

# **FREEDOM IN JESUS**

**OVERCOMING PORNOGRAPHY AND  
SEXUAL ADDICTION**

***Freedom in Jesus: Overcoming Pornography and Sexual  
Addiction* by Mark Pierce**

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## ABOUT MEN'S GROUP

Lives changed. Marriages restored. A community of brothers. A new life in Christ.

Men's Group is a multi-denominational Christian non-profit group of volunteers – guys who have been set free from decades of sexual sin by Jesus. Our groups are supported and run out of local churches. They're held in person and virtually.

All of our groups, programs and events are offered free-of-charge or at-cost. As Jesus said in Matthew 10:8 *"...Freely you have received; freely give."*

Our mission is to build communities of support for men who want to be free from pornography and other sexual addictions. Our passion is to disciple men in their journey towards sexual purity and holiness, pointing to the Lord Jesus Christ.

All of our groups have an expectation of confidentiality from everyone participating. You can use your first name only if you prefer. In this book, some names and details have been changed to protect people's privacy. The only time a group leader would not be able to keep a disclosure in confidence is if there is a threat to the safety or life of another person, or as required by law.

## **Our Values**

We hold great hope that men caught in porn and other sexual addictions can be freed by God's grace. Why? Because we've experienced it ourselves and we take real joy in seeing others set free through the power of Jesus Christ. You will hear some of these testimonies in this book.

We are dependent on the Holy Spirit's power to lead us to repentance and victory over the battle against sexual immorality.

We believe in helping men in a spirit of gentleness and humility, while keeping watch over ourselves. We listen, challenge and encourage each other.

## **Our Practices**

We attend weekly, prayerful, God-focused groups led by those who themselves have learned to renounce sexual sin.

We emphasize the primacy of personal daily time with God, reading his word and prayer.

We practice scripture meditation and memorization as a means of transforming our hearts and minds.

We take a stand to renounce engaging in evil thoughts and desires, while announcing our identity in Christ and willfully worshipping the Lord Jesus.

We live new lives in Jesus, seeking to deepen our relationship with him day-by-day as he transforms all aspects of our lives.

We share what we've experienced and learned with others so they can experience the freedom, peace, hope and new life that we have in Christ Jesus.

## **Get in Touch**

Whether you're a guy who feels trapped with no way out, or you want more men in your church to experience real and lasting freedom from sin, we want to hear from you!

Please reach out to us through our website today [www.mensgroup.ca](http://www.mensgroup.ca)

## FOREWORD

Sexual sin and addiction thrive in secrecy, isolation and shame. This destructive force only gets worse – unless we reach out.

This book is one way for us to share our testimonies of what Jesus has done in our lives – setting us free from decades of slavery to this sin.

In Matthew 5:18, after Jesus set the demon-possessed man living in the tombs free, he told him: *“Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.”*

Personal testimonies are powerful. They shatter the lies of the enemy. They help us to relate to each other. They give us hope. Most importantly, they glorify the Lord.

As we read in Revelation 12:10-11: *“...For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony...”*

In the second half of this book, we take you through “bootcamp” – a no-nonsense practical seven-week guide that anyone can take to begin to repent of this sin and put their trust in Jesus. Join us as we share what God is doing.

## CHAPTER 1

# THE WILDERNESS

A cold, brisk wind blew through the pine trees, bringing a sudden chill down Paul's back. The frigid temperature meant snow would soon begin to fall. You could barely see the jagged shapes of the surrounding granite mountains. All around was darkness, except for the warm glow coming from inside the lodge.

Paul had just arrived at the remote but modern retreat center in the woods. Eight churches had joined up to bring over 300 men together for a weekend of worship, teaching, food and activities.

Everything was bustling outside as more men arrived. It was late Friday evening and most guys had driven several hours to get here. While dozens of men waited in line to register, laughing and joking with each other, Paul felt completely alone and out of place. He had just one thing on his mind.

“I told God that either I had to get some kind of breakthrough that weekend, or I was going to wander off into the wilderness alone and take my own life,” said Paul.

“At the time, I would rather have had people think I was a good guy who just couldn't handle everything, rather than let anyone know the truth. I had that much hopelessness and despair.”

Paul was 38 years old, with a wife and young kids waiting for him back home. He had a great job and an upscale home. Came from a good family. Attended church since he was an infant. Thought of himself as a Christian. From the outside, it looked like he had everything together.

But Paul had been leading a double life. One that had spiraled completely out of control. He'd crossed lines he never imagined he would cross. Every time, he'd feel shame wrench his insides.

"My addiction started when I was nine years old," recounted Paul. "First masturbation, then lust and then pornography when I turned eighteen and got my first laptop."

Growing up, Paul would ask God to forgive him during church, usually right before taking communion. He'd make promises to himself and to God that he wouldn't do it again. He'd try harder. But the following week would be the same.

Sin. Confess. Repeat.

Eventually, Paul stopped making promises that he'd stop. He felt like a hypocrite and believed that he was the only one who had this problem. After all, no one ever talked about it.

"I remember thinking 'Jesus has already forgiven me, so if I sin, I'm already forgiven,'" said Paul. "Looking back, I can see how twisted and wrong that was – thinking I could use Christ's death on the cross as a license to sin."

"I remember the fear and paranoia of being caught. I was horrified when I found a log of images I'd looked at on

my computer, even though I thought I'd covered my tracks. I felt so ashamed of what I was doing, but I just couldn't stop."

When Paul got married, he lied to his wife and pastor during their pre-marriage counselling when asked if pornography was an issue for him. He brought his secret sin into the marriage. Eventually it grew to include sex chatrooms and webcams.

"I didn't think it was a problem in my marriage. I was so blind to how it was affecting my relationship with my wife. She would say we had trouble connecting. I would often pressure her for sex, and get frustrated and angry when she'd say 'no'. I objectified her and, when we fought, I let my resentment justify my acting out. I was so sick, but I just couldn't see it. I was blind."

One day, after a fight with his wife and 27 years into his sexual addiction, Paul crossed yet another line. That's when the physical adultery started.

Paul couldn't believe what he'd done. But it wouldn't be the last time.

"It was like throwing a can of gasoline onto a fire," said Paul. "That's the thing with addictions is they keep getting worse if they're not dealt with. I never thought I was capable of what I did."

Paul promised himself that he would never cheat on his wife again and that he would get help. But, every few months, it would happen again.

"I started praying hard for God to deliver me. I read books about recovery from sexual sin, did a self-study course – all in secrecy. They all said the same thing: you

need to tell someone, but I just couldn't do it. The shame and fear were too much. My pride was the real barrier though."

One day while driving to the grocery store, Paul felt God telling him to fast. He questioned why, but again felt that's what he had to do.

"I'd heard of fasting but never done it. So, for two days that's what I did. Nothing but praying, reading the Bible. I remember tears just flowing from my eyes, crying on my knees on the carpet, begging Jesus to save me."

"I called out to him, using the same words as the blind beggar: *Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me! Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!*' Again, and again."

Something broke in Paul during the fast. Things began to change.

"I was still waking up early every morning, but instead of going to my laptop or iPhone, I opened my Bible and got on my knees and prayed. For three months, I was completely free of all the sexual sin. It was a miracle."

But Paul was determined to have a "secret recovery" – trying alone to deal with his addiction. It seemed to work for a while, but he was soon relapsing. It seemed the harder he tried the worse things got. The secrets, lies and coverups were eating him up inside.

"It was a horrific existence. I hated what I was doing but couldn't stop. I was also drinking a lot of alcohol, smoking pot, was stressed out, overworking, having chest pains from anxiety, losing sleep. I felt totally trapped."

“I started praying for God to bring someone – anyone – into my life who I could just confess all of this garbage to. I couldn’t live with myself anymore. I was so desperate for help.”

Little did Paul know it, but God was about to answer his plea at the remote wilderness retreat that very weekend as he was contemplating suicide. While Paul felt alone in more ways than one, he was anything but.

**If you, or someone you care about, is thinking of suicide, please reach out for help:**

- In Canada and the United States: call 9-8-8
- Global Suicide Hotline Resources:

<https://faq.whatsapp.com/1417269125743673>

## CHAPTER 2

# NOT ALONE

“Academic probation”. Alex never expected to hear those words just a few years prior – back when he had big plans for university and his life afterwards. Now, sitting in his dorm room, the reality of his situation began to sink in.

“I got below 50% in all my classes, even easy ones like French that I’m fluent in. So literally, just because I didn’t attend class.”

Alex didn’t want to be at this university. A sudden change in his parent’s immigration status was the only reason he was here to begin with. This was a university he didn’t want to attend; in a country he didn’t plan on even being in.

“I had a plan lined up for my start of university life. And God really changed that completely,” said Alex. “And, because of that, out of anger, or just out of not having control and wanting something to control, I started diving into porn on the Internet. Started using that as a way for me to really numb the feelings I didn’t want to feel.”

Video gaming was another escape. It consumed more and more of Alex’s time in his dorm room, as he became increasingly isolated from the world outside. “I was really unhappy with what was going on in my life.”

“Those two addictions really allowed me to just wallow in whatever feeling, despair,” said Alex. “Gave me ‘outs’ whenever I had bouts of depression. It would allow me to numb it.”

Eventually, Alex got kicked out of university. He began to really question his life. “What was I doing? Where was God in all of this?”

“For the first time in my life, I really had to reach out to God because I had nothing. My wife – my girlfriend at the time – somehow stuck beside me, by God’s grace.”

Alex was able to overcome his video gaming addiction, but his pornography addiction proved more stubborn and entrenched.

“I continued having this double life of being a porn addict and masturbating,” said Alex. He went back to another university, graduated and got his first job. “Anytime that I got highly emotional or despondent or lacked control in something, I always turned to porn as a hit to just numb, or to medicate, or to not deal with things.”

Alex’s spiritual life also suffered. Reading the Bible, he felt convicted. His prayers felt dry. “I was plagued by just years of dryness, in my walk with Jesus,” remembers Alex. “I couldn’t feel God. I couldn’t.”

Surely getting married would “fix” the problem, he thought. When it didn’t, Alex thought that the arrival of his first child would be the milestone that would kick his desire for his addiction. But it didn’t either.

Alex lived in fear that his wife would find out, or worse, his child would discover his secret.

“Just kept telling myself, *I’ll never do it again*. And then going right back and doing it.”

Dirty. Numb. Despair.

Alex continued to attend church. He even went to several men’s events where sexual sin was openly talked about. He heard testimonies of guys who said they had gotten free of it. While God was softening his heart through these experiences, Alex couldn’t bring himself to tell anyone about his secret sin.

“I just stayed hidden in the back, not wanting to deal with it.”

So, Alex didn’t expect anything different as he drove up to yet another men’s retreat. There’d probably be plenty of bacon and someone would talk about the sin of pornography. Those two things were staples at men’s events.

Alex wasn’t feeling well, but decided to drive up anyway to the wilderness retreat, along with a friend who was an elder in his church and his Bible study leader.

Alex’s illness got worse on the trip up. His nose was running, his throat sore, and a cough came every now and again. He felt terrible. The cold, brisk wind in the mountains wouldn’t help Alex’s cold, that much was for sure.

Alex hadn’t met Paul yet, who’d also arrived that night at the men’s retreat with his own secret sin, even as he contemplated suicide. They attended different churches.

Alex and Paul were about to find out how God had orchestrated them both being there, along with other men they would soon call brothers. Each of them hiding secret lives that threatened everything they held dear in this world – and so much more.

## CHAPTER 3

# THE LIES THAT BIND

Among the bright lights and towering buildings of Tokyo, it isn't always easy to find a quiet place for a coffee date.

Well, it wasn't a date just yet. More like a meet-up to decide if they should start to date each other: an opportunity to "DTR" or "determine the relationship".

Kevin had come from continental Europe for a new job in Japan, while Astrid had come there from North America to teach English. The two had met at a Bible study while living in Japan and hit it off. Both were interested in seeing if there was something more.

As they walked up the stairs of one of the myriad Starbucks in the megacity, they found a quiet spot to sit and talk. Kevin was feeling excited about the potential for a relationship with Astrid, until she confronted him with a question that he didn't expect.

"Are you looking at porn?"

Kevin was taken aback. Astrid had a very close friend whose marriage had been destroyed because of the husband's porn addiction and his unwillingness to deal with it. They were professing Christians. It ended in divorce. Astrid didn't want the same thing to happen to her.

“I’ve dealt with it,” replied Kevin. That would sound honest enough and put to rest any fears. And it did.

But it was just the first lie Kevin told his future wife. In reality, he’d been unable to stop looking at pornography for several years. He feared that if he told Astrid the truth, their budding relationship would be over before it even started.

While Kevin had become a Christian when he was fifteen at a worship night, sexual sin had continued to hound him.

“Within weeks of becoming a Christian I realized that this is something that is sin. Masturbation, fantasy.”

“I immediately felt a conviction around this. I felt two things: one was guilt and the other one was shame. And I didn’t tell anybody. From very early on, I had this sense that I needed to overcome this, I need to get this out of my life, but I can’t tell anybody.”

Things got worse as Kevin turned eighteen, left for university and got access to the Internet.

“That really accelerated the addiction. Access to free Internet and online porn and this whole world of fantasy in my mind that I could access at any point.”

“Whenever I felt stress, loneliness, when I went to university, it was a pathway into feeling good again or numbing those stress factors in my life. That has been the case throughout my story and I didn’t realize it at the time, but it was a way for me to cope.”

While Kevin continued to attend church and, at times, gave a “semi-disclosure” about his struggle with sexual sin

to church leaders, he couldn't bring himself to fully drag his sin into the light. Shame, guilt and pride kept him entangled. "I always pushed it away. Nothing ever changed."

"I felt kind of a determination every Sunday that this is going to be the last Sunday. After this, I'm going to be clean. This is going to be the week. Then failing every time. There was sometimes the occasional week or two weeks and I would fall again. It would make it worse and worse. This vicious cycle of feeling bad, feeling worse, retreating more into shame, silence and then determining again not to sin. Failing again for years and years and years."

Kevin brought his secret sexual sin into his marriage with Astrid. "She asked me several times and I just said, 'No, I'm good'."

"I always had this idea as well that once I'm married I get to have sex whenever I want – another lie – and I won't have this issue anymore which, obviously, isn't true. I was good for a little while after we got married, but the sin came back. That pattern started all over again for years and years and years."

A year and a half into their marriage, Astrid confronted Kevin after finding he had scrolled through a sexually explicit show that appeared on their shared Netflix account. He had not been "hiding his tracks" well.

"She got really angry. Very angry. I'd never seen her that angry before. She got really upset. It was the first time it really came up."

Kevin agreed to meet with a pastor and they had a one-time session, there were some Biblical references

given, but no follow-up. Kevin stayed clean for a couple of months, but his sin came back. He didn't tell his wife.

"It's almost as if the addiction got stronger, because every time you relapse after a big disclosure and you relapse and you don't tell, you dig in – now I definitely can't tell her. It's almost like it reinforced the guilt and the shame and the fear of being found out."

