embedded Study

As you reach this step the momentum of change has probably already fluctuated several times. Getting started was hard. It felt like an uphill battle. Sin didn't want to let go of you and you didn't want to admit it had a hold on you. Honesty with self, others, and God has a great way of building momentum. You began to let go of the weights of sin that clung to you and run free from secrets (Heb. 12:1). That phase is almost always exciting and you can almost feel guilty about the amount of relief it brings (especially if you're married and your spouse is carrying the weight of your secrets which have now come to light).

As that excitement gives way to life restructuring change begins to feel more like work again. “Implementing change” does not occur as quickly as repentance and confession. At this phase, change happens in incremental units and mundane moments. Change begins to require faithfulness in moments where change may not feel as “relevant” to your battle with sexual sin. It no longer feels like you're running downhill towards God, but uphill.

In this chapter you will evaluate the effectiveness and needed modifications to your life restructuring plan made in Step 6. This step will require the passage of time. Implementing (Step 7) takes longer than creating a plan (Step 6). For this reason, if you are in a group program, you should give at least two months to this step. You will need to see how your plan responds to the changes of settings, relationships, and emotions that happen more over months than days.

As this time passes, there are three areas of assessment that you will be performing from this chapter. First, we will discuss the subject of relapse. Second, you will be learning how to measure lasting progress. What is the difference between “I'm having a good week” and “My life is beginning to conform to God's design”? Third, you will be looking at key areas of your life to make sure that you have not overlooked something that was not relevant during the crisis that precipitated your seeking help but is now.

### Discussing Relapse

Is every slip a relapse? Does every bad choice mean I'm “starting over”? How can I not expect myself to be perfect for the rest of my life without making excuses for myself that will make it easier to slip back into destructive behaviors? You can see why relapse is such a difficult subject in a recovery program.

On one hand, you can expect to relapse many times in the journey of recovery. If we don't relapse, then our struggle was probably not “life dominating” and didn't warrant the level of attention this study provides. On the other hand, we don't want to expect to fail. We want to face every moment with the expectation that we'll rely on God to make healthy, God-honoring choices.

With that said, here are the expectations of this study:

- We will face relapse.
- Relapse is the recurrence of self-destructive behaviors related to our desired change.
- More dangerous than relapse are dishonesty and hiding.
- Dishonesty and hiding are the difference between a relapse slip (short) and relapse slide (long).
- Relapse begins to end when honesty begins.
- We are more likely to be honest about something we've openly discussed.
- We include this section, not to excuse or predict relapse, but to place ourselves in position for a healthy response.

Stephen Arterburn and Linda Mintle lay out four phases of a relapse (*Lose It for Life*, p. 228-230; bold text only). The presence of an early step does not make the latter steps inevitable. Rather we will look at each in order to help you prevent moving further into relapse when you realize you're in a vulnerable condition.

**1. Complacency:** “I just want a break from being good.” This is the mild, passive-aggressive defiance of fatigue. It likely means we've been trying to change too fast (perfectionistic approach to change) or that we've got too much in our schedule. Early honesty with people in your support network is the best response to this fatigue. Don't try to press through in private. Evaluate what would be a sustainable approach to change with people who care about you. That is what this chapter is all about.

**2. Confusion:** It has been said by many, “Worldliness is what makes sin look normal and righteousness look strange.” The further we get into temptation, the more this dynamic effects our thinking. You begin to view “healthy choices” as an “unhealthy burden.” You begin to view “unhealthy choices” as “moments of freedom.” You begin to

view “supportive friends” as “people who don’t understand and expect too much.” When this disorientation begins to emerge be honest ASAP. This is the pattern of thought that will extend a relapse. Even if you don’t know what to disclose at this point, call a member of your support team and say, “I’m struggling. I don’t think I’m thinking well right now. Can we talk?”

**3. Compromise:** This step can be fueled by self-pity, denial, or defiance. But we begin to think, “I deserve my self-destructive behavior,” as if it were a form of relief. The duration of time that has passed since we last engaged our sin allows the sense of high or relief to be greater and the negative physical effects not to be as immediately felt. It is as if our bad friend really has learned to be good like they promised. We also know those who care about us will be disappointed and hurt, so we are more prone to remain secretive about what we’re doing. Frequent warning signs at this stage of a relapse are:

- Fantasizing about your addiction as if it were “the good old days.”
- Believing that you can sin again without falling back into addiction (over confidence).
- Your emotions become moody and your attitude becomes selfish
- You begin reconnecting with your old friends from when you were actively in addiction.
- You begin to pull away from or neglect friends who have been part of your recovery.
- You are defensive when someone brings up changes in your mood, attitude, or actions.
- You begin to neglect your outlets for healthy fun or enjoy them less.
- You begin to engage healthy interests in excessive ways (e.g., excessive exercise, compulsive cleaning).

**4. Catastrophe:** Destructive choices destroy. There is no way around that. When we fail to acknowledge compromise (stage three), catastrophe (stage four) will eventually get our attention. While our goal is to interrupt a potential relapse before it reaches catastrophe phase, the earlier in the deterioration process we acknowledge what is happening, the better. Don’t allow shame or pride to prevent you from reversing the impact of your choices.

**Read I Corinthians 10:13.** “God will not let you be tempted beyond your ability” doesn’t just mean the type or intensity of temptation, but also means at any point in the temptation cycle. Too often we conceptualize a fictional “point of no return” in our battle with sin. If a “point of no return” exists, it is the point at which we decide not to be honest with God, ourselves, and others. The grace of God means there is always hope in honesty about our sin. When God promises to provide “a way of escape” that refers, not to some secret passage way (hidden is never free), but to the context of grace and support which the gospel provides, that allows us to be honest.

John Baker provides five dispositions, using the acronym HEART, that alert us to time when we are particularly susceptible to relapse (p. 192, *Celebrate Recovery: Leader’s Guide*). When you experience these dispositions, reach out to a member of your support network. A quick phone or text that says, “I can tell I’m tense right now and wanted to let you know. Will you pray for me?” can make a big difference.

- **H**urting
- **E**xhausted
- **A**ngry
- **R**esentful
- **T**ense

### How to Measure Lasting Progress?

Measuring progress is tricky for many reasons. First, measuring progress is an attempt to measure something very fluid and dynamic. There is a rise and fall, acceleration and deceleration in progress that makes it hard to get a concrete reading on progress. Second, measuring progress has a tendency to measure performance over dependence. This tendency can easily begin to undermine the God-reliance and vulnerability stressed throughout this material. Finally, measuring progress can foster shame when there is some type of relapse or regression. How relapse and delays are handled is pivotal to establishing lasting change.

C.S. Lewis gave a very instructive metaphor for how to deal with shame. Lewis compared shame to hot coffee. If we spill hot coffee on our skin we are burned, scalded, and feel disgusting. However, if we drink coffee we are warmed, nourished, and energized. When we avoid shame or wallow in shame, it becomes like spilled coffee. When we handle the shame of sexual sin

in the ways that are outlined in Scripture, then even our failures draw us closer to Christ, remind us of the necessity of the cross, and give us testimony to share.

In his booklet *Sexual Addiction* David Powlison gives seven indicators that progress is being made (p. 8-10; bold text only). These are discussed to give you a more robust understanding of progress than merely counting the number of days since you last fell to sexual sin.

1. **Decrease in Frequency of Sin:** Progress does mean that we should sin less. There should be noticeable and quantifiable decreases in the frequency of active expressions of sin (i.e., visiting pornographic websites, getting lost in romantic fantasy, masturbation, visiting chat rooms, any contact with adultery partner, etc...). Any sincere attempt at change will cut off the physical and mental magnets that attract sin.
2. **Repenting More Quickly:** Progress means that we will deal with our sin differently when we do fall. Quick repentance is the key to stopping “sin binges.” No longer will you give into the mindset, “If I’ve already blown it, I might as well enjoy it.” You should be conversationally comfortable going to God in repentance (review Step 4). You should also know to whom you will confess and have their number on speed dial (review Step 5).
3. **A Change in Battleground:** Progress should mean that you see an advance in your battle against sin to its core fortress: from actions to thoughts/fantasy and finally to heart commitments. You should begin to have a sense of excitement as you see these changes in where you are battling lust. While each new battleground may require different strategies and durations of time to win, there should be a joy as you see God’s kingdom penetrating new territory in your soul.
4. **Having a Greater Sense of Need for Christ’s Mercy and Grace:** Progress that does not see its reliance upon Christ, degenerates into pride and becomes a stronghold for the enemy. The enemy may use this stronghold to launch new attacks (not based on sexual temptation). Without humility during victory new points of temptation will emerge and you will be as blind to them as you were to the growth of sexual sin’s dominance over your life.
5. **Increase accountability and honesty:** Progress means that you do not need a “reason” to be honest and things do not have to be “that bad” in order for you to have accountability. In many ways, this variable is one of the primary, practical expressions of the humility discussed above. Humble people refuse to fight sin alone and refuse to trust their own hearts apart from the community of caring, Christian friends (Heb. 3:12-14).
6. **Not Responding to Difficulty by Indulging in Sin:** Difficulty is the time when progress is most clear. When we forget this, we become discouraged by difficulty and this discouragement adds to our temptation. Recognize that when difficulty comes (i.e., conflict, stress, setbacks, etc...) this will be a time when your progress will be most evident. If you are married, these times will be a primary time when God restores the trust in your marriage.
7. **Learning to Love and Consider the Interest of Real People:** This is the epitome of progress because it is the fulfillment of the whole law of God (Gal. 6:14). The opposite of sexual sin is not mere abstinence from sex, masturbation, and lust. The opposite of sexual sin is real caring relationships with real people built upon mutual honor rather than self-gratification.

### Looking for Progress

Now that you have a more complete picture of what progress is, we need to do a thorough examination of life to determine where this progress should be found. In the material below you will examine the key relationships (who?), times (when?), locations (where?), and activities (what?) in which progress should be becoming increasingly evident.

It is vital that if you see areas of needed change that you are as honest about them as you have been with anything in this study. The fact that we change over time to become more Christ-like (theologically this is called progressive sanctification) means that the need for new changes will continually come to light. If we treat non-crisis sin differently than we treat crisis sin, we will be in crisis sin again.

#### Inspection I: Who?

**Spouse:** If you are married, then your progress with sexual sin should be evident with your spouse. As the marriage relationship is restored the sexual relationship should be qualitatively different than it was before. Sexual sin causes us to

become sexual consumers. We grade sex based upon our preferences rather than allowing sex to be an expression of the love we share for our spouse. Sex must be divorced from the fantasy evaluation system created by pornography, romance media, or adultery relationships.

“You know full well that much of pornography depicts acts of conquest, not acts of love and service... Do not subject your wife to acts that would make her feel like the means to an end, like she has been conquered instead of loved and nurtured, like she has been defiled instead of treasured (p. 67).” Tim Challies in *Sexual Detox*

**Read Hebrews 13:4.** Honoring the marriage bed entails more than not committing adultery or looking at pornography. Honor is a positive command, not merely a negative restriction. Making the marriage bed undefiled requires not placing the expectations from outside sources upon it.

