

MY HOUSE MEN'S GROUP

The My House Men's Group provides a Catholic focus on prayer and recovery in every man's battle for sexual integrity. The world's view of sexuality has left many starving for truth, and our goal is to provide hope and encouragement for men who want freedom. We are not alone in this battle, and great progress can be made through standing together with other men. We open up with real stories from men who are in the recovery groups. Names and identifying information have been removed to keep the stories anonymous, but we encourage you to begin by reading the stories. The group outline provides the structure of our groups. Our groups have been influenced by the work of Christopher West, Dr. Douglas Weiss, Sexaholics Anonymous (www.sa.org), and other support ministries for sexual integrity. In addition to the format that has been developed in the group, we read and discuss *The Good News about Sex and Marriage* by Christopher West during group meetings for 15 - 20 minutes to provide a positive vision of what we are recovering to. You are not alone in this battle, and there is true freedom!

FREEDOM TESTIMONIES

From Despair to Freedom!

"I want you to leave, I want you out!" These were hard words to hear on a cold January night, after telling my wife that I had fallen yet again with pornography. Sadly, I knew that she was serious, and that the immature game of lust needed to end. It was time to desperately seek out help.

But how had I arrived at such a low place? Where had this insidious habit come from? After all, I had a beautiful wife whom I loved intensely and was deeply attracted to. I attended Catholic schools from kindergarten through college, and was receiving the sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist regularly. On the outside I was a good guy who was connected with friends and family, but beneath there was something terribly wrong. My first introduction to pornography came at the age of twelve, and my childhood innocence of collecting baseball cards and going bass fishing was forever changed. I soon discovered masturbation, which quickly became a habit. As a teen, I developed a disordered view of women and sexuality through frequent viewing of pornography. Girls were a mysterious symbol of power, and the more attractive my dates and girlfriends were, the better I felt about myself. I thought that I always needed to date someone, and that something was wrong with me if I was alone.

Though I sporadically attempted scripture reading, daily mass, and the rosary, I felt ashamed and distant from God. I rationalized that at least I was not doing drugs, which somehow seemed much worse. Besides, many of my friends in Catholic school looked at pornography, and they seemed pretty normal too. I thought that all of this would go away when I got married some day, and assumed that the strong urges would quiet down after my "sexual peak", which I had heard was around 18 for men.

I distinctly remember being upset at a close friend of mine, and knew that I needed to confront him, but I turned to pornography instead. I temporarily anesthetized the frustration and anger that I felt towards him, and never ended up resolving the issue. The patterns of running from pain and avoiding conflict gradually became a way of life. My self esteem was in the gutter, and shame was a way of life. I worried what people would think if they really knew the things I was doing and the lustful thoughts that were clouding my mind. Underneath the façade of holiness and happiness was low self worth, insecurity, and fear. Despite the difficult emotions that I was experiencing, I always knew of a way to feel safe and confident, no matter how temporary the feeling was. My wife and I met in college, and had the opportunity to study in Rome for a semester. My spiritual connection greatly increased through experiencing the heart of the Catholic Church. We saw Pope John Paul II multiple times, visited more churches than I can remember, and walked where martyrs had died for the faith. Though pornography slowed down during that semester, I knew that I still needed healing from lust.

We took a trip to Lourdes, France, where many claimed that miracles had taken place, and I fervently prayed for my struggles with lust to be removed. I went into the cold spring water near the cathedral and desperately hoped that freedom would miraculously follow.

Though things got better after Lourdes for a while, I continued to sporadically fall back into lustful habits. I could resist lust for a few days or weeks, and then I would fall into binges. I bought a pornographic magazine one week before our wedding, pridefully thinking that it would be the last time. Though in reality I had engaged in fantasy and pornography thousands of times before marriage, somehow I was convinced that it would all be over after I said my vows.

Only a few days after our beautiful wedding, I had strong urges to watch the pornographic movies that could be ordered in the hotel room on our honeymoon. I struggled with focusing on my wife during times of physical intimacy, and felt bombarded with lustful images and fantasies. I was far from the self-giving love that God calls us to, and was not man that my wife thought she had married. The pornography continued, and I began to disconnect from my wife.

We purchased an internet connection for our computer early on in our marriage which quickly became a problem. I would sneak on the computer whenever my wife left the house, and frequented “free” porn sites. I rationalized that at least I was not spending any money on the internet pornography, but cannot begin to tell you how much it took away from my relationship with God, my wife, and others. I gradually became more secluded and isolated, and was filled with shame.

The internet pornography progressed at times to going online late at night when my wife was asleep, and being exhausted the next day. My body would literally shake when the old dialup internet connection sounded, and my heart would race in anticipation and lustful curiosity. My wife went out of town one weekend, and I remember looking at pornography sites for almost an entire day. A few days later, one of my friends said he had been trying to call me all day on Saturday, and kept hearing the busy signal. I quickly lied to him saying that I had been busy with lots of “research.” I began to rationalize that at least I was not watching adult videos, but within the first year of marriage, I was crossing that boundary. My life was becoming more unmanageable, and I was off in fantasy land during stressful times. After binging with pornography, I felt disgusting and ashamed, and as a recovering man once said, sometimes there was not a shower big enough in the world to wash away how dirty I felt. After a while though, the shame and depressed feelings would wear off, and I would go right back.