"Another element that I didn't realize at the time was pride as well. I had this image of being quite well liked by everybody – a 'good guy'. I have this good reputation with my parents. I grew up in a very loving environment, but there was a lot of attention for performance."

"That's how I received love and affirmation. So, I never wanted to disclose because I thought I won't be a 'good guy' anymore. And in my marriage, I can't tell her because I'm a 'good, reliable husband'."

The masks that Kevin wore to conceal his sin became harder and harder to take off. The image to be maintained too entrenched.

A few years later, while he and Astrid were living in North America together, Kevin did another partial disclosure of his struggles, went to his pastor once more for a meeting, but again had no follow-up. He kept on lying, so his wife Astrid thought he had dealt with it.

That same year, Kevin decided to attend a church men's retreat at a remote wilderness center.

## CHAPTER 4

# THE END OF THE ROAD

“I knew I was going to hell,” said Dan.

Maybe he wasn't the oldest man in the room, but Dan was definitely close to it, with his snowy white hair. Yet his bright eyes and warm smile revealed a youthful enthusiasm and vitality as he stood in front of over 300 guys who had come to the wilderness retreat center. He loved talking about how Jesus had transformed his life.

Scattered among the crowd was Paul (who was contemplating suicide over his secret sin), Alex (who'd been kicked out of university due to his porn and gaming addictions) and Kevin (who had kept lying to his wife about his sin, starting at that Starbucks in Japan). They were all waiting to hear what Dan and the other guys on stage with him had come to say.

All they knew was that a bunch of guys from something ambiguously called “Men's Group” were there to share their testimonies. What it was all about, none of them had a clue.

Dan had a difficult and painful childhood. As he turned eighteen, he set out on his own, on the heels of the “Summer of Love” and Woodstock in 1969. Hippie culture was at its peak.

It was the early 1970s and the “Jesus movement” had taken the West Coast by storm – a vibrant hippie evangelical revival as portrayed in films like *Jesus Revolution* (2023). The “Jesus people” sought a return to the original life of the early church. Simple living. Prayer. The Bible. A belief in powerful works and miracles in the power of the Holy Spirit.

“They were basically Christians living in communes,” said Dan. “They’d come here to start a commune and I heard the gospel for the first time. I was just surprised. I just never heard it. I believed it and became a Christian.”

However, within a year or so, Dan’s commune merged with another group that had come to town targeting them as part of a global expansion.

“The group turned into a notorious cult called the ‘Children of God’. And at the time, nobody could see much difference, just that they were more enthusiastic,” said Dan.

“And I remember being warned by somebody when the groups were merging. A guy approached me and I was 18 and he said, ‘Dan, I think there’s something wrong with this group.’ But I had no education, nothing. I had no way to know.”

At its peak, the “Children of God” was estimated to have 10,000 members in 130 countries. Hollywood stars like Rose McGowan and Joaquin Phoenix were born into the cult. Members had little to no contact with the outside world, except to recruit new members. Marriages were arranged between cult members. Leaving the cult meant

excommunication – being shunned by friends and family still in the cult. Cut off forever.

“And we were sent down on a bus to Los Angeles and over to Texas to a ‘missionary training camp’, and then sent back to Toronto to help establish a commune there,” said Dan. An arranged marriage soon took place between Dan and a female member of the cult. Together, they were sent to New Zealand to start a commune. There they had a son.

Around that time, things began to take a dark turn. Some of the cult leadership started teaching that sexual activities clearly prohibited in the Bible were not a problem. It got worse from there.

“What they started to teach was religious prostitution, literally religious prostitution – winning converts by using sex,” said Dan. “That’s insane.”

One day, Dan volunteered to go on a proselytizing road trip with his wife so he could speak alone with her, away from the watchful eyes of the other cult members. His plan was to convince her to leave the cult and start life afresh.

“She wanted to stay and I knew what would happen if she stayed and I didn’t come back to the group. They would remarry her.”

For half a year he pleaded with his wife to leave with him and their infant son. But she refused.

Dan made the agonizing decision to exit the cult on his own. He was taken in by some other Christians, started

a lawn mowing business and continued to pray that his wife would come to her senses and see the truth.

One day, however, he ran into a cult member and they confirmed Dan's worse fears.

"I found out that she had been remarried in the cult and it crushed me. I was so devastated that I couldn't even talk to my friends. I went home and sold the lawn mower. And I just started to drink. Alcoholism for me was anesthetic. I drank to kill the pain."

Alone and cut off from his wife and young son, Dan became a drifter. Hitchhiking. Jumping on and off railway cars. More booze. Then drugs.

"Just lost and alone and thinking there's no hope and that I'm either Judas – which the group had called me – or I'm hopeless."

"I'd read the Bible. I'd read enough of it: no sexually immoral person, no alcoholic will enter into the kingdom of heaven. No drunkard. That's who I was. Plus, all those other sins," said Dan. "I was a hopeless case."

By the time he was 36, Dan had been in and out of rehab. His doctor told him that his drinking was going to kill him if he didn't stop – a badly swollen liver was the evidence. Dan managed to get sober for an entire year with help from Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). But his sobriety was shaky.

"I ended up driving down to Mexico with one of my old drinking buddies," said Dan. The alcohol withdrawal he was suffering was debilitating. "I started going through delirium tremors. Just horrible, horrible. Basically,

demonic apparitions appearing to you, feeling like I'm going to die and go to hell. Just nothing more frightening than that. I mean, it's just horrifying. And in desperation, I called out in prayer and said to Jesus, 'Have mercy on me. Save me.'"

The next day, Dan forgot about his prayer temporarily and went with his friend in search of opium from a dealer in the mountains near San José del Pacífico in Oaxaca, southern Mexico. His friend knew someone there who could hook them up.

At the end of the road, on a high mountain pass, they parked their van. On foot, they followed an obscure – and in retrospect, symbolic – route down into a valley, through a graveyard, across a stream and finally to an ancient-looking home. Dan went inside, expecting to find opium to once again take the pain away – albeit temporarily. But in the intervening time since Dan's friend had last been to this place, something had changed dramatically.

"I saw a Bible on the table. And I thought, *Oh, no. Christians.*"

Needless to say, the young hippie couple who lived there had stopped spreading the transient counterfeit peace provided by opium, and instead had started spreading the everlasting gospel of peace.

"They were the real deal," said Dan. "They started praying for me." Speaking in Spanish, they prayed over Dan in the name of Jesus Christ for the devil to leave him. The impact of their prayer of deliverance was immediate and life-changing.

“I never drank after that. Stopped drugging. Took me about half a year to quit smoking cigarettes,” said Dan. “I just stopped. I knew that my life was really radically changed.”

Dan enrolled as a mature student in a theological college to deepen his Biblical knowledge and as a way to start helping people like himself who struggled with addiction. “They let me in as a ‘mature student’. I was neither mature, nor a student, at the time, but they took me in.”

It was then that Dan met a wonderful woman who lived in his apartment building. But he could tell she was struggling with alcohol. He shared his story with her and started praying for her. They began attending AA meetings together. She got sober. And one day, she announced that she’d become a believer too. Their friendship blossomed into something more and they were married, having a daughter soon afterwards.

Meanwhile, Dan supported guys in detox and regularly attended AA meetings, himself staying sober and sharing his story with anyone who would listen about how Jesus had saved him.

One day, Dan was approached by a member of the church he was attending.

“Dan, I got a problem. It’s not drugs and alcohol, it’s pornography.”

That’s when Dan started to realize pornography was a problem in the church. While it wasn’t something Dan had experienced as an addiction, he’d had his own brush

with sexual content on television and knew how potent a temptation it could be.

“Two years before that conversation at my church, I’d been living without television. We moved into a place where we had free cable,” recalled Dan. One night as his wife and daughter slept, he surfed the channels, looking for the latest news. Instead, he came across a station broadcasting sexual content.

“It was so powerful. I heard a voice right inside my head say: ‘Turn that off.’ It wasn’t audible, but it could well have been audible – it was that strong to turn it off. And it wasn’t a suggestion. It was a command. And I pushed God away. I felt myself pushing God away. I dove into it.”

After watching for a few minutes and masturbating, the reality of what had just happened began to sink in.

“It felt like I’d cracked open a bottle of whisky. It’d been 10 years since I had a drink. And it felt like I’d started drinking right out of the bottle, straight out of the bottle. And it was just a horrible, horrible feeling. After all Jesus had done for me, here I am willingly jumping into this.”

The next day, Dan went and confessed what had happened to a godly pastor who he knew. They prayed and Dan promised himself it wouldn’t happen again.

“A week later, I went looking for it. And that was really, really troubling to me. That was doubly troubling. And that lasted two days, two days in a row. I did that. And I was overwhelmed with shame and horror of what I was doing.”

Dan confessed again to the pastor. Again, he pointed Dan to the cross.

Around that time, Dan came across a book by Christian author Neil Anderson that shared a simple, but powerful truth.

“He said you don’t ever have to give in to a lustful thought again. You can have control of your thought life,” explained Dan. As 2 Corinthians 10:5 says “...*we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*”

“It worked right away. Right away, the very first day. And even though it was a horrible battle, because these thoughts kept flooding in, it was just a war. No, I’m not going there. I renounced in Jesus’ name.”

That was the end of Dan seeking pornography. So, as he looked into the eyes of the man at his church who was asking for help with a pornography addiction, he had some idea of what he was up against. He took a day to think about it, then went ahead.

Soon after, Dan started the first Men’s Group with a small group of guys. The idea was simple. Meeting weekly with a group of men confidentially, like he’d done for years with AA, but the focus would be on freedom from sexual sin through the power of Jesus Christ.

The emphasis would be on foundational spiritual disciplines that every Christian should be doing anyway: spending time with Jesus in prayer and reading the Bible daily, memorizing scripture, confessing sin to each other, giving thanks to God for all he’s done, and renouncing temptation the split-second it arises – in Jesus’ name.

Sure enough, guys started getting clean. More men heard about the group. People started getting referred from other churches. In time, group members became group leaders and launched their own groups at their own churches across the city, region and eventually far-flung countries. Some even became pastors. Marriages were being restored. There was hope.

Dan shared that God had kept him sober from alcohol and drugs, and clean from pornography for over 25 years. God also brought him healing from his past, including reuniting with his long lost son, who he never thought he would hear from again after leaving the cult. They talk regularly and are making up for lost time, going on camping trips together, playing chess.

“Guys do get clean. Their lives change and they follow Jesus,” said Dan. “Isn’t it amazing?”

After Dan had finished sharing his testimony, you could hear a pin drop at the wilderness retreat center. And things were just getting started.

## CHAPTER 5

# TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN

“I experienced some abuse as a young boy,” said Ryan. Along with Dan, he had come to share his story at the wilderness men’s retreat.

“A few years later, I was exposed to pornography, which was readily available in Europe where I was living, on regular television. I wouldn’t say I developed an addiction at that point, but it was an interest.”

In his early teenage years, Ryan would begin to turn habitually to masturbation and pornography whenever he was having a difficult day. Raised in a very conservative Christian home, he knew it was wrong, but also felt that it was something he had to hide.

“I felt a deep sense of embarrassment and shame. I didn’t feel like I could talk to anybody. It was very secret, which is how the enemy uses that to thrive in our lives. It is this secret sin we compartmentalize and separate out.”

While Ryan tried to have “accountability partners” at various times, it never seemed to make a lasting difference. When he started attending Bible college with no real access to sexually explicit content, his addiction seemed to subside.

“I was very deep in Christian theology and Christian stuff all day, every day,” recalled Ryan. He also met his wife

– who was a Christian – at Bible college and they got married. For a year or two, he continued to stay clean from pornography, but things changed once he got access to the Internet. “It reopened that dormant sin in my life.”

Ryan kept his pornography use hidden from his wife. But he believes it had a devastating impact on his marriage and his relationship with God.

“You know, you reap what you sow. I brought in my heart this adulterous spirit into my marriage,” said Ryan. “About seven or eight years into our marriage, my wife had an affair on me. It totally shattered my world.”

“I think my actions sowed that seed. I wasn’t honoring my wife the way I should be, I wasn’t growing and leading my marriage. That even unfortunately unlocked the ‘if you can, I can’ attitude. It didn’t lead me to duplicate what she did, but it did make me feel more justified in what I did.”

Several years later, Ryan and his wife struggled to cope as they faced multiple deaths in their extended family. The losses affected both of their relationships with God.

“Faith became a secondary priority for me and not at all for my wife.” She completely stopped attending church, but little did Ryan know what would come next.

One day after Ryan returned home from a business trip, his wife suggested to him that they open up their sexual relationship to include other people. Since Ryan had already been doing that with pornography for decades, he quickly agreed.

“She basically invited me into a candy store for my sin. I wish I said no. We engaged in that, and that just blew our marriage up.”

“About six months in, I felt like I had to give an ultimatum to her: we need to be following Jesus, or I can’t be married to you and living in this lifestyle.”

Ryan’s wife decided she was going to continue living a life of open sexual relationships with multiple people. She left him and their children. He had to single parent his young kids for almost a year. During that time, God was working in his heart.

“God did a lot of work on me as a prodigal son.”

After almost a year apart, Ryan’s wife got into a Christian recovery program, got healing and recommitted her life to Jesus. They both started reengaging with their church and faith, and even renewed their vows.

While his wife had dealt with the underlying issues that led to her sexual sin, Ryan hadn’t done the same. After a back injury, he was looking for a Registered Massage Therapist but couldn’t get an appointment. Instead, he went to a “non-official massage place” where he was “offered something extra”.

“I hadn’t dealt with this stuff and went down that road,” said Ryan. “I confessed to my wife, sought out help and that’s when I was referred to Dan and Men’s Group.”

Ryan started memorizing scripture every week, spending time each day in prayer and reading the Bible, hearing and sharing during the weekly group meetings, and learning more about the roots of his sexual sin and what he needed to cut out of his life. As he began to

change through turning his life over to Christ, he began to see massive changes in his relationship with his wife too.

“My relationship with my wife and intimacy with my wife was completely new,” said Ryan.

Eventually, Ryan asked Dan if they could start a Men’s Group at Ryan’s church. The two approached his pastor and shared about how guys were getting clean from sexual sin. After meeting with Dan and learning more, they did an anonymous survey at Ryan’s church showing that he wasn’t alone in this struggle.

Over two-thirds of men in Ryan’s church disclosed that they too had a problem with pornography – a similar proportion that research has found across the church in North America. There was also a substantial portion of women who struggled with sexual sin too.

With a Men’s Group up and running at his church and Ryan continuing to stay clean from sexual sin, he began to help lead the group. Shortly after, his pastor asked if Dan, Ryan and other guys from the Men’s Group would come and share their testimonies at a men’s retreat. And that’s where Paul, Alex, Kevin and over 300 other men were listening to his remarkable story.

“We’ve seen many guys experience freedom and renewal. Restored families, restored marriages. There’s hope. My testimony is just one of a broken guy and how God can take someone that messed up.”

## CHAPTER 6

# SETTING CAPTIVES FREE

“If you want to get free of this sin in your life, I want you to stand up right now.”