**Individual Person:** If there were particular people with whom you struggled with lust, then progress should result in a redefining of these relationships. Any relationships that violate a marriage covenant (yours or theirs) should already be completely ended. If you are single, changes in a dating relationship should be in place to evidence you are taking sexual purity seriously. If there are particular people in your social circles whom you lust after, then this should be part of your accountability relationship and situation-specific changes should be brainstormed to alleviate temptation.

**Read I Timothy 5:1-2.** This passage describes how you should think about anyone to whom you are not married or (if single) with whom you are not in a dating relationship. The point is to view people as people to be treated with the honor of family members, not embodied pleasure centers who exist for your enjoyment. This is not just a passage on manners, because Paul concludes the passage with “in all purity (v. 2).”

**Group:** If your lust was attracted to a particular group of people (i.e., blondes, sensitive men, cheerleaders, bold-leader personalities, or some form of fetish), then you need to examine the motivation and history for that attraction (review of Step 3 in light of this particular attraction). Generally these attractions can be attributed to (a) an idolatrous over-valuing of certain “desired” attributes and social roles or (b) aspects of an abusive/neglectful personal history that changed the value you placed on the desired attribute. The implementation of your life restructuring plan needs to take into account actions steps and monitoring for this particular attraction.

**Read Galatians 2:28-29.** Attractions based upon group identification reveal that we are valuing as “most essential” things that are not “most important” about a person. We are using our sense of attraction or preference as a measuring system. In a real sense it is a form of prejudice that makes the same value claims about sexuality that racism does about race or sexism does about gender.

**Role:** Sometimes attraction has less to do with a particular person or attribute than it does with the dynamic of the relationship. Some people are aroused by power; others by those by being led. The same person (personality and body type) could be more or less attractive based on whether he/she was your boss or employee; related to in authority or submission. In these cases you need to realize that your sexuality is being attracted to things it was not designed to attach. Sexuality was meant to be sparked within relationships not power dynamics. If your struggle to overcome lust is aggravated by the power-dynamics in your relationships, then you need to gain a healthier, non-sexualized understanding of the purpose of authority.

**Read Mark 10:42-45.** It may be awkward to ask (and if it is, then this distortion of attraction probably does not apply to you), but does anything about this passage strike you as “sexy”? When you read about those in authority lording over others or being in a servant posture towards another, does it sound attractive in a way that has nothing to do with admiring the character of Christ? If so, then part of your challenge is being able to read this passage (others like it and your relationships) as God intended – where authority was not sexualized, but was meant to be a means of general care.

## Inspection 2: When?

**Time of Day/Week:** Sin tends to make its nest in our lives. While sin is always willing to seize a “more opportune time” (Luke 4:13), habitual sin makes itself at home in the rhythm and routines of our lives. Those times when you have most frequently sinned will require more attention and intentionality in order to change. In those times you will have to “do something different” instead of just “not sinning.” You assessed your schedule in Step 6. Look at it again and evaluate where the pockets of most intense temptation consistently arise.

**Energy Level:** Have your times of struggle been connected to times of fatigue or excitement? If these times come without a clear situational cause, then you may want to consult a physician to discuss this fluctuation in energy level. This can be a sign

of an underlying medical condition that makes it more difficult to resist temptation. If it is clear why the energy changes are occurring (i.e., over working, drug usage, etc...) then part of resisting temptation will entail managing your life more wisely. Regardless, you must realize that to use sex to compensate for changes in energy level is to use sex like a drug.

**Before / After:** The before/after might be an event (i.e., presentation, visit to family, etc...) or interaction (i.e., conflict, interview, etc...). Regardless, you need to see that when you turn to sex or fantasy to relieve stress you are using them as a replacement for prayer. In the moments when you should be sharing your fears or joys to God, you are sharing them with a sex partner or pornographic image. You are relying on sex to get you through rather than God.

**Read 1 Peter 5:6-11.** As you consider the role of “when?” in your temptation, remember there is a universal call to cast your anxieties upon God because He cares for you (v. 7) and a universal warning to watch your life closely because there is a real enemy bent on your destruction (v. 8). You are being called to look at when temptation arises so you can be more prepared to call on God and when to look out for the sin predator. This is not like doing fire drills in elementary school feeling relatively certain they are an irrelevant exercise. This is more like the final walk through before a dangerous military mission. What is your attitude like at this stage in the journey?

### Inspection 3: Where?

**Home:** What are the biggest challenges you are facing in sexual purity at home at this point in the change process? What are the areas of life at home where you would be most likely to relapse into sexual sin? Do you have wise practices and accountability related to the major electronic devices in your possession: computer, cell phone, iPod, television, etc...? Have you instituted the level of financial and recreational schedule accountability you need?

**Work:** What are the biggest challenges you are facing in sexual purity at work at this point in the change process? How does your work schedule affect your level of temptation? Are there additional changes you need to make in your patterns of relationship at work to promote purity? Are you balancing your work schedule and expectations in a way that allows you to live a healthy life and face temptation at optimal physical, emotional, and mental strength?

**Activity:** Are there certain activities you engage in that place you at greater temptation? Have you left open any opportunities for interaction with an adultery partner? Are you frequenting places where people go to “hook up” (i.e., bar, club, etc...)? Are you recreating in places that have a vested interest in promoting lust?

**Read 2 Thessalonians 5:13-15.** Paul is very direct about how we are to fellowship with those who will not adhere to the standards of Scripture. We are to “have nothing to do with” their sinful lifestyle (v. 14). This is not isolationism, because Paul says we are to love them as a brother and this love should be expressed through warning (v. 15); not participation. When we fail to make this commitment in our recreational activities, the times we should be being restored will cause us to “grow weary in doing good (v. 13)” because we allowed recreation time to be filled with having to actively resist sin.

### Inspection 4: What?

**Entertainment:** Sexuality is embedded in entertainment in our culture. We may never visit a prostitute, but nearly every member of American culture has paid for sex. “Sex sells” is the motto of our marketing industry. When the marketing industry says this, they are merely recognizing that sexuality in multi-media marketing has a larger impact on the decision making than most other appeals. This is true for both scantily clad models selling chainsaws and romantic themed commercials selling soap products.

“Television and film stir up feelings and emotions that bypass our minds and go straight for our affections. The incredible power of media is that it can make something evil look good or exciting without appearing to make an argument at all (p. 118)... What a tragedy it is that I’ve sat idly by during movies and television shows and watched the very sin for which Christ had to die being laughed about, even celebrated (p. 125).” Joshua Harris in *Sex Is Not the Problem (Lust Is)*

“If you can’t bow your head and sincerely thank God for a movie or a symphony or a newscast or a novel—then for you that activity is wrong. Stop arguing with yourself, and move on to something else (p. 121).” Joel Belz as quoted by Joshua Harris in *Sex Is Not the Problem (Lust Is)*

How is your entertainment consumption affecting your pursuit of purity and godly relationships? Do not reduce this question to, “Are you watching anything with sexually explicit images or themes?” although that question should be asked

here. Ask yourself, “Does my media consumption positively or negatively impact my ability to enjoy godly, wholesome relationships? After my entertainment is over am I ever left with a nagging feeling that what God offers me now in my real relationships is not as good as what I saw, read, or heard?” If the answer is “yes” then your entertainment is eating away at the foundation of contentment that purity is built upon.

**Event:** “Event” here refers to occasions that deviate from your “regular” schedule. There are temptations we face in unique settings that need to be thought through separately from our standard life restructuring plan (i.e., business trip, vacation, reunion, anniversary of an important occasion, etc...). “Events” are often the “more opportune times” (Luke 4:13) that Satan uses to gain a foothold in our life. If we fail in the irregular parts of life, then we are more prone to carry that sense of defeat, shame, and secrecy back into our regular life. What practice do you need to put into place with your accountability partner to ensure you talk through special events and prepare for them?

### Evaluating Your Implementation

The chart on the next page is meant to help you assess how well you are implementing your life restructuring plan. It is meant to give you a place to write down key pieces of information you have gleaned from your reflection in this chapter and look at this information as a whole. You will see that the first column corresponds with the major headings and subheadings of this chapter. The second column is for you to identify the areas of needed change.

The next three columns summarize ways in which you can identify progress. These three headings are less specific than the seven ways taken from David Powlison in the beginning of this chapter. They are meant to be broad headings that can capture encouraging elements of God’s work in your life as you continue to battle against sin.

The final column is to make notes about changes that need to be made to your life restructuring plan. These may be modifications or additions. If you want to write more than space allows, the basic categories of evaluation can be used in a journal or computer document. The primary value of this tool is as a conversation outline with your counselor, group, or accountability partner. Allow this to be an instrument that teaches you the value of regularly examining life with those who care about you and are committed to pursuing God with you.

A PDF copy of this document can be found at [www.bradhambrick.com/falselove](http://www.bradhambrick.com/falselove).

#### Accountability Focus (IMPLEMENT):

With each step, we will provide questions you should invite another person to ask you openly and to confront any contradiction between your words and life.

- Am I finding legitimate evidence of progress in all seven areas that indicate lasting change is taking place?
- Have I shown evidence of carefully evaluating my effectiveness in pursuing sexual purity in each area listed?
- Have I given evidence I would confess a struggle about which this study does not directly question?



## PURSUIT OF PURITY IMPLEMENTATION EVALUATION

	Improvement in Intensity	Improvement in Duration	Improvement in Frequency	Needed Changes to Plan
<b>WHO?</b>				
Spouse				
Person 1				
Person 2				
Person 3				
Person 4				
Group 1				
Group 2				
Group 3				
Role 1				
Role 2				
Other				
<b>WHEN?</b>				
Time 1				
Time 2				
Time 3				
Time 4				
Time 5				
Energy Level				
Energy Level				
Before/After				
Before/After				
Other				
<b>WHERE?</b>				
Home				
Work				
Activity 1				
Activity 2				
Activity 3				
Other				
Other				
<b>WHAT?</b>				
Entertainment				
Event				
Event				
Event				
Other				

## Chapter 8

### “Fighting Sin on Changing Turf”

PERSEVERE in the new life and identity to which God has called me.

**“I can see God’s faithfulness over the last [time since beginning this material].  
As I have experienced victory, my temptation has changed [describe]  
and my ability to focus on God in non-crisis times has been stretched [examples].  
I have come to realize that ‘healthy’ means more than the absence of lust.  
God has an entirely different agenda for my life [explain] than what I knew.  
I am learning to enjoy it and be comfortable in it.”**

**Memorize:** 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5, 8 (ESV), “For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God... Therefore, whoever disregards this, disregards not man, but God, who gives the Holy Spirit to you.” As you memorize this passage reflect upon these key points:

- “The will of God” – You can know for certain that the changes you have and are making were God’s will for you.
- “Know how to control his own body” – This is something that every person is charged by God to learn.
- “In holiness and honor” – Sexual purity protects your relationship with God (holiness) and others (honor).
- “Not man, but God” – If you relax your efforts at persevering in purity you are primarily disregarding God.
- “Gives the Holy Spirit to you” – Do not forget the source of your strength to persevere is the Holy Spirit, not self.