We reached out for help with a few Christian therapists, which I hoped would provide some help. The first counselor thought that I was perfectly normal, and said she knew many men who masturbated every day. She told my wife that as a man, I could not be expected to control myself. The therapist completely shifted the blame onto my wife saying that she needed to “do more,” which would clear up the issue. I have never felt more degraded in my life than that day, and thought of myself as a monkey who had no self control. Sadly, what the therapist did not realize is that no real person can satisfy lust or even compete with fantasy. We never went back to that therapist, and though part of me wanted to blame my wife, I knew deep down that it had nothing to do with her.

Another therapist asked me how I felt after I relapsed, and tried to help, but had no practical answers. He did not seem comfortable with discussing the topic. There were several good priests that I confessed my problems to, who recommended putting more spiritual connection in my life. They helped me to keep trying and to not give up, and I am blessed by their prayers. There was one summer that I went to mass nearly every day, and had a few months of freedom, and the spiritual guidance really helped. It was hard for me to be consistent though, and it always seemed inevitable that the struggles were coming back.

I found a job which involved lots of down time behind a desk, which also had open access to a high speed internet connection, and viewed pornography nearly every work day. I also found lustful material at magazine racks, book stores, and even libraries. The distance between my wife and I continued to increase, and though I could always tell her that I had fallen, I had no solutions for getting out of the cycle. My wife and I conceived our first child during the second year of marriage, and were excited to start a family. I felt inadequate and scared about being a father, and began to fall into more regular binges. The fantasy and masturbation became so intense that a few months into the pregnancy I told my wife that I was thinking about leaving. What a coward I was, and where had my integrity gone?

We ended up losing our son to a miscarriage. My worst moment was being in a daze at our son’s funeral, and wondering why I could not feel remorse for him, and wondering why I could not feel anything for that matter. I cannot describe the distance I felt from everything, and that day haunts me. The miscarriage happened during our senior year of college, and life was becoming more and more unmanageable. I did not graduate with my wife, and did not even start my psychology thesis, which was the only assignment that needed to be completed.

Soon after my wife’s graduation, we developed an interest in moving to another state. I hoped that outdoor sports and beautiful scenery would help me leave my addiction behind. Just having a change of pace would really help, and I thought that I could run away from the problem. Sadly, within a few months I was renting videos, looking at personal ads, and even flirting with a coworker. I was able to tell my wife that I was falling again and again, but there was never any hope of long-term victory. I thought I could stop, and tried to convince her of this many times early on, but with each relapse I lost hope and began to believe that lust was my master. I had not opened a book for my thesis, and I slowly began to give into despair. I felt alone, and believed that there was no help or healing that was attainable.

I continued using pornography, and was getting to the point where it was happening nearly every time she left the house, or that I had a day off. Finally my wife said that she would leave if I did not get help, and I knew that she was serious. Though I never had any sexual contact with other women after our marriage, I thank God that my wife confronted me when she did. Without her tough love on that day, I would most likely have progressed to affairs. Her difficult confrontation was an invitation to desperately look for help, and though I was sick, I did not want to lose our marriage.

A few days after her confrontation, I convinced my wife to come to a local sexual addiction meeting with me, as I was too scared to go alone. Though she had no personal struggles with lust, my wife agreed to drive with me over to the meeting, and we showed up to an empty office building and waited nervously. A man walked in to the room about twenty minutes late, and he took out some books and began the meeting. Though it was only the three of us, the meeting was miraculous. The man looked like a homeless person off of the streets, and I immediately determined that I couldn't be as bad as he was. The more I heard him speak though, the more I knew he understood my experience. He had a fair amount of sobriety and the idea of having freedom was inspiring.

Somehow the topic of faith came up after we had talked for a while, and he told me of a local counseling center that specialized in treating sexual addiction, where many local Christians were receiving help. We went in for our first session with a therapist who graciously provided hope and practical tools that could be used to achieve freedom. In one hour he gave us more practical advice and understanding than I had collected in my lifetime. He directed me to recovery groups, where I formed friendships and grew in accountability with solid Christian men. At that point in my life I had one close friend in another state, but nobody that I felt comfortable talking about my struggles with.

I will never forget the disbelief of attending the first meeting and seeing a man congratulated for going 90 days without pornography or masturbation. Though part of me thought that he must be lying, I felt inspired by his story and grew in hope. I began to believe that freedom was possible, which slowly began to replace the old mentality of despair that I had a terminal condition. I began to believe that it is possible to actively fight lust, and developed self respect and confidence.