Paul stood up immediately. What choice did he have? He’d given God an ultimatum that either he would get a breakthrough this weekend at the retreat, or wander off into the woods and take his own life. He’d been begging God to bring someone into his life to confess his sexual sin to. He knew this was the moment. Jesus had come to rescue him.

As Paul stood with his eyes closed, tears streamed down his face. His hands gently pressed against his heart.

“I could feel the hands of guys I didn’t even know on my shoulders and arms and back as I heard them praying for me,” said Paul. “I get emotional thinking about it even now. Jesus saved me from my sin. He literally saved my life.”

Paul tracked down Dan afterwards and asked if he could share some things with him. Paul confessed everything. Thirty years of sexual sin. The pornography, masturbation, adultery, all of it. He told Dan about the fast he’d done and how he’d gotten clean for three months, only to end up back mired in sin worse than before. Dan listened patiently to it all. At the end, he spoke. Softly, but with confidence.

“First off, Jesus can set you free from this sin for the rest of your life,” said Dan. “Second thing, you have to tell your wife.”

Paul liked the sound of the first part, not so much the second. Paul told Dan that his wife would divorce him if she knew the truth. And he had his kids to think about.

“You have to tell her,” Dan said once again.

“I left the men’s retreat feeling like this incredibly crushing weight had been lifted,” said Paul. “There was something so powerful about bringing all of this sin into the light. And the testimonies I heard gave me so much hope.”

But Paul couldn’t bring himself to tell his wife. It would take another five months before God, in his mercy, would make that happen.

After the retreat, while Paul was staying clean of sexual sin and meeting weekly with a small group of guys from his church for accountability, he resisted telling them or his wife about his sinful past. Yet, all the while as he continued to pray and read his Bible every morning, he felt God saying just one thing to him, over and over: “Tell her.”

Even though Paul hadn’t been unfaithful in the months after the retreat, he woke up one morning with excruciating pain. A visit to the hospital emergency room brought some shocking news.

“The doctor said it looked like I had a sexually transmitted infection,” said Paul. “I knew it was all over. There was no hiding my sin from my wife any longer.”

Paul returned from the hospital and simply said to his wife: “We need to talk.” Then he told her everything.

“Looking back, I wish I had told her much sooner – before things got so bad – and in a safer way for us both,” said Paul. “Doing that disclosure with a counsellor or pastor who could support her and us both would have been better. I didn’t think about how it would impact her. She was absolutely devastated. It was incredibly traumatizing for her to hear how I had betrayed her.”

Paul’s wife separated from him. They’d been together for almost 17 years. He had little hope they would make it. He began looking for a place to rent after staying almost a month at his brother’s townhouse, only seeing his kids on weekends. His wife refused to even see him. Paul found Dan’s contact information and reached out to him to finally join Men’s Group.

“I knew I needed help with overcoming my addiction. Whether my marriage worked out or not, I needed to finally deal with this,” said Paul. He decided to go to a weeklong sexual addiction intensive program in Colorado Springs. When he told his wife, she asked if she could come too. Paul’s parents looked after their kids and even paid for the cost of the trip and intensive. “We couldn’t have done it without them. My mom and dad stood by me, even though I’d not been honest with them for so long.”

“That week in Colorado changed our lives. God used our counsellor, the support groups we attended, the recovery plans we developed, and the countless moments together during that week as a foundation for our new marriage. A lot of people were praying for us. I’m so grateful to everyone who helped us.”

At his wife's insistence, Paul did a polygraph to verify he'd finally told the truth and was staying clean. Ever since the men's retreat when he first confessed his sin to someone else, Paul has been clean of pornography, masturbation and all of the other infidelity. Five years and counting. He helps lead one of the Men's Groups now too.

"Jesus rescued me. He saved me. It's that simple," said Paul. "I love my new life in Christ. I have a peace in my heart that I never knew before. As hard as it is to believe, my marriage has never been better. I owe everything to Jesus. God was so merciful with me. I don't take it for granted. Each day is a new day to stay close to him and follow him."

Three years after their marriage blew up, after countless difficult and painful moments, Paul and his wife renewed their vows at a beautiful outdoor summer ceremony surrounded by close friends and family members who'd been with them on this journey. Dan and his wife were there as Paul and his wife exchanged their vows and new rings, giving thanks to God for making the impossible possible.

While Paul was quick to stand up at the men's retreat in his desperation, there was a battle raging inside Alex's mind at that same moment.

Alex, who'd overcome a gaming addiction but not his porn addiction, had seen this sort of thing before at other men's events. Testimonies. An "alter call". Prayer. Commitments to be "accountable". But something that one of the men had shared in their testimonies at the retreat had struck him. Like Alex, he'd shared how he

thought that getting married and having kids would be enough to stop him from watching porn, but it wasn't. Alex saw himself in that man's testimony. It gave him hope.

Nevertheless, Alex argued back and forth inside his own head about what to do, determined not to stand up to reveal he too needed help to overcome sexual sin.

"No, I'm not gonna stand. I'm just gonna sit here," Alex remembers thinking. But there was a battle going on. "Are you just gonna sit here again? And just let this continue? Or do you want to deal with it?"

"I remember, like this weird out of body experience," said Alex. "I stood up – I wanted to stay sitting down – but the Lord had other plans. I can only describe it as the moving of the Holy Spirit. And since then, that has been the catalyst in the start of my road to recovery."

One of the men who prayed for Alex in that moment as he stood was his friend who had come with him to the wilderness retreat – an elder at his church and his Bible study leader. As they left the auditorium, Alex confessed everything to his friend. Then he tracked down a pastor from another church who happened to be there who had married him and had been his marriage mentor. He told him everything too.

"And as soon as I got home from the retreat, it was just burning and I need to say it. I had to confess to my wife," said Alex. "I just told her the truth, answered what she wanted to hear. I didn't try to defend anything."

"She was upset, obviously angry, surprised that I was able to keep this secret for so long. But at the same time, she had a lot of grace and love."

“It took time to rebuild that trust. And that meant cutting out many things in my life, and especially that first year,” said Alex. “I know it’s not her strength, but Jesus’ and I praise God that her relationship with Him is so solid.”

As hard as it is to believe, Alex and wife are now closer than before. Now that the barrier of his secret sexual sin between them is gone, there’s a closeness and intimacy they share unlike before.

Alex’s mother-in-law and brother-in-law were visiting at the same time. He confessed to them too, then to his pastor who encouraged him to contact Dan and join Men’s Group.

How did it feel to get all of it off his chest?

“Freedom, lightness. You never truly feel a burden on you until it’s taken off you.”

Alex’s life is totally different now. He’s experiencing the freedom in Christ he’d always heard about but never had before. He credits the Lord with over four years of being clean from sexual sin. He shares his testimony every chance he gets, helps lead a Men’s Group and Men’s Group+ Bible study, to share what the Lord has done in his life and give other guys hope.

“God has the timing for everything.”

While Paul and Alex stood up at the men’s retreat, Kevin stayed firmly planted in his seat. There were people there he knew, including his pastor.

Shortly after the Men’s Group testimonies, Kevin came across his pastor at the retreat and felt like he had

to say something, so he blurted out: “I’m just like one of those guys.” Meaning he was experiencing freedom from sexual sin. There was just one problem: it wasn’t true.

Eight months later, everything came crashing down. Like Paul, Kevin also believes that God intervened in his life to finally bring his sin into the open where it could finally be dealt with.

“My wife woke me up in the middle of the night,” said Kevin. “And she asked me again, really strongly, ‘Are you looking at porn again?’” It was the same question she’d asked him years before at that Starbucks in Japan as their relationship first began.

In that moment, Kevin knew there was no more hiding.

“Yes, I’ve been looking at it. I’ve been lying,” he replied.

“I can’t trust you anymore,” said Astrid. “I don’t know who you are. I don’t know what life you have that I’m not aware of. You’re lying about this to me – I don’t know what else you’re lying about. I just don’t know who you are!”

Kevin left their bedroom to sleep in the guestroom as everything looked completely hopeless. Astrid would barely speak to him in the days that followed. When she did, it wasn’t good.

She told Kevin that she would stay married to him in name only, simply because of their young kids.

“This is not a marriage of love. I’m just doing this out of practical reasons,” Astrid explained.

“That really was the lowest point of my life,” said Kevin. “My wife was extremely angry, extremely disappointed, she was very cold. It was as if our marriage was over at that time.”

Astrid forced Kevin to disclose his sin to her brother, his parents, and his sister.

“It was all very difficult,” said Kevin. “After that, basically five months where it was very cold at home. That was the time that Jesus really showed up.”

For twenty-five years since he had become a Christian in Europe, Kevin had struggled with this sin.

“It hung as a glue over my relationship with Jesus. It was always there. Even in my best times with Jesus, it was always like, ‘But there is this sin. But there is this sin.’ So, it was never a full relationship of realizing that Jesus loves me. It was always very transactional, like ‘God, I’m going to get rid of this sin and then you’re going to love me.’”

Kevin prayed to God over and over again, pleading for help: “I don’t know what to do anymore, this is it. I’m forty years old, my marriage is a mess. I’m not the guy I’m pretending to be. This guy that has it all together. This guy that has a good job and a good family life and two beautiful kids. This is not real. I’ve caused this and I’m calling on you now. You are my last hope. I don’t know how to fix this. I can’t fix this. Help me.”

God heard and began to answer Kevin’s call for help.

“I experienced a freedom and a love that I’d never experienced before,” said Kevin. He would go for long walks in the evenings because of how hopeless things were at home. He’d spend time in the mornings and evenings

with the Lord, listening to the Bible on audio while he was walking. “I experienced this assurance that God loves me. That was not just eye opening, but a love I experienced. I really experienced God’s grace. My sin was undeniable. But here was Jesus, saying ‘I’ll take him. I want him.’”

Kevin went to a pastor for guidance, who referred him to Men’s Group.

“That was the start of recovery. I thought it was the end: the end of my marriage, everything that I’d built up to this time, it was done. But, in reality, it was the beginning. That was when God really changed things around.”

God used the weekly Men’s Group meetings and counselling sessions with Astrid to help Kevin understand the underlying issues that led to his sin and why it was so difficult for him to disclose.

“It was an inability to accept that I was a sinner and always wanting to portray an image and my pride. A drive to achieve, to earn love, rather than accepting that I’m a sinner and I have grace.”

Kevin’s marriage, his role as a father, his work and how he does life have all changed.

“There’s a ‘before’ and ‘after’ for me, there really is,” said Kevin, “We are now almost four years further and God has done a lot in my life, in my marriage. Our marriage has never been better. Doesn’t mean that we’re all out of the woods. We’re very thankful. There are still things and we’re going through that, but the foundation of our marriage is there. There’s a real transparency. She loves me and there is grace.”

“I also got a bunch of friends for life,” said Kevin, talking about his men’s group brothers like Dan, Ryan, Paul, Alex, and so many others. “That’s another blessing.”

“But the biggest blessing is Jesus. I’ve tasted a joy that nothing else can fulfill. That is the foundation now. There’s nothing that is as good as Jesus. My time with him, his presence in my life. That has been the single most important thing that has changed everything in my life. It’s a before and after.”

“I urge guys sitting in churches every Sunday in that shame and guilt: tell someone. God will do the rest and take over and change your life. That’s what he’s doing and it’s glorious. Yes, it will be tough – but it is so worth it.”

## CHAPTER 7

# WELCOME TO BOOTCAMP!

*“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.”*

Hebrews 12:1

If you’ve been inspired by the testimonies that you’ve read and want to experience that same freedom from sexual sin and a new life in Jesus Christ, be encouraged.

Whether you’re just getting started in your recovery journey, feeling stuck in it or looking for resources to help men in your church or life, you’re at the right place.

We’ve put together the next seven chapters as a seven-week course that you can do on your own, but ideally with a small group of other men. It covers the foundational practical steps and spiritual disciplines we see in the Bible that have been helpful for countless men.

We hope that it helps you on your journey towards freedom through Jesus from sexual sin and addiction.

If what you’ve been trying just isn’t working, you owe it to yourself, your family and loved ones to give it a try.

## Task #1: Dust off that Bible

*"Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path."*

Psalm 119:105

Over 5 billion copies make it by far and away the best-selling book of all time. But have you read it?

Many people haven't read the entire Bible, some despite attending church their entire lives and thinking of themselves as Christians.

The Bible is our roadmap for life and God will speak to you powerfully through it during your recovery in ways that will surprise you.

Chances are you have at least one Bible in your house. Start reading it tomorrow on Day 1. If it is an older translation like a King James Version (KJV) or New King James Version (NKJV) use it for now and keep it, but order a new translation **now** from your favourite bookstore. Don't move on to the next task until you do.

We recommend getting a modern translation that will be easier to read and understand like the New International Version (NIV) or English Standard Version (ESV) or New Living Translation (NLT).

Finally, we strongly recommend getting and reading a hardcopy of the Bible - not a digital version (although those are good to have too). We are going to be spending less and less time staring at screens and that includes our "pocket idols" (aka smartphone).

## Task #2: Get a Journal

*“Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm.”*

Deuteronomy 5:15a

*Remember* that you were slaves. Once set free, God wanted the Israelites to remember. Moses recorded their journey of deliverance and they were told to remember and never forget what the Lord had done for them.

It is God's will that you be free from sexual immorality (1 Thessalonians 4:3). It's what we've experienced and seen in many men who put their trust in him, taking radical steps to follow him and leave their past life behind. God told the Israelites to always remember that he had set them free of slavery – when they forgot they grew discouraged and rebellious.

You're preparing to embark on a journey - a new chapter of your life. Get a journal (a dollar store coil notebook with lines in it is just fine) and a few pens so that you can record what you experience and learn along the way.

Journaling is something we'll talk about more, but for now just get one and start writing in it every day and keep it somewhere private. It's just for you to record your thoughts, feelings, and insights as you walk this road to freedom.

If you stay on this path, years from now, you will have a stack of well-worn journals filled with remembrance of the miracles and moments that God stepped into your life.

### **Task #3: Set Your Alarm**

*“Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.”*

Mark 1:35

If Jesus got up early to spend time with the Father, how much more do we need to make intentional time to be alone with God a priority? This is true for all of us, even if you have young children.

Think of the thousands and thousands of hours we have wasted on our sin and addiction. It's time to set your alarm.

What time should you set your alarm for? We recommend being out of bed at least one hour before you normally would get up so you can spend that hour with the Lord (some call this "tithing our time" - the first waking hour belongs to the Lord). We'll talk in Week 1 about what you'll do with that hour.

If you're a "snoozer", be sure to get up earlier to account for that too. Some guys even buy an "old fashioned" alarm clock to wake them up so that they can keep their devices out of their bedrooms.

What if you get tired later in the day? No worries. Jesus was apparently ahead of the curve, as usual, with taking power naps and you can take a 15-20 minute power nap. He even slept through storms (Matthew 8:24).

## Task #4: Get Some Shut Eye

*"In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone,  
LORD, make me dwell in safety."*

Psalm 4:8

The medical geniuses at Harvard endorse 7-9 hours of sleep per night on average. Dr. Anthony L. Komaroff explains "we've learned that during sleep, waste material is flushed out of our brains". How much sleep are you getting?