#### Teaching Notes

“One of the things we must realize is that if God were to instantly set us free, it would then be much easier for us to return to old habits (p. 122).” Steve Gallagher in *At the Altar of Sexual Idolatry*

“Porn is easy. It’s trouble-free and its pleasures are instant. Marriage is hard work. It involves two sinners being thrown together in close proximity (p. 127)!... Marriage is a gift for service, and sex is gloriously given to cement that partnership. But don’t let sex become the goal of your marriage—otherwise porn may seem like a good supplement (p. 129).” Tim Chester in *Closing the Window*

“But I’ve found that many men can stop habitual masturbation more readily than they imagine. Once they’re persuaded that life without masturbation is better than life with masturbation (p. 93)... Every time we worship God we’re reminding ourselves that he is bigger and better than anything porn can offer (p. 99).” Tim Chester in *Closing the Window*

“In other words, to rightly embrace our sexuality we must bring it under the dominion of the One who created it. When we do so, we’re not fighting against our sexuality; we’re fighting for it. We’re rescuing our sexuality from being ruined by lust (p. 43).” Joshua Harris in *Sex Is Not the Problem (Lust Is)*

“You can’t ‘just say no’ to an evil imagination. You have to appeal in a more profound way to your imagination by working to replace the evil, dark, and wicked in your mind with the good, light, and pure (p. 22)... [God] wants you to have a vision of something so much better than living within your dark, self-centered imagination. God wants to give you a vision of life as it is meant to be, filled with real, true, and intimate relationship with him and authentic, loving relationships with others (p. 23).” David Powlison in *Sexual Addiction*

“[Referencing Genesis 2:23] Do not neglect the words ‘at last.’ It was through that period of searching, that period of sinless waiting on God, that Adam learned to appreciate what God ultimately provided (p. 48).” Tim Challies in *Sexual Detox*

## Embedded Study

Take a deep breath. You’re probably thinking, “I’m ready to be done with this study.” If you’re at Step 8, you have come a long way. You have made many sacrifices and opened your life to many more people than you ever thought you would. Hopefully, you are experiencing the restorative forgiveness of God in ways that are incredibly refreshing.

Let me ask you this question, “What does it look like to continue to follow God from *here*?” Chances are that you’ve put so much energy into getting “here” that it is not entirely clear how to prepare yourself for life after focusing on change. What do you do when your life is not focused on overcoming a life-dominating struggle? That is the topic of this step and the next.

In this chapter we will look at post-temptation temptations—those temptations that arise when we’re doing “better.” Finish the journey you’ve started in a way that honors what God has done in your life to this point. In order to help you finish strong, we will look at three subjects for this stage in your journey.

1. Common Lies & Distractions
2. Victory Changes Temptation
3. Preparing for Transition

### Common Lies and Distractions

Strangely “better” is not always easier than “worse.” You knew the terrain of your temptation better than you know the terrain living in vulnerable transparency; loving God and honoring neighbor. That is the purpose of this section and the next—to prepare you for how temptation frequently mutates once the slavery to sin is broken.

One of the first and most effective ways that temptation mutates is by introducing new lies and distractions. As you read through this section, you should be preparing to listen to yourself. When you hear yourself thinking these kind of things or having emotions that emerge from these kind of thoughts, you should consider that a red flag and immediately talk about with your support network. The discussion after each lie is intended to give you the truth and perspective to counter these disruptive and unhealthy messages.

**“I am now getting a second rate sexual experience.”** This is a distorted and cynical version of learning contentment. It allows the lie that “sinful sex is first rate sex” to re-enter your life through the door of discouragement. It is the first step towards glamorizing the painful life of sin that you were desperate to be free from a few months ago. Making slavery look like freedom is one of sin’s core lies.

You should counter this lie with a new vision of “the sexual ideal.” Culture would tell us that the greatest sex happens between love-struck 20 year olds in moments of uncontrollable passion. Scripture would say that the greatest intimacy happens between a couple who has been married for 50 years reflecting on a shared life and celebrating that history in anything from the mildest affection of eye contact with a sweet smile to the most physically connected expression of affection, sex. When your disappointment speaks to you about second rate sex remind it of the first rate intimacy you’re unwilling to sabotage.

**“Now I can get back to focusing on what is important to me.”** This distraction buys into the notion that overcoming sexual sin is merely about exchanging an unhealthy form of self-focus to a more functional form of self-focus. Hopefully you have already learned that legitimate pleasures are an essential part of resisting sin, but have also learned that the “focus” of our lives (i.e., what we worship and gives us meaning) cannot be self-serving.

Sin, even in the form of over-prioritized legitimate pleasures, will never remain self-serving. That is the way sin always likes to introduce itself, as your servant. But once it is allowed to move into your life, it mutates from servant to master. As you finish this study several hours per week may be added to your schedule, so be sure to use that time for God-centered, joyful living. Step 9 will help you think through that new (or renewed) life-orientation.

**“I deserve a break. I have been good for a long time now.”** When we talk about taking a “break” from our battle with sin it sounds very legitimate, but it often leads to a return to sin. If you feel like you need a break, then it is important to make sure you are living a balanced, sustainable life. Review the work you did in Step 6 to make sure your expectations of yourself fit within your available life resources of time, money, or energy.

We can set ourselves up for relapse by creating a “godly” life we cannot maintain. When this happens we feel justified in taking a break from what we perceive to be God’s expectations (which are actually our distorted version of God’s fair expectations) and move towards sin as our relief. If you assess your expectations and determine they are realistic but hard,

then gaining the strength to endure and enjoy this lifestyle is what perseverance is all about (Rom. 5:3-5; James 1:2-4). If this is the case for you, then be sure to ask your support network for prayer and encouragement in this process of growth.

**“This is not working, because temptation is still present. No one else has to work this hard for purity.”** Temptation only becomes easy when you stop fighting. But then you are forced to respond to sin-induced crises rather than the nagging draw of temptation. After you get used to the relief from sin-induced crises the “relief” of only experiencing temptation begins to feel like a burden. It is like getting a raise at work. At first it feels like a relief and joy, then the pull of the new things that are just beyond your raise-expanded financial reach begin to feel like a burden.

Remind yourself that temptation is a sign of spiritual life. Only the dulling of one’s conscience can remove the sense of temptation in a sin-saturated culture (this is particularly true of sexual sin in our culture). Those who do not experience temptation as a negative experience still experience the negative consequences of their lifestyle. Your active conscience is a blessing and protection to thank God for.

**“This is not worth it, because [name] still does not trust me.”** This distraction is especially strong for those who are married when their spouse’s trust is slow to be restored. It is important to remember that you did not commit to change in order to be trusted, but to be free from sin. Trust is a highly desired by-product, but not the reason for change.

If you are asking, “Why did I go through the hard work of changing if my spouse isn’t going to trust me?” then remember what it was like to be a slave to sin. You now have a better life and the opportunity for trust to grow; before you had neither. Counter this form of distraction with gratitude for the many ways God has proven faithful in your life and use the confidence gained from God’s faithfulness to continue to pray for your spouse.

**“[Blank] situation is now more important than my need to remain pure.”** Rarely would we say this out loud, or even allow ourselves to think it in these words. But this is the lie we believe when we place ourselves back in unwise or compromising situations for “practical” reasons. “Practical” becomes a user-friendly synonym for “more important.”

When you find yourself trying to justify altering or relaxing the changes you made in Steps 6 and 7, let this lie become a red flag in your mind. Those changes were not made to help you become “strong enough” to walk on enemy turf. Those changes were made because your enemy is stronger than any of us and can only be resisted on the home turf of God’s wisdom. Do not think that victory under the protection of God’s wisdom has any influence over victory in the arena of worldly wisdom commonly called “common sense.”

### Victory Changes Temptation

Galatians 6:1-5 speaks to both the temptation of those who are “caught in any transgression” and the temptation of those “who are spiritual.” Anyone who is in the latter category (spiritual) has spent time in the former (caught in transgression). As you have progressed through this study you have at least begun to move from one category to the other. Below are four new temptations that come with a time of victory over sin.

**Disappointment from New Heights:** Poverty hurts differently when you’ve known wealth. As you live in purity (which we often call “reaching new heights”), any recurrence of sexual sin will likely create a stronger response of guilt than you knew previously. When lust was “normal,” it was less startling. It can be tempting to allow this intensified guilt to fuel a major sense of failure and give into a “lust binge.” You must recognize (intellectually and emotionally) that God’s grace is sufficient and necessary for falls from any “height” (in quotation because this is our category more than God’s).

A protection from this temptation is to remember that spiritual maturity does not mean independence from God’s grace (see next point), but a greater reliance upon it. **Read I Timothy 1:12-20.** Notice that towards the end of Paul’s ministry he saw himself as more of a sinner than at the beginning (Acts 9). Paul is using this realization as an encouragement to young Timothy (v. 18-20) because he realizes it is the reliance upon grace that is the essence of his message—the gospel (v. 16).

**Maturity and Independence:** We often are deceived into thinking that spiritual maturity should cause us to be less reliant upon God. “So God can focus more on the people who are where we used to be,” we might think. This is a most dangerous mutation in our temptation. It is like a great oak tree thinking its height and hardness means it no longer requires the soil. As soon as it detaches from the soil, its height and hardness only serve to quicken its fall and increase the damage that is done.

Maturity can only be expressed as greater dependence upon God. Maturity requires humility like a train require tracks. **Read Galatians 2:18-21.** Notice that Paul warns against rebuilding what was torn down (v. 18). This is exactly what a false view of

maturity does. It is from this warning that Paul lays down the principle that maturity is less of me and more of Christ (v. 20). Like a caterpillar matures into a butterfly, we are called to mature into something different from what we started. We started “grounded and crawling” in our *independence from God* (the essence of sin). We mature into those who embrace *dependence upon God* as the wings God uses to give us freedom. The caterpillar must die so the butterfly can soar.

**Pressure of New Opportunities:** With growth comes opportunity, and not necessarily because we are seeking it. Being more “real” in relationships and including more people in your circle of biblical community will expand the quality and quantity of opportunities you have to care for others. Fake and hidden relationships are more controllable than real ones. This is a blessing, but may feel overwhelming or uncomfortable as you first begin to experience it.

To help yourself see this change as a blessing, begin keeping a list of new responsibilities and opportunities God brings into your life. Give thanks for them regularly. Remember they are tokens of God’s grace; not burdens. Remember that overcoming lust is not the end of your journey. Lust has been a reason for not learning many incredible things (truths, skills, relationships) that God has for you. You should expect to learn many things as you persevere in your resistance of lust.