Through God's grace, lots of counseling, weekly recovery groups, working through the 12 steps of AA, frequent reception of the sacraments, spiritual direction and the *Theology of the Body*, I have been free from pornography since 7/12/05 and masturbation since 7/12/05. All of this is a tremendous gift from God, considering that in the past I could barely go a week without falling. Though I had a handful of relapses early on in the process, the time between them became longer and longer. I used to think that it was just a matter of time until I fell again, but I now know that through God's grace, I do not have to go back. At first I entered group to save my marriage, but as time goes, I stay in group to be a better person, and because of the hope and integrity that I feel being around other real people who are in the same battle.

Upon entering the group, I had a few friends in another state, but I was quite disconnected and isolated. Through multiple recovery meetings each week and making daily phone calls to the men in group, I developed a network of friendships. After talking to these Christian men about pornography and masturbation, it was pretty easy to talk to them about just about everything.

A well trained sexual addiction therapist helped me rebuild the relationship with my wife on spiritual and emotional levels, and we began to pray, talk about our emotions, and affirm each other every day. I know that I will never truly understand how much I hurt her, and I know that it is hard for her to trust me with my past. The difficult confrontation that she gave me years ago was the most loving thing she could have done, and the tough love was exactly what I needed to find recovery. Though it was not fun early on, my wife has invited me to be an authentic man, and her encouragement is a huge blessing.

There are still times when I forget to call her when I am coming home late that bring back her worries from the past. Though my wife did not ask me to do so, I now take an annual polygraph test to let her know that I am still free from pornography, masturbation, and infidelity. I look at the yearly polygraph as a gift of honesty for her and myself, and an ongoing amends for the lies and pain in the past. Though I cannot change the past, I do have a choice to humbly follow God, and stay in the recovery process.

I now see that God has answered my prayer from Lourdes, and has provided the opportunity for healing. The fact that we “happened” to move to one of the only cities in the world that has a Christian center for sexual addiction treatment is nothing short than a miracle in my life. Though I hoped that pornography and masturbation would instantly be taken away back in Lourdes, God has been faithful, and I could not be more thankful for the help and healing.

I realize that I can gain strength in my weakness before God. One of the most powerful scripture passages for me is 2 Corinthians 12, where St. Paul talks about the thorn in his flesh. I am well aware of what my thorn is, and sometimes wondered why God did not just take away my problem. God told St. Paul: “My Grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.” I know that there will always be temptations in my life, and I desperately need God’s strength to stay on the road to freedom. The reminders from the past and temptations are an opportunity for me to pray for my wife, for other men looking for recovery, for the people I have hurt in the past, and the people I have used through viewing their images in pornography.

Though I have had to humble myself and work hard to heal, there is peace and redemption when I pick up my cross and focus on Christ. I rely on God to help me in times of temptation, and continue to attend weekly recovery meetings, and make daily calls to men who are in group. I cannot say that there are not temptations or difficult situation that I face, but I know that I can continue to reach out to other men, and be accountable with my progress. Though there are so many areas of life for me to improve, God has helped me to make lots of progress over the years.

Just as St. Paul encourages us to put on spiritual armor in Ephesians 6, I put on recovery armor every day. I am inspired by the wisdom of Sacred Scripture and the beauty of our Church and pray daily both individually and with my wife. I have a network of recovery friends, and make daily calls to them, and attend a recovery group every week.

There are so many good books and resources on sexual addiction recovery and God's beautiful design for sexuality, and reading such material on a daily basis has been a huge help for victory as well. The discipline of the 3 pillars and connecting with my wife spiritually and emotionally has become integrated in my daily life. The structure of the 12 steps and working the program daily helps me to be more intentional in my life. Though I realize that there are still temptations, I trust that God will not let me be tempted beyond my strength, and will always provide a way out. (1 Corinthians 10:13).

I asked a local priest if I could meet with him each month for confession and spiritual direction, which has been a tremendous blessing. The wisdom and encouragement from my spiritual director is slowly helping me to live a more balanced prayer life. Though there are ups and downs in my spiritual walk, I am rejuvenated by receiving the Sacraments, and attend mass several times throughout the week.

Though recovery meetings and working the 12 Steps had helped me to stop pornography and masturbation, I was still struggling with lust towards my wife. I had heard information about Pope John Paul II's Theology of the Body, and had listened to several resources early in recovery. After a few years of recovery, I finally sat down and read Christopher West's *The Good News about Sex and Marriage*. I was amazed! I had never really thought about God's place in our sex life! The level of beauty that John Paul II described with marriage and intimacy was something I had always been looking for. The concept that loving my life sexually was meant to be a sign of Christ's love for the Church (Ephesians 5) was completely different than anything I had ever heard. The idea that our marital intimacy is essentially saying our wedding vows through our bodies, and the thought that our sexual union is an image of the Trinity is mind blowing.

My wife and I had the chance to attend several conferences on John Paul II's Theology of the Body (TOB) with Christopher West, and finally attended West's Head and Heart Immersion Course, which is a week-long experience. I can't begin to tell you how much my life has been changed, and I now see where I am recovering to. The recovery groups and counseling I had attended was very effective in helping me stop pornography and masturbation, develop discipline, work out unhealthy core beliefs, emotions, and thought patterns, etc. TOB did something at a deeper and profound level. I don't think that I would have been ready to receive the beauty of TOB without the help of recovery groups, the 12 Steps, and sexual addiction therapists, but I am so grateful for the beautiful new vision of TOB.