For some of us 4-5 hours per night or even less was common during our addiction. We stayed up late and acted out while our wives slept. Then woke up sleep deprived, cranky, anxious and defensive. Or woke up early, cutting our sleep short to pursue our "secret" sin.

As we covered above, you're going to be up earlier than normal (1 hour before when you usually get up to make time for being with God). Do the math and shoot for 8 hours of sleep.

So, if you usually get up at 7 am, tomorrow you're up at 6 am spending the first hour with the Lord. To get 8 hours of sleep, bedtime is 10 pm at the latest. This may take some getting used to. But your body will adjust.

Physical exercise during the day will help immensely too with getting your sleep under control. If, after a couple weeks, sleep continues to be an issue, we recommend talking to your group, doctor and/or counsellor about it.

## Summary – Getting Started

*“Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.”*

Isaiah 55:6-7

You're here because what you've been trying isn't working. We know. We tried too. Commit to doing something different - something that has worked for other guys just like you to finally get free. These are the first small steps on your road to freedom and a new life in Christ.

**1) Bible:** Get your hardcopy Bible out for tomorrow morning – use whatever version you have; order a modern translation now (e.g. ESV, NIV) if you don't have one.

**2) Alarm:** Set your alarm so that you will be out of bed at least 1 hour before usual

**3) Bed:** Go to bed around 8 hours before you set your alarm to wake you up

**Bootcamp begins tomorrow, dark and early!**

CHAPTER 8

## WEEK 1 – A NEW WAY OF LIFE

Welcome to Week 1 of Bootcamp. Let's get started.

### Task #1: Give Up

Give up. Probably not what you expected to hear on your first day. And this isn't some ploy to tell you to "give up" so that you will be emboldened to not give up. We actually need you to give up.

Give up "trying harder" to not sin.

Give up thinking you will never be able to stop.

Give up trying to do it alone.

Give up thinking you can deliver yourself.

Give up shaming yourself and blaming others.

Give up living in secrecy and isolation over this area of your life.

We've got some good news and some bad news for you. It's the same news actually. No matter how hard you try, you cannot stop your addictive behaviour. That's actually the definition of an addiction – continuing to do something despite wanting to stop doing it.

There's a good reason that the first step in traditional recovery programs is giving up: *"We admitted we were*

*powerless over [our addiction]— that our lives had become unmanageable.” (Alcoholics Anonymous)*

Trying harder to not sin doesn't work. The Apostle Paul wrote about this almost 2,000 years ago when he said:

*“For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing.”*

Romans 7:18b-19

That's the bad news. But it is also the good news. It means we get to stop carrying the burden of trying to dig ourselves out of the pit we are in. Someone in a pit with a shovel can only dig themselves deeper. You are in a pit and you need rescuing. You need a Savior and someone to follow.

*“You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.”*

Romans 5:6

*“It does not, therefore, depend on human desire or effort, but on God's mercy.”*

Romans 9:16

## Task #2: Morning Prayer

Every morning from this day on, spend time in quiet solitude with God as the very first thing you do in the morning. Before checking your phone, before making coffee, before brushing your teeth. First thing.

You may have prayed your whole life or only during mealtimes or when you wanted something from God.

Prayer is an integral part of our relationship with God. Jesus explained how we are to pray to the Father:

*“But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.”*

Matthew 6:6-8

Throughout the Bible we see people praying on their knees and falling down before God:

*“When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, ‘Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!’”*

Luke 5:8

Praying on our knees puts us in a physical posture of humility and submission to our creator. Quieting our hearts before him.

Beginning our prayers with praise and thanksgiving for what God has done sets our hearts and minds in the

right place. Petitioning or asking God is part of prayer. So is sharing our true feelings with him, no matter how difficult they are.

Thanking God for who he is and expressing love to him for his character and attributes and promises are also part of Biblical prayer. There's no emotion too strong for God to hear. As you read the Psalms and Job you'll see people expressing all kinds of difficult emotions to God.

The more we pray honestly and consistently, the deeper our relationship with God will become.

Each morning, thank the Lord if you stayed clean the night before (since it's only by his grace) or confess to him if it wasn't. Ask him to keep you clean for the day ahead.

### **Task #3: Meditation**

Christian meditation is not about emptying your mind of all thoughts. Rather, it is focussing your mind on God, his attributes, character, the images we see of him in the Bible, his promises, and his love for us.

*"...Be still, and know that I am God..."*

Psalm 46:10

Being still before God, we begin to let go of trying to control and hold our lives together. We give up trying to fix ourselves or the problems or people around us. We come as children before our Father.

Meditation is also a time we can ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the sin in our life and the improper motives we have even when doing things that are good.

*“Tremble and do not sin; when you are on your beds, search your hearts and be silent.”*

Psalm 4:4

This kind of silent, quiet time for God to speak into our hearts means we need to intentionally make time and space for him to do so.

Don't be discouraged if your mind starts to wander off to other things like the day ahead. Just gently come back to thinking about God and ask him to reveal to you anything that he has for you that morning.

Remember, if you feel God is sharing something with you to test it against what he has already said in the Bible because God doesn't contradict himself. You can also seek the counsel of another Christian, elder, or pastor in your church.

Sometimes our times of meditation may seem like we are simply alone with our thoughts. That's okay. Sin disrupts our relationship with God, but he still loves us and wants us to return to him.

Continue to seek him, day after day.

*“And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”*

Hebrews 11:6

## Task #4: Reading God's Word

Less than half of professing Christians in the United States say that reading the Bible is an essential part of being a Christian for them.

Many of us who claim to be, or think of ourselves as, Christians have never read the foundational religious text that is the basis for our faith. And the Bible is more than that – it's the very word of God. It is an astounding realization if we step back and think about it.

Reading the Bible out of a sense of duty, shame or guilt is not going to work. It's not why we read the Bible.

Why read the Bible? Because it is the word of God and it is the most direct and clear way to know with certainty what God is saying to you today, right here, right now.

Can we trust the historical reliability of the Bible? If this is something you've asked, that's good. You may be surprised to find the wealth of evidence supporting it. A good starting point is reading [\*The Case for Christ\*](#) or watch the film it's based on by the same name.

How do we read the Bible? There are many plans out there. The easiest is to simply start reading the New Testament, beginning in the book of Matthew. Once you're done reading all the books that follow up to and including Revelation, do another pass or two of the New Testament before diving into the Old Testament.

Depending on your church background, you might be used to Bible reading plans like "Read the Bible in a Year" or something similar. If you are a slow reader, that might be stressful keeping up with the plan. This is another performance-based trap we can fall into. Instead, perhaps

plan to read the Bible for a set amount of time each day and don't worry about how much or how little you read. Just be consistent about spending quality quiet time with Jesus reading the Bible each day.

*"You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me"*

John 5:39

The first time reading the Bible, you can read through it more quickly to get the basic facts, teachings, and ideas in your mind. Then read it more slowly (e.g. reading just a chapter or even part of a chapter each day multiple times in one sitting).

Expect God to reveal things to you. Don't be afraid to get a pencil or ballpoint pen to write notes or underline passages in the margins. You'll be incredibly surprised not only with what you read but how it will begin to change your heart if you read the Bible to know and deepen your relationship with God. After all, the Bible is God's love letter to you as your Father.

*"Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says."*

James 1:21-22

*“For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”*

Hebrews 4:12

## **Task #5: Evening Routine**

We need to talk about screens. They’re a sleep killer and a gateway to temptation.

The National Sleep Foundation explains: *“The blue light emitted by screens on cell phones, computers, tablets, and televisions restrain the production of melatonin, the hormone that controls your sleep/wake cycle or circadian rhythm. Reducing melatonin makes it harder to fall and stay asleep.”*

Their advice: *“give yourself at least 30 minutes of gadget-free transition time before hitting the hay. Even better: Make your bedroom a technology-free zone.”*

Instead of “zoning out” on your screens before bed, identify one or two other healthy things you can do to help you wind down in the final 30 minutes before bed (e.g. reading, stretching, talking with your wife if you're married, listening to relaxing worship music).

Make prayer the last thing you do before going to bed. Thank the Lord for what he’s done for you that day and to keep you in his hand the next day.

Pray not just for sleep, but for rest – whether you are asleep or awake. Pray for the peace that comes from experiencing his presence and love in your heart.

*“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened,  
and I will give you rest.”*

Matthew 11:28

## **Start Writing Your Personal Recovery Plan**

This week, you’ve put in place the first building blocks of your Recovery Plan. The key is consistently doing these activities day after day, prioritizing them.

As we go through the next six weeks of Bootcamp, you will add to your plan and personalize it as you continue to grow in your recovery and walk with the Lord.

### **MY RECOVERY PLAN**

- 1) MORNING:** Prayer, Meditation & Reading the Bible
- 2) DURING THE DAY:** Journal
- 3) EVENING:** No screens 30 minutes before bed; set alarm to be up at least 1 hour before usual; get to bed around 8 hours before I need to be up; Pray before going to sleep.

We suggest creating a Word document and cut and paste the above into it, making the changes you would like to make it your own – we will be adding to it as we move forward in Bootcamp each week. Most importantly, start following it. Follow through with what you commit to.

*“Plans are established by seeking advice;  
so if you wage war, obtain guidance.”*

Proverbs 20:18

*"...Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me."*

Luke 9:23

CHAPTER 9

## WEEK 2 – GET CONNECTED

Welcome to Week 2 of Bootcamp!

### **Task #1: Follow Your Recovery Plan**

You now have a seedling of a Recovery Plan. But having a plan that you don't implement is useless. Continue to follow and build on your recovery plan in the days, weeks, months, and years ahead.

Keep track of how many days each week you follow it and, if you miss a day, be gentle with yourself but immediately get back on track. It will eventually become a new way of life and second nature, as old habits fade and new habits are formed.

Recovery from sexual sin and addiction is a long-term process, but it begins with trusting Jesus will set us free as we trust him and take steps in obedience to follow him. More on what that means specifically later.

Some of us spent decades trapped in our addiction. Not surprisingly, some experts say it can take a while (e.g. 2-5 years) to get and stay clean, so do not give up. If we don't fully commit, it will take longer and we will do more harm to ourselves, those we love and our relationship with God.

Let's be clear about one thing. Our recovery plans from sexual sin and addiction begin and end with Jesus. We don't trust in a plan, we trust in a person. He will deliver us if we trust him completely and quite literally give our lives over to him.

For a follower of Jesus or someone who is seeking him, we do at least two things every single day for our recovery.

First, we admit we are unable to do it on our own and put our trust completely on Jesus to change our hearts and lives – we daily ask for his forgiveness, strength, mercy, grace, and power.

Second, we take decisive and concrete steps to turn away from our sin and towards God – what is known as “repentance”, which is what Jesus calls us all to in his very first recorded one-sentence sermon:

*“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”*

Matthew 3:2

Recovery from sexual sin and addiction is about far more than simply “not sinning”. It is about having a new life in Christ. In fact, that's what one of us named our recovery plan: *“My New Life in Christ”*.

Spend some time reading, re-reading, and thinking about the passage below from Ephesians, where the Apostle Paul talks about this transition from being dead in our sins to alive in Jesus, and how and why God does it:

*“As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you*

*followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.*

*All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.*

*But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.*

*And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.*

*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”*

Ephesians 2:1-10

## Task #2: Get into a Group

*“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.”*

James 5:16

Imagine someone enlisting to be a soldier and not showing up for the first day of basic training with their comrades, but instead insisting they could train alone at the home gym in their basement. They'd read books off Amazon on military strategy and watch war documentaries. Unfit for service is what we'd say.

Or imagine signing up to join a football, hockey, cricket, or rugby team and then never showing up for team practices, but trying to read books about these sports and watching videos of people playing them. Good luck with that on game day. You wouldn't be allowed to take to the field or rink. Un-coachable is what we'd say.

You can't fight sexual sin and addiction alone. You've tried. So have we. It doesn't work.

We know firsthand that no one wants to tell someone else about their secret sin and admit their powerlessness over it.

Shame. Pride. Fear. Anxiety. These are all used to enslave us and keep us isolated and alone. When we are alone, we will fail.

Despite being told this again and again, we still tried to do it alone. Trying to recover alone is an oxymoron. It is futile and, even worse, delays our recovery and we risk

falling deeper and deeper into our sin, causing devastating consequences to those we love because our pride and shame is more important than trusting God, getting well, and protecting our loved ones.

It's time to reach out, connect and get help. We can help you do that today. But you have to make the decision. There is hope, no matter how far you have gone, no matter what you have done or what has been done to you.

Try to have at least one in-person group for a more personal connection to be made and to know people locally. If you are already in one group, consider joining another one. Many guys in recovery find that a once-a-week group isn't enough, especially early in their recovery.

Plug into a group right now. If your church doesn't have a group yet, we have free, confidential, online groups for you to join right now: [www.mensgroup.ca](http://www.mensgroup.ca)

**WARNING**

**Don't go ahead any further with Bootcamp until you join a group.**

**Task #3: Daily Check-In Calls**

*"If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up."*

Ecclesiastes 4:10

It is often said that *"the opposite of addiction is connection."* Addiction isolates us, so a key part of recovery is connecting with others who know us fully and we know fully.

Being part of a recovery community that is comprised of people seeking Jesus has been incredibly powerful for many guys in getting free from sexual sin and addiction.

Going to groups at least once a week (and ideally more) is a crucial part of getting into, and staying in, recovery. But on the other days, you don't want to be dealing with life alone. Also, developing deeper relationships and friendships that are mutually supportive with Christian brothers is part of being a follower of Jesus and is life-giving and a wonderful part of being adopted into the family of God.

We recommend having a one-on-one call every day with someone who you can openly and totally honestly share how you are doing in your recovery journey, confess sin, encourage each other, and pray for each other. You can make a specific commitment to change something in the week ahead.

No matter where you're at on your recovery journey, daily calls with different guys will be helpful. Having a call with someone who isn't as far along, you will be able to share what you've learned and what has worked for you.

Having a call with someone who is at a similar stage of recovery as you will help you be able to relate to someone more directly in your current challenges. Having a call with someone who is farther along than you in your recovery, you can learn from their experience and insights.

Where do you find people like this?

In your group(s). But you have to ask them. Be clear and specific: *"I'm trying to set up some regular daily check-*

*ins and was wondering if you would be interested in doing one with me? What days/times would work for you?"*

You'll either get a "yes", and start up right away. Or, you might get a "no" because the other guy is already over-committed. Don't take it personally, just ask another guy.

Making daily calls is also about coming into the light and living in the light, which has a remarkable effect in confronting sin. It will significantly contribute to your recovery as you seek the Lord together every week on these one-on-one calls. Once you know each other, these calls can be just 10-15 minutes, so they are manageable.

For some ideas on how to do check-ins, the [FASTI check-in](#) model quickly covers your Feelings, Activities in Recovery, Sobriety Statement or Slip Report, Threats, and Tools you used. It's also a good idea to talk about accountability around things like time, money and upcoming travel as they may affect your recovery.

#### **Task #4: Attend a Local Church**

*"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."*

Hebrews 10:24-25

Being part of a local church is an important part of following Jesus. For some of us, attending church is something that we have done for all or most of our lives.