**Having “Answers” Instead of Questions:** As you mature and receive new opportunities, you will likely be looked to for more answers. You are becoming a “safe,” “real,” and “available” person who can be asked more questions. You may also get the privilege of walking with others who are in an earlier stage of overcoming lust. This is a time when pride can return in more subtle and socially-acceptable ways. We must never think that because a question is brought to us that we are the source of its answer. We must never mistake the glory of the answer for the glory of the vessel (2 Cor. 4:7-18).

These opportunities are opportunities to grow in healthy fear experienced as vulnerability. Just as unhealthy fear often sparks lustful relationships; healthy fear creates healthy relationships. **Read James 3:1-12.** Notice that James is writing to Christians coming out of a struggle (dispersion by religious persecution; see James 1:1) who are now rising to the position of teacher (v. 1). He warns them about the temptation and power of their words in this new role. The message is that the awesome power of influence (bridle and fire images) should keep humble those who are coming into new positions of influence.

### Preparing for Transition

Much of your journey in this material was probably facilitated by someone who was not a part of your life when the crisis broke that awakened you to your need for change. But this counselor, mentor, or group of people was vital to the journey. So was the time of regular Bible study, prayer, and receiving Christian teaching. In this section you will examine how to ensure that the key elements God used to transform your life remain active parts of your life as you begin to transition out of this intensive study.

**Make sure you are in a small group.** Trust takes time. The baton of trust will soon be passed from your G4 Group, mentor, or counselor to the more regular discipleship ministries of the church. The primary location in which this occurs is small groups. The lessons (cognitive and emotional) that God has taught you in the course of this study have been enhanced, protected, and applied largely because of the relationships in which you learned them. The same thing is true for the next (and all other) lessons that God has for you.

This is why it is wise for you to begin getting plugged into a general small group if you are not already. If you need help identifying which small group would be a good fit for you talk with your G4 leader, mentor, or a church pastor.

**Learn accountability on a broader scale.** Walking through this material with someone else may be the first time you have experienced ongoing, Christian accountability. Accountability is not just for life-dominating struggles. It is part of God’s definition of “healthy.” People who do not have relationships in which they are honest about their struggles are people who are becoming “unhealthy.”

“Often, in my experience, support groups function like church would. They become the healthy community that addicts need to experience grace (p. 156).” Mark Laaser in *Healing the Wounds of Sexual Addiction*

As you move from a G4 Group or mentor relationship focused primarily upon lust to a general small group, you may wonder what accountability will look like now. The seven points below are meant to guide you in the kind of relationships you are looking to form with your small group.

- I. **Voluntary** – Accountability is not something you have; it is something you do. You must disclose in order to benefit from the relationship. Hopefully, the positive experience you have had going through this material will encourage you to remain transparent and vulnerable.

2. **Trusted** – The other person(s) is someone you trust, admire their character, and believe has good judgment. You are encouraged to join a small group now so that you can build this trust before graduating from your G4 Group or mentor relationship.
3. **Mutual** – Relationships that are one-sided tend to be short-lived. In the small group you will hear the weaknesses and struggles of others as you share your own. You will help carry their burden as they help carry yours (Gal. 6:1-2).
4. **Scheduled** – Accountability that is not scheduled tends to fade. This is why small groups that meet on a weekly basis are an ideal place for long-term accountability to occur. Everyone knows when to meet and has a shared expectation for how the accountability conversations will begin.
5. **Relational** – We want spiritual growth to become a lifestyle not an event. This means that we invite accountability to be a part of our regular conversations not just something that we do at a weekly meeting. It should mean that there are times when we are “doing accountability” and don’t realize it.
6. **Comprehensive** – Accountability that exclusively fixates on one subject tends to become repetitive and fade. It also tends to reduce “success” in following God to a single variable. As you seek “comprehensive” accountability after this study, you should also have friends ask you about matters from the overall life assessment you did in Step 3 and where forms of selfishness, laziness, or withdrawal might be occurring in significant relationships.
7. **Encouraging** – Too often the word “accountability” carries the connotation of “sin hunt.” When that is the case accountability is only perceived to be “working” when it is negative. However, accountability that lasts should celebrate growth in character as fervently as it works on slips in character. This requires asking each other questions about, “When have you had victory in your area of struggle?” in addition to questions about temptations and falls.

**Have a plan for future study.** We walk forward. We drift backwards. For some time now you have been a part of an intentional, structured process. If you leave that structure without a continued plan for deepening your understanding and application of Scripture to the struggles of life, you will regress. Ephesians 5:15-16 calls us to intentionality in recognition that time minus direction equals decay not healing.

This entire study has been filled with devotional Bible studies. If you have not been taking the time to read the passages and reflect on the devotional thoughts / questions that accompany them, consider using those as a guide for daily Bible reading. This will be a way to reinforce what you’ve learned in this study and further solidify the biblical basis for what you’ve learned.

The “Finding Your Identity, Security, and Confidence in Christ” seminar ([bradhambrick.com/identity](http://bradhambrick.com/identity)) also makes an excellent follow up study to this material to help you solidify your progress.

**Make a formal transition plan.** Write out your transition plan. List the things that need to be in place before you “graduate” from your G4 Group or mentor relationship. List the important practices you have begun in this study that you will need to maintain. Write out what the “yellow flags” (don’t wait for the red ones) would be that you should address seriously if they appear.

Review your plan with your G4 Group or mentor. Get their input on what needs to be added to the plan. In consultation with them, decide what aspects from that list need to be brought into the accountability conversation with your new small group before you graduate.

### **Accountability Focus (PERSEVERE):**

With each step, we will provide questions you should invite another person to ask you openly and to confront any contradiction between your words and life.

- Have I assessed and understand the new forms that temptation may take as I experience victory?
- Have I made and begun to implement as transition plan that is wise and comprehensive?

## Chapter 9

### “Delighting in Better Pleasures” STEWARD all of my life for God’s glory.

**“God has shown me great grace; grace greater than my lust.  
I am learning what it means to live out of my new identity in Christ.  
That has pushed me to ask the question,  
‘How can I be a conduit of God’s grace to others?’  
As I have sought God, examined my life, and consulted with fellow believers,  
I believe this [describe] is what it looks like for me to steward God’s grace now.”**

**Memorize:** Romans 13:8-10 (ESV), “Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,’ and any other commandment are summed up in this word: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.” As you memorize this passage reflect upon these key points:

- “Owe no one... except to love” – Sin always places you in a position where you “owe” your secrets.
- “Fulfilled the law” – Your goal in life must be to fulfill the purpose God prescribed for your life in His Word.
- “You shall not” – What you “don’t do” will not please God. God has a purpose for you not just restrictions.
- “Summed up... you shall” – God’s will for your life should always be stated in positive terms—live with a mission.
- “Love does no wrong” – When our love for God is expressed through wholesome love for others, we are sin free.

#### Teaching Notes

To “steward” something means to use it for God’s intended purpose. It is important to remember that what is being stewarded is your life, not merely the experience of overcoming sexual sin. To think otherwise would be to define yourself by your struggle again.

“I use the word recovery less, and the word healing or transformation more. We don’t go backward and recover; rather, we go forward to heal and be transformed... I have come to believe the Twelve Steps do not emphasize enough the radical spiritual transformation that can only be achieved through a more intimate relationship with Jesus Christ (p. 18).” Mark Laaser in *Healing the Wounds of Sexual Addiction*

Sin is a parasite that lives off of stolen resources (time, energy, love, etc...) that were intended for other purposes. As we rid ourselves of this vile intruder, those resources upon which sin once indulged become available for God’s design and our true enjoyment. Ultimately, stewardship is the pinnacle where purpose, worship, and joy meet.

“Sex addicts must develop a vision. A vision is a clear idea of God’s calling, plan, and purpose for one’s life (p. 167).” Mark Laaser in *Healing the Wounds of Sexual Addiction*

“The fight of faith against lust is the fight to stay satisfied with God (p. 335).” John Piper in *Future Grace*

### Embedded Study

If the law of God can be summarized in a positive command, then we must end this study talking about how to “run to” God rather than merely how to “run from” sin. Life is not about what we avoid, but what we pursue. How we run to God’s design for our life finds a unique expression in each person’s life. For this reason, you will do most of the writing in this chapter. It is your life that is being stewarded for God’s glory.

The goal is that you would find things that you could give yourself to more passionately than you once gave yourself to your lust. But not just temporal, slightly healthier things that would quickly become the next edition of ruling desires; and not things that you give yourself to in private so that they foster selfishness and excess. Rather, eternally significant things that you give yourself to in a community of faith to maintain endurance, temper desire excess, and become an example to others.

**Read Luke 11:24-26.** This is a terrifying warning about removing sin without also replacing it with God’s purposes for your life. When we replace sin with a “god-ignoring healthy life” (contradiction acknowledged) we become very proud, and defensive about further change. Our idols (motives/triggers from Step 3) become temporarily functional so the warning system of life consequences is muted. Then, when our idols cease to satisfy, and become disruptive again we are less likely to return to God, the Bible, and the gospel because “they didn’t really work the first time.” We go looking for deeper and more meaningful solutions. Indeed, “the last state of that person is worse than the first (v. 26).”

**Read Ephesians 2:8-10.** In this study we have traveled through the Gospel (v. 8-9) to good works (v. 10). *The nine steps are merely the gospel in slow motion.* We are not now exiting the gospel in order to do good works, but cultivating the fruit of the gospel. Paul says that there are “good works” that “God prepared” for every believer and that these should define our daily lives (“that we should walk in them”) (v. 10). This should give you hope that there are answers to the questions you will be asked in this chapter. You have the confidence that comes from the promises of Scripture that God has a design for your life and wants you to know what it is.

As you read through and answer these nine questions, remember God’s patience and timing. There will be some aspects of God’s design that you can engage in immediately. But there will also be ways you want to serve God that will require you to mature more or be equipped before you are prepared to fulfill them. The main thing is to begin to have a vision for life that involves being God’s servant and actively engaging that vision where you are currently equipped.

**1. Am I willing to commit my life to whatever God asks of me?** This is a “do not pass go” question. If your answer is “no,” it will bias the answers you give to each subsequent question. Do not get lost in guilt or pretend that your answer is “yes” (both responses would lead you back into lust). Rather, identify the obstacle. What is the cost you are unwilling to pay? It may be that this subject becomes a key element in your “plan for future study” (Step 8).

Are there specific things you believe God is asking of you? Be sure to record your thoughts on this question before reflecting on the subsequent questions.

**2. What roles have I neglected that God has placed me in?** The first part of being a good steward of one’s life is to fulfill one’s primary roles with excellence. When Paul says in Ephesians 5:17 that we are to “understand what the will of the Lord is,” he goes on to describe God’s design for major life roles (spouse, parent, child, and worker in 5:22-6:9).