I see my wife so differently now, and my level of love, respect, and attraction for her has never been stronger. I have been free of lustful behavior towards her since October of 2007, and am thankful for the deeper level of spiritual, emotional, and physical intimacy that we are experiencing. Natural Family Planning had always been a huge blessing for our marriage, but now I finally see the beauty in our sacrifice during times of abstinence, and understand why I am waiting. Though there is always room for healing and change, our connection and hope has dramatically increased.

When I look back, there is no clear distinction of when I truly lost control, or when lust became a devastating problem. Some weeks were really not that bad before recovery, and I often thought that I could do it alone. The problem was that I could never get the long term freedom that I desired, and the struggles always came back. Though any of us could fall, I know that I have a choice to put the armor on and keep it on today. I am humbled to be in recovery with other men with an issue that almost ruined my life, and know that all of us are called to the self-giving love of God. I realize that God's hand is at work, and know that my recovery and daily battle is much larger than just me.

Choosing to go back to pornography or masturbation would lead to separation from my wife, and letting down the recovery men that are in my life. I want you to know that you are not alone, no matter what stage you are at in your battle with lust. Your silent struggles can turn to victory if you are willing to humble yourself, and desperately reach out for help with other solid men. I have experienced both humility and humiliation with this struggle, and humility is a much less painful road. I pray that the healing that has been given to me will encourage you to take a stand, and to take action in this battle. Freedom and self-mastery are possible, but you cannot do this on your own. I urge you to humble yourself, and trust that God can truly transform our mess into a message! I pray that your heart will be opened to His call, and encourage you to join a recovery group devoted to true freedom and integrity. Thank you and God bless you.

MY HOUSE MEN'S GROUP OUTLINE

1) Opening Prayer - decade of the holy rosary

2) Confidentiality Statement – (read statement during each group) & **Celebrate milestones in chaste sobriety** (30, 60, 90, 6 months, 1 year, multiple years, etc.)

3) Quick check in (30 seconds each in big group)

Hello, my name is (first name), and I am recovering from sexual addiction.

Recovery date - date of your first group

Chaste Sobriety - How long have you been free from pornography, masturbation, sexual contact outside of marriage, and marital intimacy that is not an authentic sign of God's free, total, faithful, and fruitful love?

Daily accountability call – How many days did you call another group member? (outgoing calls are optimal, but voicemails and incoming calls are sufficient)

Quick status: victories, struggles, or something about your week, etc.

4) Read and discuss section from *Good News about Sex and Marriage* by Christopher West (15-20 minutes)

5) Longer check in with small group (if group is larger than 8, break into consistent groups of up to 7 members.) Each member is accountable about their week, and writes down their progress on the back of the sheet. Please go through the following topics without interrupting or going into triggering details:

Longer Status - How are you doing overall this week? victories / struggles?

-**Daily connection with God** - quality and quantity of prayer life

-**Daily recovery material** – 12 step work, and resources on sexual addiction recovery, Theology of the Body (see group format for recommended resources)

-**Weekly attendance of Recovery group** – see website for other groups

-**Married Men - Daily** prayer w/ wife, complementing / affirming wife **daily**, and expressing emotions to wife **daily**

-**Rewards for sobriety** - positive results of ongoing freedom

-**Primary boundaries** - past forms of relapse / resetting sobriety date

-**Primary consequences** - specific consequence for resetting sobriety date

-**Secondary boundaries** - specific places, things, and people that we avoid

-**Secondary consequences** - smaller consequence for crossing 2nd bound.

6) Questions and Feedback - sharing our experience, strength and hope through questions and comments, while carefully avoiding interruptions, judgmental comments, or “shouilding” (we are not each other's spiritual advisors or counselors)

7) Closing Prayer - Prayer requests, St. Michael prayer, closing prayer **“As for me and my house...WE WILL SERVE THE LORD!”**

INTENTIONAL BATTLE PLAN

To win this battle we get to put the armor on every day and keep track of our progress!

Today's date

Chaste sobriety

Prayer calls

Recovery material

12 Steps

Praying w/ wife

Affirming wife emotions w/ wife

Rewards for sobriety: positive outcomes of ongoing freedom such as self-confidence, integrity, leadership, a nice dinner w/ spouse at 30 days, golf club at 90 days, etc.

Primary Boundaries: What are your past forms of acting out that would result in resetting your sobriety date? (Pornography, masturbation, strip clubs, etc)

Primary Consequences: What are your consequences if you reset your sobriety date? Examples include fasting, donations, community service, moving out, etc.

Secondary Boundaries: situations, people, and places that are wisely avoided such as magazine racks, unmonitored internet, personal ads, channel surfing, junk mail, etc.

Secondary Consequences: If you cross one of your secondary boundaries w/o losing sobriety, what specific consequences are in place?

CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

Confidentiality and anonymity are essential for the My House Men's Group, and what is said during group stays in group. The meeting times and locations of each group are confidential information that is only released to men who have been screened by Tim Leininger from the My House Recovery Office for the Archdiocese of Omaha. Please call Leininger at 402-557-5663 for any questions or concerns about confidentiality. If admitted to the group, all members are required to keep the information discussed during group confidential, and to not release the meeting time or location. Tim Leininger is a Deacon of the Church, who is mandated to report suspected instances of sexual abuse of a child. Any such disclosures made in group sessions will be reported in accordance with Nebraska law and the child protection guidelines for the Archdiocese of Omaha.

ASSESSMENT OF STATUS, RECOVERY, AND SOBRIETY STATUS

“As iron sharpens iron, so man sharpens his fellow man.” -Proverbs 12:18

We are coming to group to be open and honest with each other, and we start each check in by getting current about our week. Giving a quick run down about the victories we experienced is a good place to start, which keeps an encouraging environment in the group, and keeps us focused on the progress that all of us are making. Victories could include setting up accountability software for the first time, calling a man from group on a tough day, learning something new from recovery material, etc. Showing up to group is a tremendous victory in itself, and it takes lots of courage and humility to enter the accountability process. There will always be room for improvement, but paying attention to the victories helps us to focus on the progress that we are making.

We also need to be honest about the struggles that have taken place within the week. Being accountable about the struggles we are going through gives hope that we are not alone in the battle. Examples could include relapsing with pornography, opening up a questionable email, or knowing that there will be more temptations when we are home alone on a certain day are examples. Of course we do not want to give too much detail to trigger thoughts in other members, and members are encouraged to raise their hands or comment if there is too much information being discussed. Often there may be struggles or temptations that did not involve crossing any boundaries, but that we still need to be accountable about. Of course we want to keep things as related to our personal purity as possible, and not go off on tangents, but there may be related areas of life that are helpful to bring up during the check in time.

We are all on an honor code in the group, and though it may be difficult to tell the truth after a struggle, there is healing and strength from putting our struggles into the light. Sometimes just talking about what was happening before and after our struggles can be a learning experience for us and others. Being able to open up about our ups and downs to other men who are fighting with us is an encouraging experience in itself.

Through discussing our victories and struggles, many of us will see that other men have been through similar things and are making progress to freedom.

RECOVERY DATE

The recovery date is the first day that we entered the recovery process. For most of us, that is the first day that we came to group, but it could also include our first session with a sexual integrity counselor, or the first meeting with another group. It is encouraging to think about how long we have been coming to group and taking a stand with other men. Down the road, it can be inspiring to look back and view the progress we have made in the recovery process. Though none of us are perfect, many of us will see the changes when we consistently stick with the recovery process over time.

CHASTE SOBRIETY

“Chastity includes an apprenticeship in self mastery which is a training in human freedom.”

- (1) We are involved in the group process to learn about God’s design for sexuality, but also to grow in freedom from lust and habits from the past. The term sobriety refers to freedom from relapse, or how long one has been free in the recovery process. Though there are a variety of perspectives on sexual sobriety in the recovery community, our guidelines are consistent with the Catholic Church’s amazing teachings on sexuality. The Church’s teachings can also seem challenging, but they invite us to an incredible life of freedom. We are not here to judge or condemn anyone in the group, but rather to invite them to a level of joy and freedom that is quite incredible. In addition to the idea of sobriety, we include the term chastity. Chastity is not a word that is used very frequently in our culture, but it refers to true sexual integrity and authentic sexual purity. The Catechism indicates that “The chaste person maintains the integrity of the powers of life and love placed in him.”
- (2) Our group seeks to combine the beauty of Catholic teaching on sexuality with the idea of sobriety, producing the concept of “chaste sobriety.” Again, these guidelines are in place not to condemn men, but to invite men to freedom, and for a more in depth explanation of Catholic sexual morality, please refer to the Sixth Commandment in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, The Good News about Sex and Marriage by Christopher West, and www.pureloveclub.com. Christopher West indicates that “All questions of sexual morality come down to one basic question: Is the act an authentic sign of God’s *free, total, faithful, and fruitful* love or is it not?”
- (3) At its heart, the gift of chastity helps us to live of life of authentic love. In accord with this beautiful call to love, the four main areas of chaste sobriety include freedom from **pornography**, freedom from **masturbation**, freedom from **sexual contact outside of marriage**, and ensuring that marital intimacy is an authentic expression of God’s free, total, faithful, and fruitful love (also called **marital chastity**). We come to group to celebrate the progress that we are making in chastity, and keeping track of our days of freedom can be quite motivating. The following is a brief explanation of some of the categories for chaste sobriety:

- (4) **Pornography** consists of removing real or simulated sexual acts from the intimacy of the partners, in order to display them deliberately to third parties. Pornography exists in various forms including images, videos, stories, etc. Of course, deliberately seeking out nude images, nude scenes in movies, racy stories in books, or chat lines are possible forms of relapse as well. The distortions of sexuality in pornography can be thought of as mental promiscuity and adultery of the heart (Matthew 5:27-28), and the goal for all of us is true freedom. The United States sex and pornography industry generated 13.3 billion in 2006, which was more than the combined revenue of the NBA, NFL, and MLB for that year.
- (5) Does that bother any of you men? The internet has made pornography more accessible, less expensive, and available from the privacy of the home or office. There are tools that can safeguard us from the internet, and boundaries that will be discussed later, but deliberately viewing or seeking out pornography in any of its form is considered a loss of chaste sobriety, and we need to look at our hearts closely here. Being honest and accountable about our freedom from pornography can really help us make progress. Internet accountability programs such as B-safe, Covenant Eyes and Safe Eyes are really helpful here, and please refer to the **websites of these organizations** for more information.
- (6) **Masturbation** “For here sexual pleasure is sought outside of ‘the sexual relationship’ which is demanded by the moral order and in which the total meaning of mutual selfgiving and human procreation in the context of true love is achieved.” Masturbation removes both love and life from sexuality, and can be understood as the “deliberate stimulation of the sexual organs in order to derive sexual pleasure.”
- (7) For many of us who have developed patterns with masturbation from a young age, this battle will not be easy, but we are here to celebrate the journey towards freedom. Though many in our culture view masturbation as a perfectly normal and even healthy activity, self-sex does not authentically express the self-giving and life-giving love that our sexuality was created for. Though some claim that masturbation cannot be wrong since a majority of men have engaged in it, would we also conclude that there is nothing wrong with children lying to their parents, since the majority of children have done so? We are not here to shame anyone for their struggles with masturbation, but rather to invite them to make progress towards a life of sexual honesty and integrity. Genesis 38:9 offer a scriptural perspective on “spilling seed” (especially when combined with Deuteronomy 25), but even deliberately stimulating one’s genitals without orgasm could be a form of sobriety loss as well, and we need to examine our intentions closely. Some may claim that masturbation is morally neutral as long as a person does not fantasize, but the action is still focused on self gratification and self pleasuring, which goes against the dignity of true love from John Paul II’s Theology of the Body. It is motivating to meet with other men who are gaining victory from masturbation, and there truly is freedom here, if we are willing to humble ourselves and continue in the healing process.

Sexual Contact Outside of Marriage

Any form of sexual contact or sexual behavior outside of the marriage between a man and a woman is outside of our guidelines for chaste sobriety. Sexual intimacy is a beautiful gift from God that is reserved solely for one's spouse. It is very sad to hear of the wounds that infidelity can create, but many married men are healing through regular participation in the Sacraments of Confession and the Eucharist, spiritual direction, accountability groups, and counseling. Programs such as Retroville and Engaged Encounter can be very helpful as well for marriages that have been wounded by lust.

Some men have found it helpful to give their spouse the gift of therapeutic polygraph tests as a pledge of honesty and an ongoing amend for the lies and deception from the past. Even if wives say that they don't need the evidence from this test, it can be an incredible gift that a husband gives to help restore trust. Such tests are not recommended in every situation, but can be arranged through counselors that are experienced in coordinating these with a polygrapher for sexual integrity.

Marital Chastity

“Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, (love) is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.” – 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 Many of us have not heard an adequate explanation of the Catholic Church's teachings on marital chastity, or may be unaware of the beautiful innocence of sexuality in marriage. Many married men began their struggles with lust long before they even met their spouse, and it is common to think that marriage will be the fulfillment of lustful fantasies and selfishness. We opened this passage with some beautiful words from St. Paul on love, and marriage is the fulfillment of true love. Pope John Paul II wrote “Love is not merely a feeling; it is an act of will that consists of preferring, in a constant manner, the good of others to the good of oneself.”

- (8) Married men must examine their hearts and make sure that sexual intimacy not only brings them closer to their spouse, but more importantly, that it brings their marriage closer to God. According to George Weigel, Pope John Paul II viewed sexual intercourse in marriage as an act of worship!
- (9) The wedding vows are brought to life through marital intercourse and we express free, total, faithful, and fruitful love to our spouse through our bodies. Many of us have brought lustful habits that we learned from pornography into the marital bedroom, or simply may not have learned about the fullness of the Catholic Church's beautiful teachings on sexuality. In terms of the morality of marital sexuality, Christopher West states, “Since it's the male orgasm that's inherently linked with the possibility of new life, the husband must never intentionally ejaculate outside of his wife's vagina... Since the female orgasm, however, isn't necessarily linked to the possibility of conception, so long as it takes place within the overall context of an act of intercourse, it need not, in any absolute sense, be during actual penetration.”