We may have heard sermons that convicted or encouraged us, confessed sin before communion, or made commitments to God on Sunday only to end up back in sin on Monday or later that week. But attending church will take on a freshness and greater joy as you begin walking in freedom in Jesus Christ.

Being a follower of Jesus is not only about attending church, but that is an important part of it. As you grow in your relationship with Jesus, your time on Sundays will not be the only day you spend time reading the Bible, praying, worshipping God or being together with other believers. These instead are daily practices that you're doing as part of your recovery plan – your new life in Christ.

## **Update Your Recovery Plan**

### **WARNING**

**Do not attempt to do this alone or have a “secret” recovery.**

**It is hazardous to your recovery.**

**While it may seem to “work” for a bit, it is definitely not sustainable. Many of us tried, only to end up crashing harder and suffering worse consequences. Be sure at least one mature Christian knows what you’re dealing with so there’s no secrets, and share your recovery plan with them.**

If you’re not yet part of a group, don't go ahead to Week 3 until you have [contacted us](#) to join one. Once you have, you can update your recovery plan. Here’s the template again for you to adapt:

## MY RECOVERY PLAN

- 1) MORNING:** Prayer, Meditation & Reading the Bible
- 2) DURING THE DAY:** Journal; Daily Check-In Call
- 3) EVENING:** No screens 30 minutes before bed; set alarm to be up at least 1 hour before usual; get to bed around 8 hours before I need to be up; Pray before going to sleep.
- 4) WEEKLY:** Attend Men's Group(s); Attend Church

Everyone has heard of John 3:16, but read what comes after it about living in the light of Jesus, which is what this week is all about:

*“This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.*

*Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed.*

*But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.”*

John 3:19-21

## CHAPTER 10

# WEEK 3 – THE BATTLE FOR YOUR HEART & MIND

Welcome to Week 3 of Bootcamp!

### Task #1: Follow Your Recovery Plan

Okay, we're not going to keep mentioning this every time. But we have to make the point one more time: Follow your recovery plan. Whether it's been a good day or a bad day, a clean week or a sinful week.

Mediate and pray the passages below. Write them in your journal and what God reveals to you. Come back to them and memorize them over the next week or so.

*“Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.*

*When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.”*

James 1:12-15

*“...A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.”*

Galatians 6:7-8

Here are a couple of questions to consider and write about in your journal:

What are ways that I am sowing to please my flesh?

What ways that I am sowing to please the Spirit?

## **Task #2: What does it mean to be clean?**

What does it mean to be clean of sexual sin?

We follow Jesus’ teachings - and we will explain why it is crucial to have this as our standard:

*“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”*

Matthew 5:27-28

A clean day, week, month or year means no sexual fantasy, masturbation, looking at lustful images, pornography, sex chats and webcams, visiting sexual establishments, or any other sexual activity outside of marriage between one man and one woman.

We don’t consider it an unclean week if you had a sexual dream (because you’re unconscious), but it would

be if you dwelled on it afterward or acted out while awake. If in doubt, pray about it and ask a leader what they think.

Anything that we become addicted to is sinful because it enslaves us. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6:12: *"I will not be mastered by anything"*. As Steve Gallagher explains in [\*At the Altar of Sexual Idolatry\*](#), it is virtually impossible for any length of time to masturbate without having lustful thoughts. For many guys with sexual addictions, habitual masturbation was a big part of how it began.

Like all addictions, sexual addiction is progressive. While it may take years or decades, if unaddressed, it will get worse. You will cross lines you never thought possible and, once crossed, they are much easier to cross again.

The Bible is clear and incisive in how it explains the steps that lead us to sin:

*"but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death."*

James 1:14-15

## **Q&A: What does it mean to “look lustfully” in Matthew 5:28?**

As followers of Jesus, we don't set the standards to live by – he does. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus explains that God's standards for sexual purity go beyond our conduct, to also include our hearts and minds.

The wording in the original Greek for “to lust after” is ἐπιθυμῆσαι (*epithymēsai*), which means to “to set the heart upon, i.e. Long for”. (*Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance*)

Biblical commentary gives some further helpful elaboration. “It is not the passing glance, not even the momentary impulse of desire, but the continued gaze by which the impulse is deliberately cherished till it becomes a passion.” (*Ellicott’s Commentary for English Readers*)

Jesus is speaking of “the desire not involuntary or momentary, but cherished with longing” (*Expositor’s Greek Testament*). It’s important to note that being tempted to lust is not sinful, but dwelling on, or engaging with, lustful thoughts is sinful.

“Jesus is *not* saying that all attraction is immediately sinful. The phrase used in Greek here is *pros to epithymēsai autēn*. This strongly implies something deliberate: an intentional, considered choice. ‘Noticing’ that someone is attractive is not a sin; looking with sexual intent, fantasizing, or leering—what in English might be called ‘ogling’—certainly is. This phrase implies someone engaging their imagination in lust.” (BibleRef)

In modern language, looking lustfully would therefore include sexual fantasy, intentionally “checking out” someone, leering, ogling, etc.

If you’re in doubt about whether what you’ve done is sinful after reading God’s word and reliable interpretations of it, ask him in prayer to search you and your heart (Psalm 139:23) to show you whether it was sinful, whether you need to ask his forgiveness and confess and repent of it.

### **Task #3: Living according to the flesh or the Spirit?**

We've seen how the battle against sexual sin begins with our thoughts. Lustful thoughts will grow eventually to lustful actions, leading to death.

Romans 8 further explains that what we "set our minds on" reveals whether we are living according to the flesh (our sinful nature) or according to the Spirit:

*"Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.*

*The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.*

*The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.*

*You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ."*

Romans 8:5-9

This passage explains why simply "trying harder" not to sin doesn't work. If we are living according to the flesh then we cannot please God or submit to his law. It isn't possible.

*“For it is from within, out of a person’s heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and defile a person.”*

Mark 7:22-23

Getting clean of sexual sin and addiction isn't about starting by changing outward behaviour. It is about inward transformation of our heart as we live in accordance with the Spirit.

Those who live according to the Spirit will still be tempted (even Jesus was, but didn't sin), but they do not have their minds set on the desires of the flesh.

*“Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”*

Galatians 5:24

How then do we live in accordance with the Spirit? Faith in Jesus Christ and repentance – taking decisive steps to turn away from our sin and towards God. We are also told in Luke 11:13 to ask the Father to give us the Holy Spirit. Daily quiet time with the Lord, reading God's word, worshipping him, fasting, and serving are all disciplines to help us walk in the Spirit.

Questions to consider, pray over, and journal about:

- Can I honestly say my life is defined by living according to the flesh or the Spirit?
- In what ways is my mind set on the desires of the flesh?

- In what ways is my mind set on the desires of the Spirit?
- What steps do I need to take to repent of my sexual sin: (a) to decisively turn away from it and (b) to turn towards God?

#### **Task #4: “RAW” - Renounce, Announce, Worship**

*“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”*

Romans 12:2a

Living according to the Spirit and experiencing the transformation of our minds through Jesus Christ is a mysterious, miraculous process. This transformation is fostered through daily time spent in solitude with God in prayer, meditation and reading his Word.

We have also found there are many other important tools and spiritual disciplines that the Bible describes for followers of Jesus that help us walk closely with him and resist the temptations that will still come.

We talked before about how the battle against sexual sin begins with our thoughts. How do we do battle there?

*“...we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”*

2 Corinthians 10:5

We’re going to be sharing many tools that have been incredibly helpful at times in our battle against sexual sin. Learn them, try them, and practice them. Add them to your recovery plan. None of them alone is a “silver bullet”

but all are helpful as decisive steps we take away from our sin.

“RAW” is a go-to tool we use the split-second we are tempted or have a lustful or ungodly thought.

**“RAW”: Renounce, Announce, Worship**

No! I **Renounce** that thought, in Jesus’ name.

I **Announce** that I belong to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Lord Jesus, I choose to **Worship** you.

*[Then we sing the doxology]*

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise Him all creatures here below. Praise him above ye heavenly host. Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.*

Early in your recovery you may have to do RAW many, many times a day. We also recommend calling someone in your group when you're tempted and it is not immediately going away with using RAW, changing your physical location, calling out to the Lord for deliverance, reciting scripture, etc.

It is crucial to understand that whenever we are tempted we can resist. God always gives us an escape:

*“No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.”*

1 Corinthians 10:13

## Task #5: Memorizing God's Word

*"I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you."*

Psalm 119:11

Many of us memorized scripture in Sunday school for stickers or treats. Not the best motive. Rote memorization isn't what we're talking about here. We're talking about writing the very word of God on our hearts and dwelling on what it means.

For years or decades, we've filled our minds with garbage. Now, we need to fill our minds with God's word. When you attend Men's Group, reciting the scripture you've memorized is how we start each meeting, so this isn't something extra to do.

There is power in God's word. Writing it on our hearts does something significant.

Ephesians 6:17 calls the word of God "the sword of the Spirit". You can use it when you're tempted after you RAW the temptation. Once you memorize longer passages, you can use those, filling your mind with godly thoughts to wash out the filth tempting you.

What are some tips for how to memorize scripture?

Everyone seems to find their own system. Here are a few ideas to try out. Read the verse one sentence at a time ten times, then recite that sentence with your eyes closed ten times, then move onto the next sentence doing the same thing, working through the verse. Make your verse your home screen on your phone or laptop. Write your verse(s) on an index card/piece of paper and go for a walk

while reading and reciting it aloud. Listening to your verse(s) on a Bible app again and again. There's no one way to do it, just do it.

How do you decide which verses to memorize?

There are a ton of verses we've mentioned in this bootcamp. Each of them are powerful and directly speak to the issues you're confronting in your life and will aid you in your new life with Christ. Start with them and any other passages that God speaks to you through as you are reading his word each day.

## **Task #6: Worship & Praise**

*"About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them."*

Acts 16:25

No matter how difficult our circumstances, we can always lift our voices to praise God. It doesn't matter if you don't think you can sing – God is your father and every father loves when his children sing, no matter how off-key.

There are well over a hundred verses about singing praise to the Lord in the Bible for a reason. Above all it is to give God glory and thanks for what he has done for us.

Many guys like to get a Christian music playlist going and listen to it while commuting, doing chores, exercising, etc. Rather than just listen passively, sing along, pray the lyrics, raise your hands – something to give praise and worship to the Lord. It will change the atmosphere around

you, soften your heart, and set your mind above your daily worries on what really matters.

There is every kind of Christian music genre so find something you like and connect with God through.

*“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”*

Colossians 3:16

### **Task #7: Gratitude**

*“Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.”*

Psalm 100:4

Self-pity and focussing on the negatives in our life leads to us taking a dim view of reality. It makes us more vulnerable to acting out to numb or self-medicate the pain or stress in our lives.

Instead, by intentionally focussing every single day on what we're grateful for – even in the seemingly worst circumstances – we have a much different outlook.

One of the men's group's leaders talks often about how writing in his journal every day about what he is grateful for has been a huge part of his recovery. It is also giving thanks and glory to God for all the good things he has done for us.

You can also pray entire prayers of gratitude. Not asking God for anything, just thanking him for what he has done for you, who he is, and for his creation and promises.

We don't want to be like the nine lepers Jesus healed who never bothered to thank him.

*"Jesus asked, 'Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?' Then he said to him, 'Rise and go; your faith has made you well.'"*

Luke 17:17-19

## Update Your Recovery Plan

Congratulations on making it this far! It's time again to update your recovery plan.

### MY RECOVERY PLAN

- 1) MORNING:** Prayer, Meditation & Reading the Bible
- 2) DURING THE DAY:** Journal; Daily Check-In Call; Worship and Praise
- 3) EVENING:** No screens 30 minutes before bed; set alarm to be up at least 1 hour before usual; get to bed around 8 hours before I need to be up; Pray before going to sleep
- 4) WEEKLY:** Attend Men's Group(s); Attend Church; Memorize Scripture
- 5) TOOLS:** "RAW": Renounce, Announce, Worship

CHAPTER 11

## WEEK 4 – BOUNDARIES

Welcome to Week 4 of Bootcamp!

### **Task #1: What are boundaries in recovery?**

*“Moses said to the Lord, ‘The people cannot come up Mount Sinai, because you yourself warned us, ‘Put limits around the mountain and set it apart as holy.’”*

Exodus 19:23

Boundaries are clear lines that mark limits – they divide one thing from another. For example, a property boundary is a line that demarcates where you can legally walk on a public sidewalk from where you are illegally trespassing on someone else’s property. Where you can build your house or install a fence and where you cannot. When boundaries are crossed, there are consequences.

As God is creator of the universe and everything in it, he sets out the boundaries. He sets the limits of what is allowable and what isn’t. As his creation, we don’t get to decide what’s acceptable to him or not. To break through the limits he’s set for us is to rebel against him and sin. And that sin carries both earthly and eternal consequences.

Living in sexual sin and addiction, we have broken boundaries that God has clearly set out that we were not to transgress.

A starting point to thinking about setting boundaries in recovery is to identify all of the things you have done sexually that are outside the limits of what God allows.

What are those limits? The Bible is clear that sex, including our actions and thoughts, is only intended between a husband and wife in marriage.

Start a section in your recovery plan called “Boundaries” and begin to list boundaries that God has set that you are committed to obeying moving forward. This will likely include some general boundaries but also some that are specific to your particular areas of sexual sins and patterns of sinful behaviours and thoughts.

*“The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.”*

Galatians 5:19-21

## **Task #2: Expanding your boundaries to protect your recovery**

*“Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”*

1 Peter 5:8

Now that you have developed a set of “inner circle” boundaries as they are sometimes called (those that are at the core of your addictive or sinful behaviour), it’s time to think about what behaviours, situations, people, or thoughts can lead you towards breaking those inner circle boundaries. In many cases, the things in this second layer of boundaries are not sinful actions in and of themselves but rather things that you know, from experience, put you into a vulnerable situation. Add these to your list of boundaries (these are sometimes called your “middle circle” boundaries).

Think of these middle circle boundaries as setting fences or walls further and further away from the inner circle boundaries you are committed to not breaking. By expanding your boundaries outward, you create trip-wires to keep you alert to the enemy's approach. Let’s talk about a few specific examples.

For most guys, unrestricted Internet access has been a major gateway for sexual sin. So, in addition to having an inner circle boundary not to look at pornography or inappropriate images, they also put up a middle circle boundary such as “no unrestricted Internet access (e.g. install filtering/accountability software on all devices such as Covenant Eyes)”. Or they may take it a step further and make their phone a “dumb phone” (e.g. no access to the Internet at all, remove social media apps, Youtube, etc.). And another boundary not to “test” or circumvent those safeguards.

Another boundary that one of the guys in our group has found really helpful on top of the measures we've

already covered is a “no aimless Internet browsing” aka scrolling (i.e. he only goes on the Internet for specific legitimate purposes and then gets offline, no browsing aimlessly at all). Other men have a boundary like “no phones/computers in bedrooms or bathrooms – only in public areas of their homes”.