**3. What are my spiritual gifts?** Stewarding your life for the glory of God involves utilizing the spiritual gifts God has given you. God gives spiritual gifts that coincide with the calling He places on each individual’s life. Read Romans 12:1-8 and I Corinthians 12:1-30. If you need further assistance discerning this, talk to a pastor about taking a spiritual gifts inventory.

**4. For what group of people (age, struggle, career, ethnic, etc...) am I burdened?** From God’s earliest covenant with people His intention was to bless us that we might be a blessing to others (Gen 12:2). By investing your life in those you have a burden for allows you to be other-minded and find joy in it.

**5. What am I passionate about?** At this point in the stewardship evaluation, you can begin to see Psalm 37:3-8 fulfilled in your life. What are the God-exalting “delights” in your life (v. 4)? What wholesome things can you give yourself to and you are more energized afterwards than before you started?

**6. With what talents or abilities has God blessed me?** These don’t have to be spiritual gifts. Read the amazing description of abilities God gave Bezalel and how he used those abilities to serve God (Exodus 31:1-11). Think through the skills and expertise you have accumulated in your life.

**7. What are my unique life experiences?** Both pleasant and unpleasant experiences should be listed. We are sometimes tempted to think that God can only use the good or spiritual experiences of our lives. God is glad to use our successes (Matt. 5:16), but God also delights in displaying His grace by transforming our low points for His glory (2 Cor. 1:3-5).

**8. Where do my talents and passions match up with the needs in my church and community?** We should seek to steward our lives in cooperation with our local church. God’s way of blessing and maturing those we serve is through the Body of Christ, the church. By identifying where your gifts, burdens, passions, and abilities fit within or expand your church’s ministries, you are maximizing the impact service can have on those you are seeking to bless.

**9. How would God have me bring these things together to glorify Him?** This is not a new question, but a summary question. Look back over what you have written. Talk about it with your Christian friends, family, mentor, or pastors. Dedicate a time to prayerfully ask God to give you a sense of direction. Then begin serving as a way to steward your life for God’s glory.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” Matthew 5:8

### **Accountability Focus (STEWARD):**

With each step, we will provide questions you should invite another person to ask you openly and to confront any contradiction between your words and life.

- Are there any necessary changes I have omitted that would prevent me from taking this step?
- Is there advice or counsel I should seek before completing this step?

## Appendix A

### Brokenness vs. Pride

The following material is adapted from a message by Nancy Leigh DeMoss. © Life Action Ministries.

*“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a **broken** and a contrite **heart**, O God, thou wilt not despise.” Psalm 51:17*

#### Proud People . . .

- focus on the failures of others.
- have a critical, fault-finding spirit; look at everyone else’s faults with a microscope, but their own with a telescope; look down on others.
- have an independent, self-sufficient spirit.
- have to prove that they are right.
- claim rights; have a demanding spirit.
- are self-protective of their time, their rights, and their reputation.
- desire to be served.
- desire to be a success.
- desire self-advancement.
- have a drive to be recognized, and appreciated.
- have a subconscious feeling, “This ministry/church is privileged to have me and my gifts”; think of what they can do for God.
- feel confident in how much they know.
- are self-conscious.
- keep others at arms’ length.
- are quick to blame others.
- are unapproachable or defensive when criticized.
- are concerned with being respectable, with what others think; work to protect their own image and reputation.
- find it difficult to share their spiritual needs with others.
- want to be sure that no one finds out when they have sinned; instinct is to cover up.
- have a hard time saying, “I was wrong; will you please forgive me?”
- tend to deal in generalities when confessing sin.
- are sorry that they got found out or caught.
- wait for the other to come and ask forgiveness when there is a misunderstanding or conflict in relationships.
- compare themselves with others and feel worthy of honor.
- are blind to their true heart condition.
- don’t think they have anything to repent of.

#### Broken People . . .

- are overwhelmed with a sense of their spiritual need.
- are compassionate; can forgive much because they know how much they have been forgiven.
- esteem all others better than themselves.
- have a dependent spirit; recognize their need for others.
- yield their rights; have a meek spirit.
- are self-denying.
- are motivated to serve others.
- are motivated to be faithful and to make others a success.
- have a sense of their own unworthiness; are thrilled that God would use them at all.
- have a heart attitude that says, “I don’t deserve to have any part in this ministry”; know that they have nothing to offer God except the life of Jesus flowing through their broken lives.
- are humbled by how very much they have to learn.
- are willing to risk getting close to others and to take risks of loving intimately.
- accept personal responsibility and can see where they are wrong in a situation.
- receive criticism with a humble, open spirit.
- are concerned with being real; what matters to them is not what others think but what God knows; are willing to die to their own reputation.
- once broken, don’t care who knows or who finds out; are willing to be exposed because they have nothing to lose.
- are quick to admit failure and to seek forgiveness when necessary.
- are able to acknowledge specifics when confessing.
- are truly, genuinely repentant over their sin, evidenced in the fact that they forsake that sin.
- take the initiative to be reconciled when there is a misunderstanding or a conflict in relationships.
- compare themselves to the holiness of God and feel desperate need for His mercy.
- realize they have need of a continual heart attitude of repentance.
- continually sense their need for a fresh encounter with God and for a fresh filling of His Holy Spirit

## Appendix B

# How to End an Extra-Marital Relationship

If your question is, "What is the *easy* way to end a relationship that should have never started, but has become emotionally connected and/or sexually active?" The simple answer is, "There is not an easy way."

The rebuttal would probably be, "But I really care about this person and don't want to hurt them. I am more to blame for what has happened than they are. I couldn't bring myself to hurt them." The reality is that when a sinful relationship gets started someone, usually multiple people, are going to get hurt and hurt badly. The choice you have is not "if" someone is going to get hurt, but "who."

Stop and think about it. How are you going to get out of the situation you're in, where you have committed to love two people with a love that can only belong to one person, without hurting someone? You can't. You will not make any wise, or even sane, decisions as long as you are holding out hope that an impossible reality is possible.

It is likely that a big reason why things have gotten to where they are is that you have been looking for an option that doesn't exist. Several things are true at this moment and you will have to accept them all. Even if you choose to ignore them now, you will have to acknowledge them as reality at some point, and the longer you wait the more intense the consequences will be for everyone involved.

1. You are going to hurt one or more people that you care about.
2. You are going to have to be more honest with more people than you want to be.
3. An "easy" answer is not going to present itself that makes this situation "just go away."
4. The rest of your life is going to radically change based upon what you do with what you're reading.
5. Not just your life, but generations of your family, will be affected based upon what you do.

### Three Steps to Freedom

#### Step One: Cut Off All Contact

Willingly cut off, disclose, and surrender all contact with your adultery partner in an open communication in which your spouse is overtly present and aware of all that is said. All five pieces of this step are vital and defined below.

- A. **Cut Off All Contact:** It should be clearly stated that you are requesting no future contact for any reason, because you realize a romantic relationship outside of your marriage covenant is evil. It is appropriate to apologize for the harm you have caused this person, but you should equally affirm that any genuineness to your apology requires ending all contact.
- B. **Disclose All Forms of Contact:** Any form of contact should be disclosed to your spouse (i.e., secret cell phone, secret e-mail address, rendezvous times in your schedule, etc...). When you end the relationship you should tell your adultery partner that all of these forms of contact have been disclosed to your spouse as a way to reinforce that you are serious that no future contact is desired.
- C. **Willingly Surrender All Contact:** You should hand over every form of contact to your spouse like a suicidal person needs to hand over their gun. You are not giving up something good. Like a suicidal person looks at their gun as a friendly thing that is there to give them relief, you likely still look at these modes of contact through distorted lenses. You won't feel like doing it until after you've done it.
- D. **Open Communication:** Secrets have been part of the excitement of the illicit relationship. "Open" should mean that (a) you do not meet in person, (b) anything you say is e-mailed to your adultery partner with your spouse carbon-copied, and (c) if married, you encourage your adultery partner to confess to their spouse.

Documenting the request for no future contact is advised in case a restraining order is needed. In this kind of situation obtaining a restraining order requires proving that a clear request to cease communication has occurred (documented by your e-mail) and that continued "harassment" is occurring (documented by continued phone call, showing up at work, coming to your home, etc...). Taking these two pieces of evidence to your local law enforcement should be sufficient to obtain a restraining order if needed.

This step may have legal, safety, or employment consequences. The consequences of sin are part of the trap Satan sets to keep us in our sin. Forsaking sin is always an act of faith in God. In this case, it may not only be faith in God's superiority to sin, but also faith in God's ability to provide or protect when the consequences of sin are realized. You must realize and remember that prolonging a sinful relationship does nothing to make the situation “better” for anyone involved. Delayed consequences only grow and make obedience to God harder.

- E. **Spouse Overtly Present:** One way we communicate who we love most is by who we talk to about another. When you talked about your spouse to your adultery partner that revealed your primary allegiance. By now talking about your adultery partner to your spouse and refusing any communication with your adultery partner, you are reversing this allegiance. If you communicate the termination of the relationship by phone, your spouse should at least be in the room while you talk, or if by e-mail, your spouse should be carbon-copied on the e-mail.

### **Step Two: Avoid the “Closure Trap”**

There is no such thing as closure after adultery. Closure is a word that gives the impression of a settled, happy ending. One of the two romantic relationships in your life will die an awkward painful death. More uncomfortable still, you are going to decide which relationship (marriage or adultery) dies. This will either happen in divorce court or now. But in either option you choose, there will be no “closure” for the dying relationship.

You might ask, “Why are you being so graphic and harsh?” The reason is simple—“closure” is the lie most people follow back into adultery multiple times while trying to restore their marriage. Closure is an innocent word that masks its devastating consequences. Naively following the closure lie will make the already difficult road ahead of you longer, steeper, and rockier. When you hear the lie, plug your ears and run!

### **Step Three: Disclose All Attempted Contact**

Ending an adultery relationship requires more than doing the right thing one time after you've been caught. If your adultery occurred in an ongoing relationship, the other person will likely not want the relationship to end. Your sin will not stay away while you pursue godly character. Your adultery partner is very likely to fight for the relationship they thought was theirs to have.

It is absolutely vital that you disclose any contact, attempted contact, or potential attempted contact by your adultery partner to your spouse. Even if you get a phone call from an unknown number, choose not to answer it, and no voice mail is left tell your spouse. If a friend of the adultery partner gives you a note refuse to read it, tell your spouse and (if necessary) take the note as the second piece of evidence needed to get a restraining order.

This relationship should be treated like a poisonous snake in the house with your children. Even if the snake is in another room, you would take every measure possible to destroy the snake because you know the snake is a predator and its presence, even in another room, puts them in mortal danger. Any undisclosed contact from your adultery partner is just as deadly to your relationship with God, your marriage, and the future of any children you have.