- (10) One of our primary roles as husbands is to bring our wives closer to God, and to love them completely. Would we taint that complete love by using contraception or having a climax outside of intercourse? We invite everyone to learn about the blessings of Natural Family Planning (NFP). Some of us may be unaware of the morality of contraceptives (see Catechism of the Catholic Church 2370), and we are invited to learn more about the Church's teaching here. There is no need to hold back our fertility and harm either our body or our wife's through contraception or sterilization. Modern forms of NFP are over 99% effective at spacing children, and help to foster emotional and spiritual harmony between spouses. In addition to the spiritual and physical benefits of using Natural Family Planning, several sources have indicated remarkably low divorce rates for couples who use NFP. (11) The Couple to Couple League, a well known NFP organization, indicates the following: "As of December 11, 1995, the League has certified 1098 Teaching Couples since its origin in 1971. Of these, we are aware of 15 who have divorced. That yields a divorce rate of 1.4% among this select group."
- (11) More information about Natural Family Planning is available in the following resources:
- 1) Contraception: Why Not (Revised CD) - Dr. Janet Smith
 - 2) Life Overflowing -Archbishop Naumann
 - 3) One More Soul -www.onemoresoul.com
 - 4) The Good News About Sex and Marriage - Christopher West
 - 5) Why NFP? (CD) - Jason Evert

All of us are called to practice sexual integrity in our lives, and in our marriage. Those of us who are married may need some accountability in physically giving to our wives in an authentic way. We are not here to bring other's sins into the group, and it is not our job to bring up what happened with our spouse or other people. Simply saying "I acted unchastely towards my spouse" is sufficient for married men who have crossed a line of chaste sobriety through contraception or contraceptive behavior. We are not here to blame other people either, but to take responsibility for our actions. Single men need to have a respectful sense of vagueness when they talk about losses of sobriety involving other people to not mention names or specifics. There is no requirement to talk about unchaste behaviors that involve others, and spiritual direction, counseling, and having the accountability of a few close men can be very helpful here as well. We need to stress the importance of group confidentiality on all of these points as well.

Conclusion of Sobriety Guidelines

There may be other behaviors that are outside of the context of sobriety as well, but having some initial guidelines is helpful. During group we state how many consecutive days we have been free from the previously discussed areas, which can be amazing to hear as we progress in freedom. Sobriety can be an indicator of our level of commitment, and our willingness to do whatever it takes to be free. We are not here to judge others and arrogantly compare our amounts of sobriety. Instead, we want to rejoice with our brothers as they progress through large milestones of freedom such as: one month, 60 days, 100 days, 6 months, 1 year, etc. We are also here to walk with our fellow members if there are relapses, and to encourage them to keep fighting. Attaining long term freedom is not easy and will require daily submission to God as well as humility before other men.

Though some of us may relapse and have to follow through with our primary and secondary consequences (discussed in a later section), we will begin to believe that there is a choice in the matter. Length of chaste sobriety is not something to brag about as if it is something we did by our own strength. According to the Catechism, “Chastity is a moral virtue. It is also a gift from God, a *grace*, a fruit of spiritual effort.” (12) We pray that others will stay clean and avoid relapsing. We should reach out in support and compassion to those who are struggling, and walk with them back to freedom. Ultimately chaste sobriety is a celebration of authentic freedom, and we are blessed to have a Church that helps us to grow in true sexual integrity.

References for Chaste Sobriety

- (1) Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2339
- (2) Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2338
- (3) West, Christopher. *Introduction to Theology of the Body* (Study Guide), Ascension Press, page 19.
- (4) Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2354
- (5) Internet Filter Review
- (6) Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2352
- (7) Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2352
- (8) JPII “We wish to see Jesus” – Feb. 22, 2004
- (9) Weigel, George (2001). *Witness to hope, the biography of Pope John Paul II*. New York, NY, Cliff Street Books
- (10) West, Christopher (2004). *Good news about sex and marriage*. Cincinnati, OH, St. Anthony Messenger Press. pages 90-91.
- (11) Obtained on January 16, 2008 from www.ccli.org
- (12) Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2345

DAILY PLAN OF ATTACK

THREE PILLARS

“Put on the armor of God so that you may be able to stand firm against the tactics of the devil. For our struggle is not with flesh and blood but with the principalities, with the powers, with the world rulers of this present darkness, with the evil spirits in the heavens.” -Ephesians 6:11-12

The Three Pillars provide an intentional lifestyle of daily structure for men who are seeking sexual integrity. To make progress in this battle, we need to put on the armor every day, and keep it on throughout the recovery process. Coming to meetings at least once each week is a good start, and we encourage members to go to multiple groups each week. In addition to meetings, there are three daily virtues that help us to make huge headway, when done consistently. The three pillars involve daily prayer, daily accountability with other men, and daily learning through recovery resources. Instead of viewing these as things that we have to do for freedom, the three pillars are tools that we get to use to be free from lust. Men who put in the maximum effort and consistently do the daily work tend to have a much stronger chance for long-term freedom. The three pillars eventually involve humility and stepping outside of ourselves every day to stay free. Some thoughts on each category follow.

Daily connection with God

“Chastity means the successful integration of sexuality within the person and thus the inner unity of man and his bodily and spiritual being.” -CCC, p. 2337

Frequently receiving the sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation provides a wealth of sacramental grace that nourishes our relationship with God. God is the source of our freedom from lust, and sexual integrity is a gift that we can ask him for every day.