For many guys, social media has been a big part of their sexual sinning, so they put a boundary about “no social media” or only in the presence of their wife or a friend.

For other guys, alcohol or drugs have been a part of their addiction or, at times, contributed to their sexually “acting out”. The Bible also identifies drunkenness as a sin. You can add a boundary to your recovery plan about abstaining from substances.

The above examples are just a few of the kinds of things to think about. It’s important that you develop a set of boundaries that are directed at your particular vulnerabilities and ways of acting out. This varies between men.

We encourage you to share your list of boundaries with a few guys in your men's group, both for accountability and to learn from each other. Be sure to add boundaries to your recovery plan that they have that you think would help you. Print off your recovery plan so you can regularly review your boundaries and so that they become second nature.

Now is also the time, if you haven't done so, to “clean house”! Get rid of any pornography of any kind and anything else that you have used to sexually sin.

### **Task #3: 24-hour “tell policy”**

*“This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God”*

John 3:19-21

What do you do if you break a boundary? The first thing is to have a “24-hour tell policy” where you commit to confessing it to God, telling your wife/fiancé/girlfriend (if you have one), and a man in your recovery group within 24-hours.

Also report it at your weekly meeting. The longer you wait, the harder it gets and more vulnerable you will be to further temptation, so do it right away. Rip the band-aid off.

Doing this is a natural consequence that none of us wants to do, but will help us in our recovery. It breaks the shame, isolation and secrecy of our sin. It reaffirms the boundaries we’ve set, and is an opportunity to learn and grow.

There’s a saying in recovery that “you’re only as sick as your secrets”. King David knew this well as he eventually had to publicly acknowledge his adultery with Bathsheba. Until that happened, he was in misery:

*“When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord.’ And you forgave the guilt of my sin.”*

Psalm 32:3-5

#### **Task #4: Boundaries about changing boundaries**

*“Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.”*

Revelation 2:5

Sometimes we get a temptation to “change” (i.e. weaken or reduce) the boundaries that we have set. There may be legitimate reasons for doing so, but this should always be approached with extreme caution.

Dr. Doug Weiss recommends you have a boundary about changing boundaries: only change a boundary after prayer, a certain period of time considering the risks/advantages, and after consulting beforehand with your wife/fiancé/girlfriend (if you have one), and a leader in your recovery group.

If your boundaries have been helping you stay clean and you've been experiencing sustained periods of clean time, it is not the time to go weakening your boundaries. In fact, guys in long-term recovery are always looking for

ways to strengthen their recovery. Their boundaries become stronger – not weaker – over time.

## **Task #5: Locking-down your devices**

*“Keep to a path far from her, do not go near the door of her house”*

Proverbs 5:8

If we were a group of men in recovery from alcohol, we wouldn't long be able to show up to group and explain that we'd relapsed once again after drinking alcohol from our fully-stocked bar fridge. If we didn't come to our senses of doing this week after week, month after month, someone would hopefully pull us aside and ask: “Hey, if you're committed to quitting drinking, why do you still have a fully-stocked bar fridge in your home?”

Yet that is just what we are doing if we have any unfiltered, unaccountable devices in our home and are seeking freedom from sexual sin and addiction (e.g. smartphones, gaming systems, tablets, laptops, desktop computers, smart TVs, etc).

This task is about locking-down your devices – getting rid of the equivalent of that fully-stocked bar fridge.

“What we are attempting to do is make a radical life-change that is as difficult, if not more difficult, than overcoming a drug or alcohol addiction. Rarely, if ever, will a significant change like this result from insignificant measures.”

This quote from Pure Desire Ministries is bang on. Part of repentance is taking those decisive and concrete steps to shut down every avenue for temptation. Adapted from their materials, here's a list of questions to work through in taking these steps:

- 1) List ALL devices, locations, and methods you have used to access pornography/sexually sin in the last six months:
- 2) From this list, which one is your greatest threat?
- 3) Starting with your greatest threat, what decisive step(s) do you need to take to remove access to each threat?
- 4) By what date and time are you committed to completing this action?
- 5) What obstacles or roadblocks do you anticipate facing in this decision, and what is your plan to address them?
- 6) Who will you be accountable to follow-through and stay truthful and transparent with regarding locking down your technology and keeping it locked down?

### **Update Your Recovery Plan**

Update your recovery plan based on what you've learned about boundaries. It is starting to get more robust as you're taking concrete actions to turn from your sin and towards God.

Here's the template we've been working with, but your plan should be evolving to become your own. Add in

other elements you want in there, including verses that God is using to speak to you.

### **MY RECOVERY PLAN**

- 1) MORNING:** Prayer, Meditation & Reading the Bible
- 2) DURING THE DAY:** Journal; Daily Check-In Call; Worship and Praise
- 3) EVENING:** No screens 30 minutes before bed; set alarm to be up at least 1 hour before usual; get to bed at around 8 hours before I need to be up; Pray before going to sleep
- 4) WEEKLY:** Attend Men's Group(s); Attend Church; Memorize Scripture
- 5) TOOLS:** "RAW": Renounce, Announce, Worship; Lock down devices (e.g. filtering & accountability software, "dumb phone")
- 6) BOUNDARIES:** List your "inner circle" and "middle circle" boundaries; 24-Hour Tell Policy; No boundary changes without first consulting with wife and group leader

CHAPTER 12

## WEEK 5 – SELF-CARE

Welcome to Week 5 of Bootcamp!

### Task #1: S.E.E.D.S.

*“Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.”*

1 Corinthians 6:18-20

Sin and addictive behaviour take a toll on us spiritually, physically, emotionally, and mentally. Living a new life in Christ and staying in recovery includes taking care of the body that the Lord has given you.

S.E.E.D.S. is a quick and easy acronym to remember to help you start and maintain a basic self-care plan. It stands for: **S**ocial contact, **E**ducation, **E**xercise, **D**iet and **S**leep.

Add a "self-care" section to your recovery plan with what you are going to do to nurture your spiritual, physical, emotional, and mental well-being.

*“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”*

John 10:10

## **Task #2: Social contact**

Social contact: make a part of your recovery plan meeting up with a friend at least once a month, or ideally once a week.

If you don't feel that you have any friends, start by asking a guy in your recovery group or church to go for a hike, a bite to eat, find an activity to do that you both enjoy, or taking your kids out together (if you have them) on a weekend or during the week.

## **Task #3: Education**

Education: most of what we've been sharing so far is from things we've learned from reading God's Word and a wide range of recovery materials.

Our website includes a list of resources to consider. Approach any materials prayerfully and critically. Remember that freedom isn't found in a book or program – but in a person, Jesus Christ. We always want to be growing in our recovery journey as followers of Him.

Consider joining Men's Group+ where we study God's word together and work together on our recovery journey.

## **Task #4: Exercise**

Exercise: health professionals recommend you get at least 150 minutes a week or 30 minutes a day of moderate physical exercise.

Exercise has been shown to boost your mood, boost your energy, and help you sleep. We weren't meant to live sedentary lifestyles, but to be active. When Jesus wasn't taking a boat, he walked everywhere over vast distances.

Even Paul acknowledged in 1 Timothy 4:8 *“physical training is of some value”* (and made tons of object lessons about running and even boxing). Getting regular exercise is a positive step towards a healthier lifestyle free from the chains of addiction.

Get active and start to enjoy a new life. You might start some entirely new activity or revive your interest in an old physical activity you've long since given up.

## **Task #5: Diet**

Diet: this doesn't mean going on a literal diet to lose weight. It means eating healthy. Many of us self-medicated with food, eating junk food, smoking, drinking, or using substances as unhealthy ways to numb out our feelings.

Instead, eating a healthier whole-food diet and drinking plenty of water is a much better way to fuel your body. Eating real food that God made – rather than processed junk made in factories – is going to help you feel better and get the nutrients your body needs.

## **Task #6: Sleep**

Sleep: we've talked before about how important 7-9 hours per night of sleep is for your well-being and to support your recovery. If you're not yet doing that, or struggling, take another run at making that happen.

It can be especially tough if you have young kids or are struggling with insomnia. Don't be hard on yourself if you're trying and not getting much success. Consider talking to guys about it on your daily calls and reach out for help.

## **Update Your Recovery Plan**

Sometimes we're not even aware of how much we neglect our physical, emotional and psychological well-being.

We challenge you to track how you're doing on each of the "SEEDS" every day for a week. Where are you coming up short? What steps can you commit to taking to address those aspects that are challenging? After doing that, add a self-care section to your recovery plan.

## **WEEK 6 – FEELINGS**

Welcome to Week 6 of Bootcamp!

### **Task #1: Why do we have to talk about feelings?**

Most guys don't like to talk about feelings, right? Well, that's part of the problem.

Our society taught many of us as boys that “real men don't cry” and that guys need to “buck up” when life gets tough. The most widely portrayed male emotions in popular media have traditionally been “macho” emotions like anger, rage, and revenge – or showing no emotions at all. You may have never had a positive male role model who showed emotions in a healthy way.

At the same time, addictions provide a temporary escape or “self-medication” of difficult feelings. If you've been living with an addiction for years or decades, you've become accustomed to “numbing out” difficult or painful feelings, rather than feeling them and processing them in a healthy way. Some of these things that we numb out originated in trauma or abuse suffered as a child, others are the day-to-day stresses of life that we didn't develop healthy coping mechanisms or resiliency to address.

It's been said that when we try to numb our negative feelings (consciously or most often unconsciously) we numb out the positive ones too, so we're not able to fully experience the joys of life either.

Many of us have self-medicated with addictive behaviours so immediately, so habitually, and for so long that we don't even realize we're doing it. Before getting further into recovery, we may have difficulty even identifying what our emotions actually are. If our addictions began when we were children (as is often the case with sexual addiction), we may be severely emotionally under-developed – almost as if our emotional development froze when our addiction took over.

Several guys in Men's Group have shared that early in their recovery, they could only identify a small handful of feelings. By the way, if you're asked how you're feeling and your answer is "okay", it may come as a surprise to learn that "okay" isn't a feeling at all. That's not unusual.

It is important to start to identify your emotions as you are experiencing them. "What am I feeling right now?" and "where do I feel it in my body?" is a good check-in you can do with yourself. You can also build in how you're feeling into your daily check-ins and weekly meetings.

Being in recovery means you will start to increasingly experience your feelings without self-medicating them. That can be difficult and is why you need to develop healthy ways for processing difficult (and positive) emotions. Awareness of your feelings and sharing them with others is an important aspect of staying clean.

## **Task #2:**

### **God created us to have a wide range of feelings**

*"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we*

*are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”*

Hebrews 4:15-16

God made us in his image. The Bible talks about God having a wide range of emotions, including love (1 John 4:7), compassion (Matthew 14:14), joy (Psalm 104:31), pleasure (1 King 3:10), sorrow and rejection (Isaiah 53:3), hatred (Proverbs 6:16-19), sadness (John 11:35), anger (Numbers 11:1), regret and being troubled (Genesis 6:6), and jealousy (Exodus 34:14), to name a few.

Jesus understands what it is to be a man because he was fully man, and fully God. He experienced the love of close friends like his disciple John, the sting of betrayal by Judas Iscariot, the compassion of seeing throngs of people in need and without a shepherd, the anger at the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, the physical pains of hunger while tempted in the wilderness, and the excruciating agony of being tortured and crucified.

If anyone can understand the painful and difficult feelings you experience, it is Jesus Christ. There is no other faith or religion that has dared to even imagine a god like that.

*“He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.”*

Isaiah 53:3a

### **Task #3: Bringing your emotions to God**

*“Evening, morning and noon I cry out in distress,  
and he hears my voice.”*

Psalm 55:17

Rather than going to your idols when you feel strong emotions, God wants you to come to him – no matter how big and difficult those feelings might be.

If you read the Psalms, you see King David crying out to the Lord in agony in some of them, and jumping with joy in others. Through it all, he keeps going to God with his feelings no matter what they are. Not all of David’s prayers were positive like Psalm 55:17 (above). Contrast that with Psalm 22:2 where David says the exact opposite: *“My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, but I find no rest.”*

The point is that David is coming to God regardless of how good or bad he feels, and whether he feels like God is listening to him or not. Trusting in the Lord with all our soul means trusting him with our emotional well-being and having faith that *“in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose”* (Romans 8:28).

The book of Job is an example of an upright man who lost every earthly thing and lamented it all before God, crying out to him, expressing incredible pain, sorrow, confusion and even anger. Yet, through expressing it all to God, God said Job did not sin and he blessed him greatly after enduring such trials as losing his wealth, family, and health.

On the next page is a helpful tool called the "Feelings Wheel" which helps identify feelings. Brené Brown's book *Atlas of the Heart* is also a good primer to help with this.

Some questions to think about and journal on:

- Are there emotions that I find difficult to bring to God?
- What is holding me back from expressing myself fully to God?
- Do I think it is okay to express confusion, misery or even anger to God?
- Is it easier for me to express positive or negative emotions to God? Why do I think that is?



them all. Here a link: <https://www.drdougweiss.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Feelings-list-18.pdf>

Second, each day you select a feeling at random from the list. Then you go through this exercise, filling in the blanks for yourself for that feeling:

I feel \_\_\_\_\_ when \_\_\_\_\_.

I first remember feeling \_\_\_\_\_ when \_\_\_\_\_.

Dr. Weiss recommends (and it is very good advice) that if you're doing this with someone else, the examples must **NOT** be about that person, and that the other person not provide any feedback. If you're doing it with your wife, he suggests you maintain eye contact as well.

Here are a few examples:

*I feel EXHILARATED when I go scuba diving. I first remember feeling exhilarated when my parents taught me how to ride a bike.*

*I feel REJECTED when I lose a grant application at work. I first remember feeling rejected when I didn't get invited to a birthday party of someone I thought was my friend.*

This simple exercise may seem silly at first, but it can really help you over time gain a greater and greater catalogue of feelings that you can identify as you go about your day afterwards.

For instance, initially, when you share how your day went with someone, you may only be able to identify that you feel “sad”, but in time that may become more in-depth and precise as you unpack that sadness and see that it, perhaps, is really a combination of confusion and rejection, or anxiousness and futility, or something else entirely.

You get better at identifying your feelings the more you do it, so practice lots. Sharing your feelings with those around you will help you build emotional intimacy with them over time too.

If you’re married, check out “the Dailies” as a way to build this into your time each day with your wife, including affirming each other and praying together.

Here’s a link: <https://www.drdougweiss.com/how-to-make-your-marriage-stronger-in-3-daily-steps/>

## Update Your Recovery Plan

Update your recovery plan based on what you've learned about feelings (suggested additions to consider appear underlined below):

### MY RECOVERY PLAN

**1) MORNING:** Prayer (share your feelings with God), Meditation & Reading the Bible; “The Dailies” with your wife (if married)

**2) DURING THE DAY:** Journal (identify your feelings); Daily Check-In Call (share your feelings); Worship and Praise

**3) EVENING:** No screens 30 minutes before bed; set alarm to be up at least 1 hour before usual; get to bed around 8 hours before I need to be up; Pray before going to sleep (share your feelings with God)

**4) WEEKLY:** Attend Men's Group(s); Attend Church; Memorize Scripture

**5) TOOLS:** “RAW”: Renounce, Announce, Worship; Lock down devices (e.g. filtering & accountability software, “dumb phone”)

**6) BOUNDARIES:** List your “inner circle” and “middle circle” boundaries; 24-Hour Tell Policy; No boundary changes without first consulting with wife and group leader

**7) SELF-CARE:** List your self-care plan

CHAPTER 14

## **WEEK 7 – RELAPSE PREVENTION**

Welcome to your final week of Bootcamp!