## Appendix C

### How to Talk to Children When Sexual Sin Affects the Family

*Written by Caroline Von Helm, M.A. and Brad Hambrick, Th.M.*

When sexual sin invades the life of a family, every member of that family is affected. Not only is the impact large, but the impact is also unique upon each individual family member. The most innocent of the victims, and the ones who frequently received the least quality or quantity of care, are the children.

Children, young and old, need both *honesty* and *hope* during and after the crisis. The facts, which should be age-appropriately honest, need to be delivered in a way that is clear and as hopeful as the situation allows. As parents (both offended and offending parent), our instinct is most often to shield our children from this hurtful reality and to try to make things "less painful" for them.

"Less painful" is an appropriate goal as long as it does not come at the cost of being truthful or leaves a void for legitimate questions a child may have about his/her family, home, and future. If "less painful" compromises the child's age-appropriate ability to know the truth or being able to anticipate the future (at least to the degree that is possible), then "less painful" creates more harm than it alleviates pain.

#### **Case Study:**

The following case study is a fictitious example of a family of six walking through the process of a mother slowly finding out that her husband is committing adultery with a co-worker. It is meant to help you apply the recommendations that follow, by having an example that is less personal than your current situation.

Caitlyn is three years old. She stays at home with her mom most days, enjoys being outside, and loves reading stories with her dad. She has older siblings who go to school. Caleb is six and in the first grade, Kayla is eleven and just entering middle school, and Jacob is fourteen and starting high school. From the outside, all looks good for this family.

They are active at church, have a small group that they love. The children are involved in sports, drama, and other extracurricular activities. Dad works hard to support his family financially. They look like your typical American family; the kind that you would want to have over for dinner.

Behind closed doors things are quite different. Dad is critical, and emotionally absent most of the time. He will do what is asked, but rarely seems excited and does not initiate family time or individual activities with the children. He asks the standard questions about grades, school, and friends; but seems uninterested beyond those topics.

Mom does her best to compensate for Dad's lack of involvement by over-involvement. She tries to make sure they have everything they need... and want. This creates tension between her and dad, because they can never get ahead financially. For this and other reasons, Mom and Dad neither value time with each other.

The most recent tension has been created because mom found some emails from Dad to a co-worker that to her seem flirtatious and inappropriate. Dad quickly minimized them and then proceeded to berate mom for looking at his personal things and not trusting him.

Over the course of the next few months, mom continues to see emails, and eventually text messages that confirmed her suspicion that Dad was having an affair. After multiple attempts at confrontation and many arguments, dad admitted to his actions. Mom was devastated, Dad was angry, *and the children were confused.*

#### **What Does the Family Do Now?**

The scenario above is meant to serve as a framework for discerning how to discuss sexual sin by a parent with children. There are many things to keep in mind as you prepare for this type of conversation. The points below are meant to orient you to how these situations affect a child, appropriate expectations of a child when he/she first learns of the sexual sin, expectations after learning of the sexual sin, and the type of assistance a child needs to process this information.

1. An event of this magnitude and the subsequent parental conflict / absence / distraction can be traumatic for the children involved, even adult children.
2. If your child has not reached puberty and/or has no knowledge of or exposure to sex, your conversations about what has happened should not describe what happened in sexual language.
3. As children age and develop sexually, they may ask questions about things that have happened during this time. Answering these questions in age-appropriate ways is an important part of helping them process the grief.

4. Your child's feelings may be more or less intense than the feelings of the offended spouse. Both parents need to accept whatever feelings surface, help the child to name those feelings, and understand how those feelings relate to the changes in their life, home, and family.
5. If a traumatic experience happens to children who are pre-school age or above, they will remember it and may need to process those memories at later developmental stages as they are able to comprehend more of their personal-family history.
6. Most children will not process (healthily assimilate into their life story) their emotions about a traumatic event until they feel safe enough to do it. Once you and your spouse have reached a "better" place and feel as if you are "moving on," that may be when the children decide to process their own feelings. This will feel like it drags out the healing process for the parents, but you cannot rush your children through their process any more than the offending spouse could be rushed to repentance and the offended spouse rushed to forgiveness.
7. The biggest "damage" that has been done is undermining the child's sense of security and definition of love. This is true regardless the age of the child. The care and aftercare for a child should focus upon providing a healthy sense of security and balanced expression of love.
8. When it comes to having the "what's going on" talk, the ideal situation would be for both parents and a neutral third person to talk to the children together.
9. The content of the "what's going on" talk should be decided before the talking to the child. If an agreement cannot be reached, then wait until an agreement can be reached. The time period that passes should be as short as possible, waiting more than four to six weeks becomes very confusing for the children.
10. There may have to be more than one conversation depending on the age differences in your children. If your children are in the same developmental range, then one conversation can be had with all family members present.

If your children are at different age / developmental stages do not try to talk to everyone at the same time. But do make sure that what you say to everyone is as consistent in content and language as age-appropriateness will allow. Older children should be told if there are things their younger siblings do not know, and do not need to know at the current time.

11. Make sure there is someone in your children's lives who will be their support. This is especially important for the older children and even children who are out of the house who often get overlooked in this process.
12. If the sexual sin is not resulting in lifestyle changes (i.e., parental separation, legal action, job loss, pregnancy, etc.) seek counsel about what to disclose to your children. All the information your children may need is that you and your spouse have encountered problems because of hurtful choices by a parent, and that Mom and Dad are trying to make things better.
13. Encourage children to ask questions as they have them. It is unreasonable and unhealthy to expect children to formulate their questions at the "information meeting." When you give them the freedom to ask questions, it is wise to also tell them you don't have all the answers and that there may be some things that will stay between mom and dad.
14. Remember that children will process at a slower pace and may ask questions years after the occurrence. Being prepared for this prevents the emotional processing of your children from setting you back or giving you reason to be unforgiving. A negative emotional response by the parents to a child's question, is a factor that reinforces the common false belief that the child has some responsibility for what happened in the marriage.
15. Guard yourself from feeling the need to "make up" for what is happening in your family. Neither gifts nor penance will make up for the offense or alleviate the impact. If anything they will teach a distorted view of the gospel, repentance, forgiveness, reconciliation, and family. Patiently submitting to the reconciliation process is the most helpful thing for your children (when possible). Only God can heal the hurt in your children not imbalanced love.

If the sexual sin is resulting in a lifestyle change, then consider the following:

### **Birth through Five Years**

While you may think that at these ages children are not be able to tell something is going on, children are very perceptive at reading emotional changes in their environment. If mom is always crying, dad is always angry, or there is bickering and

fighting, children in this age group can tell. They may become more “needy,” experience developmental delays, or regression in already learned skills as expressions of how changes in the home environment are affecting them.

The goal for parents is to be both authentic (fake calm when you think the child is looking is not enough) and reassuring. Although your spouse may have had an affair, you still have to be a parent. You cannot spend days crying, angry, or searching for more/new information. If restraining these behaviors is hard for you, ask for help. Take time to see a counselor or ask a friend to work through these True Betrayal materials with you.

No conversations should be had with your preschooler unless a decision is made for the offending spouse to leave for an extended or indefinite period of time. If spouses are staying together and no one is moving out, then preschool children do not need to know what has happened. Later in their life (as adults or older teens) there may be an appropriate time to share what God has done or what happened, but preschool children have no way of comprehending what you would tell them. *The main goal at this age is to provide consistency, love, and safety.* This is their greatest need. Leaning on friends and trusted caregivers will be important during this time.

If the offending parent leaves the house and the child is between two and five years old, you should give some explanation as to where the parent is going. The most optimal plan would be for this conversation to be factual and done together with a third party present. The person leaving should be the primary one speaking and communicate the following information:

“I am going to stay with (**location** – the child will need to know because it can cause more anxiety to say he or she is just “going away”) for (**duration** – it is important to tell the child the duration so they know an ending point. If a time period cannot be determined, then be honest and tell them you don’t know how long). I know it will be hard for you to be away from me, so I will come see you (give **visitation plan**).”

Notice in this conversation, you did not give the preschooler the answer to the “why” question. Most will ask, but some may not. Do not try to answer the “why” question for preschoolers unless they ask since it is hard for them to spontaneously transition to abstract thinking, especially in an emotionally powerful setting.

When they do ask “Why?” the offending parent should tell them:

“I made some choices that I should not have made, and when we make bad choices that really hurt people we need to give the person we hurt time and space. So, I am going to (location) to give Mommy/Daddy some space.”  
[Reiterate your love for them and that you will miss them.]

There will be tears, shock, and an inability to comprehend what you are saying. Their brains are not developed for this type of transition. They do not have the life experience to grasp what it means or know what to do when a parent is absent for punitive reasons (“punishment” is the category they have to comprehend a marriage “time out”). Be patient. Prepare for tantrums and disruptions to their sleeping and eating patterns.

The experience of children (at any of the ages discussed) will look a lot like grief, because they are grieving the loss of what they have known as “normal.” For this reason the parenting tips and family devotion appendix will be an adaptation to the “Taking the Journey of Grief with Hope” seminar from the same G4 series.

If the parents stay together, then keeping preschooler’s routine as normal as possible is vitally important. Enrolling in programs like Mother’s Day Out or preschool for a couple of days a week may allow the offended parents time to work through what has happened.

The offended spouse will often say to the offending spouse, “Your relationship with your child is your relationship. I’m not getting in the middle of it.” This is a deadly message to send your child. Children have not yet learned the intricacies of relationships; they have not learned to talk about their feelings.

As a parent, the offended spouse must model the journey of forgiveness. This includes encouraging the child to express their feelings and telling the offending parent what they are thinking. You are not responsible for the other parent’s behavior, but you can teach your child in the midst of this difficult time how to handle conflict and express emotions healthily.

It is important to think about what you are teaching your child through modeling at this time. Children will learn more about emotions, reconciliations, and relationships from what they see you do with/towards your spouse than what you “teach” them during this time.

## Elementary Age Children

At each stage in the developmental discussion, all of the previous material should be considered still relevant unless the next maturation level material says something contradictory.

Elementary age children are more verbal and have more cognitive ability than preschoolers, but they should not have sexual knowledge or understanding yet. Unless you want to explain sex to them, you still do not reveal the nature of the conflict.

When talking with your elementary aged child about what has happened, it is wise to say things like:

"Mom/Dad made choices that hurt me."

"Mom and Dad are working on making our marriage better."

"Mom/Dad is working on forgiving..."

"Mom/Dad is working on building trust with..."

Children at this age will ask lots of questions, like "What did you do? Are you getting divorced? Do you still love Mom/Dad?" Be honest where you can, but when the answer to their question is not age-appropriate or is undecided it is appropriate to say, "Some of what happens between Mom and Dad is not beneficial for you to know," or, "Those are things you can know when you are older."

Reassurance of your love for them is important during and after each of these conversations. Pointing them towards God and prayer is essential. Pray with your child after these conversations. But when you do pray speak in ways that express where they are, not trying to "teach" them what or how to think instead of talking to God on their behalf.