### **Task #1: Triggers and H.A.L.T.**

There are well-established patterns or templates to our “acting out” in addiction. Identifying these triggering emotions and situations, and having a plan in place for how to prevent or respond to them is important to help you strengthen your recovery.

For example, a big trigger for many guys is the end of a long work-week and a pattern of Friday night or Saturday morning sexually sinning. The feelings that are behind that need to be identified and understood. Perhaps it is a blend of exhaustion, frustration, resentment, and entitlement? That's a potent mix to fuel sexual acting out.

Gaining awareness around your triggers and then having healthy ways to instead process those emotions is important. Build in some breaks to release some of that building stress and pressure during the week with things like exercise, getting enough sleep, eating well, and sharing your feelings on your daily calls.

Additionally, you can plan an activity with your wife or a friend during the times when you would typically act

out so that you're not alone – ideally an activity that is active (e.g. not sitting in front of a screen eating junk food).

There's also probably some longer-term deeper work you need to do to understand what you're trying to get out of your job besides an income that is fueling your "need" to perform. The first step in identifying common triggers is to identify the patterns of your acting out and the feelings attached to them.

An easy acronym to remember that is talked about in recovery for emotional triggers that many people have is HALT. It stands for Hungry, Angry, Lonely, and Tired.

A combination of any of these feelings can make you more vulnerable to acting out. So being aware of when you're feeling one or more of these feelings (or the other ones you've identified for you as risky) is the first step in then responding in a healthy way that often begins with the simple step of reaching out to someone and sharing those feelings with them instead of repeating your old patterns.

## **Task #2: FASTER Scale**

The FASTER Scale is a relapse prevention tool that is part of Pure Desire Ministries' 7 Pillars of Freedom program. It is based on helping you identify the feelings and behaviours that take you down the road to relapsing. By having greater self-awareness, you can take steps to "get off" the scale. Here's a link to it:

<https://puredesire.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/faster-scale-check-in-2017-1.pdf>

At the top of the scale is where we want to live: RESTORATION (Accepting life on God's terms, with trust, vulnerability, and gratitude).

But we can start to slip down from Restoration lower and lower down the FASTER scale (Forgetting Priorities, Anxiety, Speeding Up, Ticked Off, Exhausted) until we eventually Relapse – going back to our sin and addiction despite our best intention.

By being aware that we are beginning the downward emotional and behavioural descent, we can reach out to God, our accountability/support brothers, our group, and implement some positive changes before it's too late.

Download the FASTER scale and commit to giving it a try every day for a week, or once a week for a month or two, and see if it might be a helpful addition to your recovery plan.

Check out this podcast episode (30 mins) about how the FASTER scale works and how it can be helpful in recovery.

Here's a link: <https://puredesire.org/podcast/the-faster-scale/>

### **Task #3: Relapse: What will you do differently?**

Recovery from addiction is a process. If you relapse, it's a time to reflect on what happened, why, and determine what will you do differently.

Here are some questions you can pray, discuss, and journal about to help guide you in that process if you relapse:

- How was your time with Jesus?
- Were you following your recovery plan? What parts began to slip and when?
- What were the triggers that set you up?
- Did you confess your relapse to your group/accountability person within 24 hours? If not, why?
- Why didn't you call an accountability/support person for help?
- Which "middle circle" boundaries did you ignore or violate before your relapse into your "inner circle" boundaries? Do you need any new "middle circle" boundaries?
- What lessons did you learn from this relapse?
- Is there a pattern you can see?
- What changes do you need to put in place to prevent the same thing from happening again?

Finally, never believe the lie that because you have relapsed once, you might as well just keep going. The quicker we are to bring any sin into the light, confessing it to the Lord and our brothers, the quicker it loses its power over us and the quicker we can get back on track.

### **Update Your Recovery Plan**

Update your recovery plan to include a Relapse Prevention section at the end.

## MY RECOVERY PLAN

**1) MORNING:** Prayer (share your feelings with God), Meditation & Reading the Bible; “The Dailies” with your wife (if married)

**2) DURING THE DAY:** Journal (identify your feelings); Daily Check-In Call (share your feelings); Worship and Praise

**3) EVENING:** No screens 30 minutes before bed; set alarm to be up at least 1 hour before usual; get to bed around 8 hours before I need to be up; Pray before going to sleep (share your feelings with God)

**4) WEEKLY:** Attend Men's Group(s); Attend Church; Memorize Scripture

**5) TOOLS:** “RAW”: Renounce, Announce, Worship; Lock down devices (e.g. filtering & accountability software, “dumb phone”)

**6) BOUNDARIES:** List your “inner circle” and “middle circle” boundaries; 24-Hour Tell Policy; No boundary changes without first consulting with wife and group leader

**7) SELF-CARE:** List your self-care plan

**8) RELAPSE PREVENTION:** Identify feelings/situations that are triggers for you to act out and identify three healthy things you can do instead of turning to your addiction; HALT, FASTER Scale

CHAPTER 15  
**AFTER BOOTCAMP**

*"See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland."*

Isaiah 43:19

We want to encourage you for making it this far and to keep on going. Living life as a follower of Jesus is taken one day at a time. Many of us spent years, decades even, in our addiction. It is an entire way of living that has affected us in every area of our lives in ways we are still coming to understand.

If you are beginning to experience some sustained clean time that's great. If not, don't be discouraged. Reach out to your group leader, pastor, other men who are in recovery, and seek God's will for you in prayer. The Holy Spirit leads and guides us on our journey – in your time of quiet solitude wait for his still small voice.

*"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."*

Galatians 6:9

This is just the beginning of your journey. There are other steps ahead that you will need counsel and support from your pastor and/or group leader to navigate,

including making full disclosure to your wife, if you're married. If you've experienced trauma, childhood or later in life, you may need professional counselling as well.

As you begin to experience freedom and a new life in Christ, your story will be a powerful testimony in other men's lives who feel trapped, isolated, and despair. You'll be able to give them the support you experienced from others, showing the love of Jesus to them.

Men who stay clean are men who stay close to Jesus, help their brothers as they were helped, maybe even lead men's groups. They never believe the lie that they can never fall again. In short, they never take it for granted that they were enslaved but have been set free.

*“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.”*

Galatians 5:1

This completes the 7 Week Boot Camp that we've developed to help kickstart your recovery. Many men have developed and then followed their recovery plans for years, and successfully navigated to sustained clean time. Now let's move on with the rest of the book.

We would be happy to talk to you and pray with you about what next steps God may be calling you to take on your journey. Reach out to us today and one of the Men's Group leaders will contact you: [www.mensgroup.ca](http://www.mensgroup.ca)

*“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”*

Romans 15:16

## CHAPTER 15

# STARTING A MEN'S GROUP AT YOUR CHURCH

We love talking to pastors, elders, youth leaders and others about how Jesus is setting men free from sexual sin and addiction. We take great joy in helping them start new Men's Group ministries at their churches. We're all volunteers and won't ask for a dime: as Jesus said *"Freely you have received; freely give."* (Matthew 10:8).

There are many ways to start a new group focused on helping men who are enslaved to sexual sin. We present here a process we've used to help many churches start a Men's Group over the years.

### **Let's meet!**

We can meet by phone, Zoom or in-person (if we have someone in your area) to tell you more about Men's Group. We'll share what Jesus has done in our lives, talk about how Men's Group works and provide a step-by-step guide to start one. This is a great opportunity for you to ask questions.

### **See for yourself**

We'll invite you to attend one of our existing Men's Group meetings so you can see how it works for yourself: the prayer, the praise, the verses, the sharing, the

testimonies, and the sense of the Holy Spirit. Seeing a group run in-person will give you a more tangible feel for what a meeting looks like and how they are run. Don't worry though, it's not rocket surgery, each leader is just a guy who's found freedom in Jesus and has experienced some measure of clean time.

## Church survey

It can be helpful and motivating to get an understanding within your church of how serious an issue there is with sexual sin and addiction, and gauge people's interest in getting involved in Men's Group. This can be done quickly with an anonymous survey (see below) using paper and pen on a Sunday morning or at a men's breakfast.

### Anonymous Survey

1 Have you accidentally come across porn on the internet and kept watching anyway? Yes / No

2 Have you gone seeking porn on the internet or elsewhere? Yes / No

3 Have you tried to stop watching porn but found that you could not? Yes / No

4 Have you pleaded with Jesus to help you stop for good? Yes / No

5 If you knew that there was a way that worked and that you would not be shamed or humiliated, would you like help in overcoming porn for good? Yes / No

Are you: male / female

Are you: single / married / separated / divorced

Consistent with published research, we typically find around 2/3 of men in churches and a lesser, but still significant, proportion of women have unrepented sin in this area.

*“But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people.”*

Ephesians 5:3

## **Men’s Breakfast & Testimonies**

Getting men interested and committed to attending a group like this is not an easy task. Many men have been trapped in sexual sin for years and have never told anyone about it. One way to build interest and break through to these men is to hear testimonies of other men who’ve found freedom in Christ.

We will help you prepare an event to bring the men of your church together to learn about Men’s Group and hear the testimonies of guys that Jesus has set free. If you’re in the area, we can send 3-4 men to share in-person and, if not, we can do it online. We find this is the #1 way that guys who are trapped in sin find hope, many for the first time in their lives, and get connected. You can have your first Men’s Group meeting that very next week!

## **Your first Weekly Men's Group meeting**

We will help you to run your very own first Men's Group meeting. We'll explain the format, pray for the Lord to use your group powerfully, and even attend the first few meetings if you'd like to help you get started. Then your group will be off and running! We will also connect you with the network of other Men's Group leaders for ongoing prayer, advice, support and joint events. You're not alone in this fight!

You may find that initially there is a very small core of guys who are dedicated to attending. It's not uncommon for a men's group to start with 2-3 guys. But as they find freedom in Jesus, other men will notice and be drawn to the hope and change that they see. Men's Groups meet weekly. Pick a day/time that works for your church/group and stick with it.

## **Running Bootcamp**

We also offer support for the men in your group to go through our free 7 week "Bootcamp" course (the one that you've seen already in this book) together.

Each guy will learn the basics of a Christ-focused recovery from sexual sin and addiction, learn and practice the spiritual disciplines, learn helpful recovery tools, and come away with their very own personalized recovery plan. Again, all of this is entirely free. We just want to help other men as we were helped.

## **Contact Us**

To learn more please contact us: [www.mensgroup.ca](http://www.mensgroup.ca)

## CHAPTER 16

# WHAT HAPPENS AT A MEN'S GROUP MEETING?

We meet every week, rain or shine, during holidays and vacations – since we sinned at all times, so much more should we seek the Lord and be in fellowship at all times! If someone is travelling for work or leisure, we encourage them to join one of the online meetings to stay connected.

Here's a basic overview of what happens at a Men's Group meeting, although some groups add on things like a meal (think "Taco Tuesday!") or begin with worshipping the Lord together in a song or two.

A group leader should be someone with extended clean time. If it hasn't been a clean week for someone scheduled to lead, they should take a break and have another brother lead. If a leader has had a major relapse, it is wise to take some time to get back into restoration before resuming leading.

Anyone wanting to join the group should first meet with one of the leaders. It's a chance for the leader to share their testimony, explain what Men's Group is all about, explain about confidentiality (that everything said in a group is confidential and stays in the group. The only time a group leader would not be able to keep a disclosure in confidence would be if there is a threat to the safety or life of another person, or as required by law.)

Meeting in person, we sit together in chairs in a circle; usually at a church or someone's home. But anywhere that offers privacy can work. A typical meeting would be 60-75 minutes depending on how many guys attend (anywhere from 3-4 guys up to 20 or more men). Guys are busy so it's important the meeting start and end more or less on time. Here's how a meeting flows:

## **Opening Prayer**

We start all of our meetings with a brief opening prayer. We know we can't do this on our own. We've tried. And failed. We start by asking the Holy Spirit to be with us as we come together. Either the person leading the group can pray or they can ask one of the other men to.

*"For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them."*

Matthew 18:20

## **Reciting Memorized Scripture**

We used to fill our minds with garbage. Now, we fill our minds with God's word. Each week, we recite from memory verses or entire chapters or books of the Bible that speak to us. If it is someone's first week, they get a pass, but otherwise each attendee is expected to bring something. It's a gentle peer pressure that helps, but ultimately our motivations are writing God's word in our minds and hearts.

*"I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you."*

Psalms 119:11

## **Prayer: Hearts of Gratitude**

After everyone has shared their memory verses, we begin a time of prayer together. The leader will give a prompt and everyone will offer up a brief, honest prayer in response. Typically, we pray around the circle as that avoids awkward interruptions as multiple guys start their prayer. Depending on how many men are there, we may have between 1-4 rounds (prayers are short and brief). Here's some example of prayer prompts we use often:

- Let's thank the Lord for something in his creation that you enjoyed this week
- Thank Jesus for someone who he has brought into your life and been a help on your journey
- Let's pray something in our verses that we memorized this week that we want to thank God for
- What's a promise in the Bible that you cling to
- What are one of the attributes or names of God that you are grateful that he's like
- Let's ask Jesus to change something about us

## **Sharing**

Starting with the group leader, everyone takes turns sharing. We start by introducing ourselves by first name, then say whether it's been a "clean week" or not. If it has been, we all praise God since it's by his grace. If not, we thank the person for their honesty. We then share (1) how was our time with Jesus that week? And (2) what helped keep us if we were clean, or what change we will make going forward if it wasn't a clean week. We confess what

the sin was clearly (e.g. masturbated once, looked at pornography, etc.), without triggering details.

What is a “clean week”? We follow Jesus' teaching from the Sermon on the Mount:

*“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”*

Matthew 5:27-28

So, a clean week means no sexual fantasy, masturbation, looking at lustful images, pornography, sex chats and webcams, visiting sexual establishments, or any other sexual activity outside of marriage between one man and one woman.

During sharing, there is no “cross talk” or back-and-forth between members of the group. Each person shares their own update and doesn't offer unsolicited advice to others.

### **“RAW”: Renounce, Announce, Worship**

After everyone has shared, one of the group members will lead us in practising a tool we use throughout the week called “RAW” (which we shared earlier in this book). The leader will ask one of the guys to lead us, line by line through RAW as we rehearse it together.

*We know we'll be tempted, so the split-second an ungodly thought enters our mind, we say:*

*No! I **Renounce** that thought, in Jesus' name.*

*I **Announce** that I belong to the Lord Jesus Christ.*

*Lord Jesus, I choose to **Worship** you.*

*[Then we sing the doxology]*

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise Him  
all creatures here below. Praise him above ye  
heavenly host. Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.  
Amen.*

## **Closing Prayer**

Finally, we close with a prayer of consecration to dedicate ourselves to the Lord for the week ahead. Either the leader or someone they ask in the group will pray for us all.

What happens after the meeting? People sometimes hang out and chat or exchange contact info with each other.

Some guys attend multiple weekly groups – which we recommend, especially in the first 100 days of recovery.

Many groups also have a Signal/WhatsApp messaging group chat for guys to stay connected and get prayer and support.

One-on-one calls with other group members on days you don't have a group is also a great idea.

*“If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up.”*

Ecclesiastes 4:10

## CHAPTER 17

# MEN'S GROUP+

Men's Group+ is for guys already attending a weekly Men's Group meeting. It's a time to spend more time together following Jesus and growing in our recovery. We meet online weekly to study God's word and learn how it applies to us as sons, husbands and dads. We encourage each other and share progress on recovery materials, tools and exercises.

For example, we've done Bootcamp together, we have talked about various recovery topics and tools, and we have done Bible studies of books like Romans, Ephesians, Hebrews, James, Psalms and the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7.

During our Bible studies, we each take turns leading through a passage, then asking a question for everyone to reflect on about how the passage relates to us (sometimes related to our recovery journeys but not necessarily). We're not here to impress each other, but let God's word work in our hearts and lives.

*"For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."*

Hebrews 4:12

## CHAPTER 18

# CONCLUSION

Make no mistake about it. Overcoming sexual sin and addiction is a battle. But it is a battle Jesus has already won on our behalf.

In the middle of WWII, British Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill encouraged his nation to persevere in fighting the darkness that had descended upon the European continent, saying: “Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.”

We can’t fight this battle alone. God doesn’t ask us to. He empowers us through the Spirit and strengthens us through a brotherhood of believers to fight alongside us.

Our hope and prayer is that the Lord Jesus Christ sets you free and keeps you free from sin. That you grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus. That your life is a testimony to his unrelenting love, mercy and forgiveness. That you and the men around you experience freedom in Christ.

*“May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.”*

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

## **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

Visit <https://mensgroup.ca/resources> for more resources on overcoming sexual sin and addiction, growing in your walk with Jesus, recovery and partner support, podcasts and sermons, and counselling programs for both betrayed and unfaithful partners.

## **MORE STORIES OF HOPE**

There are so many incredibly stories of hope of men who Jesus has set free. We wanted to share just a few more of them to encourage you and give him the glory.

### **Jeremy**

I am 46 years old, and I first started viewing porn after I got my first laptop in my early 20s, around the year 2000. Throughout my 20s, I would give in to temptation on average every few weeks, and at times I would binge on porn over the course of a few days.

As a practicing, church-going Christian, I knew it was wrong in my head, but the thrill and excitement and the desire it seemed to fulfill proved too strong for me. During those years, there were many times I resolved to stop, promising God I would. But nothing really changed ... for years. I kept going back repeatedly – the pull was too strong. I had a relationship with porn.

Into my 30s there was a genuine desire to grow in my walk with Jesus and it was as if the light of God's Spirit and the darkness of this stronghold of lust were finally coming to a confrontation. After 12 or more years of consistent consumption of hardcore online porn and the masturbation that went with it, the effects and toll it took on me were getting worse. The aftermath of giving in to

sexual gratification became increasingly devastating. I felt more and more in my body and spirit the truth that “the wages of sin is death”.

In the days following my acting out, I felt wrecked. I lost almost all motivation to do good; I lost peace in my mind and the joy in my heart would flee – it was terrible and getting worse. I remember one time in which I gave in to temptation: as soon as I started to view that video it was as if I could hear the devil laughing at me, and at the same time I felt my spirit drop into the pit of death as though I just plummeted 10 stories in an elevator. It was a taste of hell on earth, one I will never forget.

The growing horror over the consequences of my participation in pornography and self-gratification prepared me to be ready to make changes. It was at that time, that God graciously used my girlfriend (now my wife) to introduce me to Men’s Group. She had read in the church service sheet that there was a group for men who were struggling with sexual sin. I’m so thankful that I had shared with her that I was struggling in this area, because Lord knows I didn’t read those bulletins very often! It was not long after that, that I attended my first Men’s Group meeting.

I’ve been attending Men’s Group meetings consistently for over 10 years now. I currently have close to 5 years without engaging in any pornography use. Doing the math you realize it took me quite some time to break free. It took many months before I was able put together more than a few weeks of “clean time.” I account this mainly to the fact that I had a lot to learn and that I’m a slow learner!

I think one of the big issues for me, aside from just growing to love this sin, was that I needed to learn that I couldn't beat this thing my way, but it had to be the Lord's way. I had to learn to humbly hear his word and commands in scripture and to receive his instruction. I needed to put aside my performance mindset, putting my faith in his promises and my confidence in his grace to deliver me. I had to learn that it wasn't about me being strong and being righteous, it was me being obedient to his word out of reverence.

I also learned that God is so very generous. I saw that it is only he that gives righteousness to me as a gift, along with his peace and joy and many other wonderful gifts of grace. Not because I've earned it, but because of the grace available to me through the cross of Christ.

The other major practical lesson for me was twofold: the radical cutting off of access to all pornography and replace it with the discipline of spending time with Jesus, seeking his presence. It took me a long time to thoroughly purge my life of access to my pornography, because I had come to cherish the relationship I had with lust. But once I finally went all the way in obeying Jesus' command to "cut it off", it was like the gates of heaven opened to me. "If you turn at my reproof, behold I will pour my spirit upon you, I will make known my words to you" (Proverbs 1:23).

Our Men's Group leader would always tell me, "just wait, you're going to love it". I heard what he said but it wasn't until I tasted and saw the goodness of the Lord that I fully comprehended what a blessing it was to walk in freedom.

What a blessing it is to walk in the light free from slavery to sin and the sexual bondage that brought only destruction to my life!

Now I can say that I love spending time with Jesus every morning – it is by far the best part of my day. Porn never left me satisfied, but Jesus always does! And my quiet time with Jesus keeps getting better — his Word in the Bible has come alive to me. God’s word is a living and active force at work in my life and the change and growth the Lord continues to work in my life is so exciting!

In my journey he is setting me free from many other sinful attitudes and habits and teaching me how to walk in the Spirit each day. I am so grateful for the Lord’s continued work of grace because I am experiencing more and more the Spirit’s “peaceable fruit of righteousness”, and nothing is as sweet as this. This is what my leader was talking about when he said, “just wait, you’ll love it, it’s so good”. There is no earthly pleasure that compares to the abundant life in the Spirit, in fellowship with our Heavenly Father and our precious Lord Jesus.

If you are stuck in sexual sin and feeling hopeless, don’t give up. Please make the decision right now to find help through a Men’s Group. Don’t delay! Nothing shall be impossible to him that believes in Jesus and his precious promises to all those who come to him.

## Matt

My addiction started really slow, like many of us. I grew up in a great home. My mother loved the Lord, she raised us well. She was a single mom. My dad passed away pretty young but we went to church, a Christian school, I was well insulated, I was part of youth group. I was the “good on-paper” Christian guy.

But when I was 13/14 years old, I got hooked on masturbation. I was introduced to masturbation and that was my start to the road. It was never really pornography at the beginning. I didn’t have Internet at the time and it just never got there. It just started off small and it just grew and grew and grew. I always knew it was wrong. I had a pretty good framework where I knew it was wrong. I felt the guilt, I felt the shame. I knew it was wrong, but thought I could shut it down anytime I want, and thought “Look at all this other stuff I’m willing to do for the Lord. Maybe he’ll give me a pass on this one.” But it continued and I thought it was my secret. Nobody really knew about it. And it continued and it continued.

Eventually we got high speed Internet. I got Internet in my bedroom and that was a gamechanger in the worst possible way. My addiction just accelerated. I knew I was hooked and I did not know how to get out of it. And all the while I’m still going to church, leading youth group, doing my thing and again, nobody really knew.

Occasionally, I’d have these conversations with youth pastors. I remember being at a youth conference and saying “I’m really struggling with lust.” That’s about as much as I could muster.

I remember I was down at a conference in Mexico and during a youth trip I remember getting the nerve to tell this big speaker guy that I'm having a struggle with this, and he went on to tell me "It's funny you should mention that, I had a conversation with a guy in my congregation about that who was in his 80s and we were talking about it and we were like, 'Are we ever going to get over this?' And he he said, 'Sure you will, when you're dead!'" And he started laughing and that was it. That was his "sage wisdom" from this big speaker guy.

I was like: I'm done. I'm cooked. There's no hope for me. So, I stopped telling people. Eventually, when I had a really close buddy I started talking to and he also struggled in the area. But I just struggled and struggled and struggled. I just dragged this on. I would be driving home from work, stressed out and thinking 'I know exactly what I'm going to do when I get home'. Even before I got in the house. That's how deep-seated and habitual it was. I was powerless to stop it.

I had a season where I lived with an ex of mine and that was just another dark secret of my life that made my addiction even worse. It made me feel even worse about myself. And I managed to dig myself out of that hole and came back.

I eventually meet someone new. This lovely young woman that I remember thinking 'I don't have a chance, but maybe she'll give me a shot.' And this woman would become my wife. But she's a godly woman. So, when we met, she was like "Let's air all our dirty laundry" – like a good Christian girl. "What do you got?"

“I struggle with lust,” I said. And that’s all I could muster. That was the extent of it. I just bold-faced lied to her. She was like, “I know, I appreciate that.” And that’s as far as I ever told her.

So fast forward, we’d been dating for 18 months. We’re pretty serious, we’re in our late 20s and have busy lives, dating is complicated, and we were dating long distance. One day she had a dream from the Lord and he prompted her to ask me if I watched porn. So, we were on a hike and she just flat out asked me: “Do you watch porn?”

I was like, oh boy, where do I go from here? I said: “Yeah, I do. I’m not proud of it, but I do.”

“I don’t think this is going to work,” she said. She cut our visit very, very short. She said “sin is sin, but you gotta get this thing under wraps”.

And it really forced me into looking at this issue and I started doing some things mostly because I didn't want to lose her. I had invested a lot in the relationship and I truly cared for her and I just did not want to lose her.

She said, “You know, what about your laptop? Do you think maybe it would be a good idea if you got rid of that?” And I was like, “Ah, it’s fine.” Even though this is the thing that's causing me to sin. I thought it was totally fine that I kept using this thing.

All the while, I was telling myself and her: “I need this laptop, I need this thing for work.”

I managed to cobble together some clean time, but I just “white knuckled” it. I didn't change anything in my life, nothing. Like zero, nothing changed.

I was scared I would lose her. And I got about three months of clean time. That's about the longest I'd ever been able to get any sort of traction. Just not changing anything.

Everything was going great, then we got engaged. Bam. I was back in it. And this time, I didn't tell her, I was such a coward and so entrenched in my sin, I knew it would wreck her. Because it wrecked her the first time. I wasn't even sure we were gonna stay together the first time. And so the idea of smashing those pieces into smaller pieces was just horrific. I couldn't man up and tell her.

We had a pretty short engagement planned, and we were slated to get married in March. In January, she was confessing something to me. I don't even remember what it was. It was on a Saturday night, we had some time, we were talking, she was confessing something to me, and I thought, 'perfect, this is a great opportunity. You know, there's nothing like, meeting a small confession with a huge bomb dropping confession, right?'

And so that's basically what I did. I just told her. She asked me how long I had been back looking at porn. I told her it had been a couple months.

"You waited this long to tell me? You need to leave. I don't know if I want to see you. I don't want to see you at church tomorrow, so go somewhere else. And, I don't even know if I want to marry you."

And so, I left. I was just at the lowest I think I've ever been. I was alone. I thought, who could blame her? I never knew how to renounce things and so all those thoughts came in, and I just let them be: I'm a loser, why would she want to marry me?

The next day was Sunday and I went to a different church. I just sat in that service, and just worshipped, and just bawled. I just cried. And I think for the first time in that service, I think I felt the separation between the Lord and I.

I had never really gotten to that place. Before my sexual sin was an inconvenience, a nuisance, like I gotta tell my fiancée, and we might not get married, all these like logistical things.

That day, maybe I felt a small extent of what the Lord felt and I was just like, 'Lord, I don't want to do this anymore. I don't care if I have to change jobs. I don't care if I don't get married. I don't care if I have to move, do whatever, just, I don't want to do this anymore. This has been going on for too long and I didn't want to do it anymore. I'm willing, Lord, I'm willing.'

That was probably the lowest moment in my life. The Lord had me where he needed me. I talked to my fiancée. We knew better than to just rush into things.

We talked and talked. I told her what I was willing to do. And she said, "Well, you know, it's interesting you say that, because the Lord said, 'If he's willing to do these things, you should marry him.'" And they were the same list.

"I'm scared to death," she said. "I don't want to, because I'm scared. But I will do it. I will be obedient to the Lord, because I feel like He's asking me to stay with you."

And it was just this vote of confidence that I thought, I don't deserve this. I don't deserve this from her. I don't deserve this from the Lord.

So, my journey started. But it was such a weird time. For a while, we didn't even know if we'd get married. Even a month before we were getting married, people were calling to RSVP for the wedding. And I didn't even know if it was going to go on. Like, we didn't even know if we were going to get married.

We were still in that discerning process. Should we? Should we push it back? We were talking and it was such a strange time, and yet the Lord made this beautiful thing out of it. We did get married.

But it wasn't like, great, we're done, we're married now. It was a brutal first year. A brutal first year of marriage, as you can imagine.

Like, I bring in this crap, and she's gotta deal with this all, this broken trust and everything. So I had to change a lot of things. Due to my lust issues, I had to stop going to a lot of restaurants, I had to stop going to beaches for a season, not go to the swimming pool. Just lots of things, a lot of people would say is crazy, but I need to do it. I didn't want the extra temptation.

Around that time I was introduced to Men's Group. It was here that they said, yeah, you can be free. Nobody had really told me that before. Nobody had ever given me an example that you could be free. Before everyone was just like, yeah, a lot of guys deal with this.

It's been a slow journey. It was not a super quick uptick. Things didn't go that well at the beginning. Every time I came to a Men's Group, I was probably looking like I was beat down. It was hour by hour. In those first months, it was tough just getting that traction, that clean time. But I was grateful to have an example.

To have people tell me, do this. You'll like it. Just, like, start doing this, stop doing this, and start drawing near to the Lord, and He'll fight your battles for you. And I was like, oh man, I hope this works. I need to change. Through His grace He's given me clean time. I'm so grateful for that.

Now my concern is that I feel like I've had enough clean time, that now the urgency starts to slide and, and I know I could go back. I'm at a place now where I feel more vulnerable than I've been in years. I got two young kids, I'm overworked. I know I'm vulnerable, but the Lord has brought me here and he's brought me here by his grace.

It's his doing. It's nothing I've done. It is purely his grace. Everything that I have now in my life is from him. It's a gift from him. It's day by day for me. And it gets easier over time. 100 percent it gets easier over time, but every day is day zero. I'm just hoping that the Lord keeps me in a place where I'm away from it and just guides me through the rest of it.

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