These conversations are a great opportunity to talk about how even parents may let them down, but God that is faithful and will not let them down. If the decision is made that the offending spouse is going to leave the home for a time period, then a conversation much like you had with your two to five year old will be necessary.

## Middle / High School Children

By this age, children are becoming sexually aware and likely know what sex is. You as their parents may have already had "the talk" with them. If this is the case, then being factually honest about the sexual sin is appropriate. You would rather your child hear your confession from you than from someone else.

If the sin is adultery or an emotional affair, you should not give details about the sexual relationship. They may want to know how long the affair went on, and it is important to tell them. They may ask questions about the other woman or man: what they look like, if they have children, how old their children are, and similar questions. These are the details that are important for pre-teens and teens. It is appropriate to answer these questions.

The biggest thing that children in these age categories will be thinking about is "How does this affect my life?" They are at an egocentric time period in life so their fear is that somehow their standard or norm of living will be altered.

The other tendency for children at this age will be for them to take on the role of protector for the offended spouse. It is vitally important to not let the child do this. It will be tempting to want a "team" against the offender, but in the long run will only do more damage that has to be worked through.

If the situation extends and children are not kept informed as to the general things that are happening in the restoration process, some children may begin to defend or excuse behaviors of the offending parent. Most times this happens is a child's attempt to just want things "back to normal", or because they feel sorry for the parent that has had to leave. Affirming your child's care for that parent, validating the "hardness" of the situation, and reassuring them that you both love them is what is needed. Do not try to get them on a side, give them time and space to continue processing their own feelings, ask if they have questions, and provide the freedom to appropriately share what they are experiencing.

## Adult Children

Sometimes children who have moved out of the house are thought to be unaffected. This is not true. Children, regardless of their age, will feel like their basis of security is shaken when their parents' marriage is traumatized or dissolved.

Adult children may feel like all that they knew growing up was false. They will question if the offending parent was really who they thought they were, and may even question the validity of marriage. The disclosure of sexual sin can be used as an excuse to turn from God and how they were raised.

It is vitally important for children in this age group to have an adult who knows them and is aware of the situation to reach out to them and check on them regularly. Unless someone reaches out to them, they are forced to process things alone and without the benefit of seeing what their parents are going through. An objective opinion, not just what their mom and dad are saying, will be an important part of them processing these changes in their home of origin.

### **When the Children Find Out First**

What do you do if your child comes to you because they saw a parent looking at things on the internet, or flirting with someone in public? In this situation, it is important for the offended spouse to assure the child of the following things:

1. They did the right thing by coming to you.
2. You will do your best to find out what happened.
3. Once you do have an answer, plan a time for both parents to talk with the children.
4. Continue to validate that they did the right thing in speaking up, they are not in trouble, and they did not get anyone else in trouble (witnesses don't cause problems; they only observe them).

If a child is in the position of witnessing the sexual sin and then reports it, it is very likely they will feel responsible for the disruption in the family which ensues. They will need consistent reassurance that they did not cause the disruption. Ideally, this reassurance should come from both parents as well as the adult individual identified as supporter of the children.

## Appendix D

# Parenting Tips & Family Devotions

*Parenting Tips Written by Caroline Von Helm and Brad Hambrick*  
*Family Devotions Written by Jason Gaston and Matt Allison*

### Parenting Tips

No parent wants to think about their son or daughter beginning to experiment with their developing sexuality. This can be as innocent as asking their parents about changes in their bodies or about conversations they hear from friends. Or this experimentation can involve masturbation, pornography, "sexting" (sending pictures and provocative chat over the phone or internet), or intercourse with their boy/girl friend.

As parents of middle school and high school students, it is important to keep in mind that technology has opened up a world to your children that was never available to you. Our culture has desensitized us to sexual messages, images, and content. Prime time television makes "normal" experiences that should not be. So, it is the job of the parents to guard our homes and help teach what a godly "normal" is.

If as a parent you find that your middle school and high school student has engaged in some type of sexual experience, from pornography to sending pictures of themselves to intercourse it is important to keep a few things in mind.

- ❖ *Your initial response is key.* You do not want to under react, so that the impact is not understood, but over reacting can shut doors to good conversations and teachable moments. It is easier to think through your response if you find pornography on the computer history than if you walk in on your child viewing pornography, but your initial response sets the tone for future conversations. If it was reactive (i.e., angry, shaming, condescending, etc.), then you should repent to your child and seek to re-establish a healthy foundation for these conversations.
- ❖ *You will grieve as a result of what you find.* Your emotions will vary from anger to sadness. This is normal. As a parent our children can get stuck in our mind as children who are naive and too young to know about such things. Don't get caught in this pattern of thinking. God gave your children parents in order to walk with them through these aspects of physical and relational maturity.
- ❖ *Make sure you have someone to process your feelings* with about your child's experience. Some of these feelings you will share with them in a constructive way, but it is helpful to first process them with someone else, not your child.
- ❖ *The primary issue that you want to address is not the behavior.* The primary concern is the motivation (i.e., curiosity, insecurity, drive for acceptance, etc...) behind the behavior, the heart. Asking "why" questions, although instinctive, are usually not helpful. "Why" questions typically create a defensive atmosphere and insinuate that these types of experimentation are abnormal. You will lose credibility as a parent.
- ❖ *Begin the discussion with what you found, were told, or observed.* Give your child a chance to give his/her side of the story. If they are denying or not forthright (most are not at this point) stand firm in what you know but do not let anger or an argument to prove your point develop. End this conversation with a statement of the facts, your disappointment and concern, and a promise of another conversation soon.
- ❖ The kind of questions you want to ask (assuming their cooperation) are, "When did you learn about this (i.e., masturbation, pornography, sexting, etc...)? What made it seem appealing? How have you felt about it while you were doing it and then after?" It is best to save the "Who else is involved" questions to the end of the conversation. This is a common point of defensiveness and will shut down other parts of communication.
- ❖ Between the discussion about the revelation and the restrictions give at least 12 to 24 hours. Give your child time to think and process what you told them so far. They may approach you before this. If they do, stop and talk. Do not put them off. If either of you begin to get angry or emotional again, stop the conversation, take a break, and then resume when both are less emotional.
- ❖ When you sit down with your child again, review the facts of what you know and discuss why it is disappointing, unacceptable to God, not appropriate socially, and disrespectful of others and their own person. These may be several smaller conversations rather than one marathon, monologue talk. Restrictions should be discussed at the end. *Explain that the restrictions are there for protection not punishment.* Also explain your expectations regarding modesty, boundaries with the opposite sex, and what they view on the internet.

- ❖ Common boundaries to set would include: installing accountability software on computer and other technologies, removal of technology privileges for a time, restrictions on social activities related to the sexual experimentation, or changes to the acceptable types of dating activities.
- ❖ After you have set the new boundaries, this would be a good time to begin the devotionals included in this seminar and begin focusing on God’s desire for them, forgiveness they can receive and do receive when they repent, and what turning from sin looks like. If your child is open to receiving correction and instruction, this is when the more meaningful conversation about motives and change will typically begin.
- ❖ Common motivations are impulsivity, insecurity, humor, fear of rejection from peer group, boyfriend or girlfriend, or strong sexual desires.
- ❖ Once you feel you have identified the motive(s), begin to discuss what truths you feel they need to understand in order to combat these heart issues.
- ❖ If your child is unwilling to admit what has happened, continue to set the boundaries and expectations. You do not have to have “proof” that you are right to set boundaries. Boundaries can be placed for protection before anything happens.
- ❖ Once restrictions have been in place for a time period, and your child has showed changes in attitude and action, it is appropriate to give back freedoms. *Your goal is to teach your child what to do with freedom and responsibility so that when they are outside of your home they can live responsibly.* If all they have ever known is restriction then when they leave the shelter of your house they will not know what to do with the lack of restriction. You want your child to learn from their mistakes under your guidance and love, not on their own self-guidance. You want them to learn from you how to use technology, watch TV, look at movies, view the opposite sex, and learn about sex. So remain available to talk about these things and continue to initiate conversation at times when you are not responding to something they did wrong.
- ❖ When giving back freedoms, talk with your child again about what happened to put the restrictions in place, what changes you have seen that show you your child may be ready for more freedom, and review the expectations.
- ❖ Pray consistently that God would reveal sin, and allow you, as the parent, to know what is needed, and not allow your child to continue and be able to hide their sin. This may sound trivial, but prayer is an integral part in keeping your home pure. Remaining close to the Lord through prayer will give you insight and understanding that you will not achieve on your own.

## Family Devotions

### Step One

ADMIT I have a struggle I cannot overcome without God.

**Devotion from Genesis 15:1-6 and 16:1-6.** Start the conversation by asking your teenager what sin is? Yes, sin is “missing the mark,” “messing up,” or “things you do that you are not supposed to,” but at its heart, sin is making yourself more important than God. It is choosing what you want regardless of what God says. Then ask, “What is sexual sin?” You might get examples like: adultery, pornography, or homosexuality, but could also be defined as “any way we entertain ourselves with sex – choosing what we want – instead of what God designed for sex.”

Read Genesis 15:1-6. Question: What did God promise Abram? Answer: God promised Abram that he would have a son. Question: How do we think God was going give Abram this son? Answer: Yep, through the gift of sex with his wife Sarai – that’s typically how this kind of thing works! So, in summation, God promised Abram a son, and sex with his wife Sarai was the way that God was going to fulfill that promise.

Read Genesis 16:1-6. Question: Did Abram and Sarai believe in God’s promise? Answer: Well, for a long time they did apparently. Eventually however, they decided they would take God’s good marital gift of sex and use it for what they wanted. Question: Do you think they knew Abram having sex with Sarai’s servant was wrong? Answer: Yeah, of course they did, just look at how Sarai responded in verse five!

So, what does this passage teach us about sexual sin? It teaches us that sexual sin is any time we use sex as a tool to get what we want (pleasure, power, respect, children), instead of believing and trusting in what God says about sex. God has

given sex as a beautiful gift that is meant for celebrating the covenant relationship God has given us with our spouse. Make sure to emphasize that sex isn't bad, or gross, but is incredible when understood and treated the way God treats it.

**Devotion from John 3:18-20 and 12:45-47.** Whenever we sin, our natural reaction is always to cover it up. Whether we are ashamed of what we've done, don't want to face the consequences, or don't want to be forced to stop, our natural inclination is to lie, hide, cover up, change the subject; anything but tell the truth.

**Read John 3:18-20.** Light is truth. Light is believing in the gospel. Question: Why does the passage say that people stay in darkness? Answer: Verse 19 tells us that it is because they love the darkness and verse 20 tells us that people don't want their evil exposed.

But... if we want to stay in the darkness because we love our evil deeds, how could we ever get into the light? **Read John 12:45-47.** Question: How do we get into the light? Answer: Only by believing in Jesus and what He's done for you.

Sexual sin thrives in an environment of secrecy, lies, and darkness. Believe in God's plan for sex, and God's plan for you because of how much we see He loves us in the gospel. Believe the gospel, come into the light and admit your sexual sin.

### Step Two

ACKNOWLEDGE the breadth and impact of my sin.

**Devotion from 2 Samuel 11:1.** Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said "Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that." Just like darkness is the absence of light, sexual sin is sex, but without the covenant relationship and blessings that God designed to accompany it, and thus a curse.

In Step 1 we learned the importance to admit and acknowledge our sin, however this can't just happen one time. Every day is a process of admitting and acknowledging if we want to remain in the light. The great hymnist Robert Robinson wrote these incredibly true words "prone to wander Lord I feel it, prone to leave the God I love." Because of sin, our hearts are hard, and even when we've admitted this once, it doesn't keep us from slipping back into darkness. This is why honesty and accountability are so important.

**Read 2 Samuel 11:1.** Most of us know the story of David and Bathsheba (if not read all of 2 Samuel 11), but a lot of times we skip over this verse. Question: Where was David? Answer: Jerusalem. Question: Where was David supposed to be? Answer: Battle with his troops, because it was the time of year that people went to battle. Question: Why? Answer: We don't know, but what we do know is that David must not have allowed people in his life that could tell him that he wasn't doing what he was supposed to.

Our hearts are prone to wander. Our hearts fade toward darkness if left alone. Who is in our life that we are honest with, that knows us, and that we have given the right to confront us and tell us we aren't where we are supposed to be? Accountability is so important because it provides the light of the Gospel while darkness is lurking and looking for a way in.

### Step Three

UNDERSTAND the origin, motive, and history of my sin.

**Read Proverbs 5:1-8.** People learn in many ways, but one of the most effective is through our own experiences and those of people close to us. In fact, as a parent, one of your primary responsibilities is to "bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). In what better way can we do this by sharing our own experiences, both good and bad?

In this passage a father imparts wisdom to his son, illuminating the inward struggles of his son's sexual sin. Question: Where do you think the father gained this precious wisdom? Answer: From his own (and other's) experiences of course. If that is so, what do you think is the best way to train up your child to understand sexual sin? That's right, not being afraid to share with them how you've learned to understand your sexual sin, especially with regards to the "Motive(s) of My Sin" (i.e. boredom, loneliness, stress, frustration, fatigue, etc.). Note: This doesn't mean going into graphic details, or sharing things that might hurt them if they knew, but it does mean to be real with them, which requires vulnerability.

For instance, here is an example conversation that you could have where you impart wisdom to your child struggling with sexual sin:

*Hey son, I was reading through proverbs today and I came across something really interesting. [Read Proverbs 5:1-8] I think it was cool that Solomon talked with his son about important issues like sex and sexual sin. I know I haven't been the best at leading out in conversations like this, but buddy I love you and just don't to see you fall into the same sins and patterns that I*

*did. Have you ever thought about why you struggle with \_\_\_\_? I know that for me, I was much more susceptible to falling into temptation when I was stressed out. I learned that was because I used sexual sin as my comforter instead of trusting in God to comfort me.*

Everyone knows there is no such thing as a perfect parent, even your kids. Don't pretend to be one, because your kids don't need a perfect parent, they need a parent that needs Jesus just like they do.

#### Step Four

REPENT TO GOD for how my sin replaced and misrepresented Him.

**Devotion from Psalm 51.** We've all been to camp of some sorts right? Talk for a second about some of your favorite memories from one of your camps you went to growing up. Here's the reality: We've all been in a camp that's the same. It's the camp of sin. There's only one road out of that camp, and it's Jesus. Repentance is turning from that camp, and running to the better camp, the camp of Jesus.

Repentance is the core of a relationship with God in a world that is broken by sin. So what is repentance? Repentance is change in worship from self to God. When we worship anything but God, we sin. This is exactly what David goes through in Psalm 51; *authentic repentance*.

Take some time right now, as a family, to confess together where you are trusting in the love of things more than the love of God. Now repent as a family. Cling to the goodness of Christ Jesus and the Holy Spirit's willingness to "Create a pure heart and renew a steadfast spirit within you!" (Ps. 51:10)

#### Step Five

CONFESS TO THOSE AFFECTED for harm done and seek to make amends.

**Devotion from James 5:15-16.** In the movie "Castaway," Tom Hanks is stranded on an island after a plane crash. He makes it "by himself" for a while, but then reality sets in; he's alone. He ends up finding a volleyball that he names *Wilson*. Wilson becomes his best friend. He talks to Wilson, laughs with Wilson, and confesses his hurt to Wilson. He needs Wilson's companionship. That's because it's the way that humanity is wired. We need one another.

James understands this. We need one another for companionship. We need one another for friendship. We need one another for accountability. We need one another for prayer and confession. We need one another for encouragement in our pursuit of the new camp, where Christ is located!

Ask your family who those people are in our lives. We have friends that help us, but who are they? Make sure you reinforce that you, as parents, are those people for one another. No man is an island.

#### Step Six

RESTRUCTURE MY LIFE to rely on God's grace and Word to transform my life.

**Devotion from 2 Timothy 2:22.** Using blocks of some sort (or find something you can build a tower with), take just a second and discuss how our life before Christ was about building a tower for our own desires, fulfillments, and pleasures. Now knock it over. Go ahead. Knock it down. That's exactly what happens when we give our life to Christ. That's what happens when we confess sin to Christ. Our kingdom collapses. But here's the good news, God gives us all the tools, and the builder to construct a new tower (life) with new passions, desires, and pleasures.

Our pursuit as believers, as Paul reminds Timothy, should be the desires of Christ. Our old pursuits were for self. A restructure of the heart and its affections is now in line for us as followers of Christ.

This means finding new friends to encourage you in your walk with Christ. This means giving up old habits and replacing them with healthy ones that lead us to Christ. Each step in the process is a new block being built in your life as a follower of Christ.

#### Step Seven

IMPLEMENT the new structure pervasively with humility and flexibility.

**Devotion from 2 Timothy 3:14-17.** Pull up a map online (or if you still have a map in the house, grab one of those!) and chose a destination. Ask your child to pick a destination, and then have them determine the best route to get there.

The destination we're all on is to be more like Christ. The reality is that this simply does not happen overnight. It's a process. It's a journey. And it needs a *map*. It needs direction.

We're the same way. We need a plan. We need a direction. We need a map. Spend some time with your child giving some plans, some direction, some steps you guys can begin to take as you seek to measure success in the journey in becoming more like Christ and fleeing the sinful desires of our flesh. Celebrate the wins you've already encountered along the way (we replicate what we celebrate!).

### Step Eight

PERSEVERE in the new life and identity to which God has called me.

**Devotion from Hebrews 12:1-2.** Ever wonder how someone can run a marathon? Let's face it. They didn't just go outside one day and say "Hey! I think I'll run 26 miles today!" It took time for their endurance to build up. It took time for their body to adjust to the distance. They may have gone outside and run a few sprints, but it's nothing in comparison to 26 miles. Truth is, the same is true in our walk with Christ. It's a marathon, not a sprint.

The writer of Hebrews understood this as well. We're all running a race, and that is the race of life. The race isn't over until we cross the finish line, where we'll be with God forever. But the race is tough. There will be times when you want to quit. There will be times when it hurts. There will be times when your faith may be tested. Don't quit. Fix your eyes on Jesus. He ran the race perfectly for us, and he's not just waiting at the finish line for us, He's intricately involved in helping us, growing our endurance, and giving us new desires along the way.

As a family, spend some time thanking Jesus for running that race perfectly. Ask that He would give you perseverance as you seek to run the race He marked out for us.

### Step Nine

STEWARD all of my life for God's glory.

**Devotion from I Timothy 6:11-12.** Ask your student what they would do if they found themselves to be surrounded by a pack of wolves, or even just a neighborhood full of mean dogs. Wait for them to explain that they would run away, that they would flee from the animals for their own safety. Press the point to ask them if which direction they would run and when they would stop running.

In the process of becoming more like Christ, there are two big steps. You are called as a Christian to *flee* the life that you have been rescued from, and to *follow* the example placed before us by Christ.

The first half of this new life is fleeing the things that have entangled us, but we cannot stop there. In fact, almost every time that the Bible tells us to flee sin, it also tells you to pursue righteousness simultaneously.

We are called to follow the example of Christ and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, etc... in order to glorify God with our lives. The process of managing this time that God has given us is called Stewardship, and being a good steward of the life that God has given us is one of the clearest ways for us to glorify him. If you continue to run without a definite direction, you'll never reach anywhere on purpose.

"“There is no neutral ground in the universe; every square inch, every split second, is claimed by God and counter-claimed by Satan” - C.S. Lewis in *Christianity and Culture*

## Appendix E

### What Do I Do Now?

A plumb line of the Summit counseling ministry is, "We don't do events; we create resources." That means you should be asking yourself, "What can or should I do with this information now?"

We have created a series of brief videos that answer that what-now question from several different perspectives. Each of these can be found at:

[www.bradhambrick.com/whatnow](http://www.bradhambrick.com/whatnow)

#### Personal Study or Small Group

Question: I've been to several of the Summit counseling seminars and notice there appears to be a couple of different kinds. You frequently recommend studying them as a small group or with a friend. That seems like a great idea, but since I haven't done that before I'm not quite sure how to start something like that. Do you mind giving me guidance?

#### Pursue Personal Counseling

Question: After attending this seminar I realized I would like to pursue counseling to help me grow in this area. It sounded like there are several different options available. Would you mind explaining to me what those are and how I could connect with the one that best serves me need?

#### Leveraging My Workplace

Question: I've heard rumors that I'm supposed to be able to use the Summit counseling seminars to leverage my workplace for gospel influence. My first impression is that it sounds awkward and intrusive; like I'm telling people they've "got issues" or "need help." But I'm also worried about putting up Christian material that might be offensive to some people who visit my workplace. But I would at least like to hear what you've got to say. How would this work?

#### As a Professional Counselor

Question: I'm a licensed counselor (LPC) and came across the Summit counseling seminars. I'm excited to see the church addressing these kinds of subjects, and I'm curious how you might see someone in my position (or a LCSW or LMFT) using the materials. I can see recommending them to my clients who are open to an overtly Christian aspect to their counseling, but it seems like there could be more uses than just counseling homework. Could you share your thoughts on how those in private practice might use these resources?

Our goal in Summit counseling is to (1) equip the church to care for one another and our community with excellence; (2) provide quality counseling services that allow our people to get involved in the lives of others with confidence – knowing additional, experienced care is available to come alongside them if needed; and (3) create ways for our members and other Christians in our community to leverage their workplace and careers for greater gospel impact in their spheres of influence.

We hope this seminar and these videos give you a vision for how this can happen and stirs a passion in you to be a part of God's work of redeeming and restoring hurting individuals and families.

[www.bradhambrick.com/falselove](http://www.bradhambrick.com/falselove)