Outside of communion on Sunday, attending daily mass as often as possible and going to Eucharistic Adoration are practical ways to embrace the body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ. Instead of jumping from priest to priest for Reconciliation, many men find it helpful to build a relationship with a priest who they can confess to at least monthly.

Outside of Confession, some priests are available for spiritual direction by appointment, which can be very helpful for spiritual growth and balance. During group, men are encouraged to be open about their prayer life, and daily spiritual disciplines. Simply asking God for freedom and grace every day can go a long way. There are so many other ways we can grow spiritually in our Catholic faith, including the rosary, daily mass readings, the saint of the day, liturgy of the hours, etc. Daily prayer keeps us humble and focused on God, who is the ultimate source of our strength.

As St. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 12, God’s power is made perfect in our weakness. Temptations can be viewed as opportunities for prayer, and we can lift the impure thoughts up to God rather than just try to push them out. (Of course we are not recommending that people put themselves in tempting situations, which will be discussed more in the boundary section, and make sure to

review the information about wearing a rubber band in the sexual compulsion section) During times of temptation, thoughts from the past, impure looks, etc, many have found it helpful to pray for the person they are feeling tempted by. Other prayer intentions include our brothers in group, the other men who are searching for help, the people who are exploited by the pornography industry, the people we have hurt through lust, spouses, family members, etc.

Daily accountability with men from group

“The virtue of chastity blossoms in friendship. Chastity is expressed notably in friendship with one’s neighbor.” (CCC, pp. 2347)

The sense of community and brotherhood is essential for a sense of true accountability in the groups. Daily connection with other men builds relationships that help dissolve the isolation and despair from our struggles with lust. Whether in person or over the phone, daily accountability is an essential element of freedom. The strength and support of our group is greatly built through daily accountability, and there are many opportunities to quickly check in throughout the day. Even on a hectic day when we only have a few minutes, we still can make the time to reach out. Did we not creatively manage to pursue lust, no matter how busy life was in the past?

Though calls may be a new habit to develop, we have to fight for our freedom and trust the recovery process through embracing the initial discomfort. We grow in self mastery and humility every time that we reach out, and we never know how much the person may need our support. Several members have said that they miraculously received a phone call just before they were about to lose sobriety, and knew that God’s hand was there. Making outgoing calls and initiating conversations is optimal, but incoming conversations are sufficient as well. Simply leaving a voicemail or text message for another man in group can be a huge blessing as well.

Instead of having one accountability partner, in the My House Men’s Group we go into battle with a platoon. During group we mention how many days we were accountable to other men, and who we spoke with. Having a number of men that we connect with builds a strong support system. Some of us may think we will use the phone list only when we are in trouble and are close to falling. However, we are more likely to call when we have proactively formed relationships with other members, and when there is sense of brotherhood. Though we may feel more comfortable with the personalities and life experiences of certain men, it is important to have a variety of men to hold us accountable.

For those of you who are new to this group, don’t worry about bothering the person that you are calling, or catching them at a bad time. Most of us will pick up the phone if we can talk, and we benefit from the connection too. If you are about to fall at 3 in the morning, all of us would rather miss a little sleep and pray with you during the difficult time, than to see you fall. Though we may not agree with or enjoy this part of the program at first, many of us are amazed at how much we look forward to talking to another guy from group.

It is such a benefit to connect with men who are committed to doing the right thing and who truly understand where we have been. The questions, challenges, and advice may be the very thing that helps us make it through our day. What a blessing it is to be connected to others when many of us thought we were alone, and strength and support quickly build through the process. Phone calls help us grow in humility, and the days that we may really not want to reach out are often the days that we need help the most. A quick phone call each day keeps relapses away!

Daily recovery material

Daily recovery material builds our mental defenses against temptation, and helps to reveal God's meaning and truth for sexuality. Currently there are a variety of books on the subject of sexual purity, sexual compulsion, chastity, Theology of the Body, and Natural Family Planning. The Catechism of the Catholic Church has amazing wisdom in the Sixth and Ninth commandments, which goes into purity and sexuality as well.

Overall the goal is build up our mental defenses for freedom, and the Church and other authors have blessed us many options here. Effort should be made to avoid books with triggering stories or details, and to be accountable about what we are reading during group.

Making time for daily recovery material may be difficult, but remember that we often managed to creatively squeeze in time for fantasy and lust in the past. Reading a recovery book, listening to recovery CD's in the car, reading websites that deal with freedom from lust, or watching part of a recovery DVD are all ways we can build our mental defenses. Though spiritual reading and scripture are excellent parts of prayer time and spiritual connection, we are looking for resources focused on the battle for purity.

There are also many good resources on marriage and relationships that may be beneficial after reading books on chastity and sexual purity.

12 Steps

One of the integral parts of changing our hearts and healing from lust is working through the 12 Steps. The 12 Steps originally come from Alcoholics Anonymous, which was founded in 1935. From admitting powerlessness and taking a moral inventory in some of the earlier steps, all the way to making amends and spreading the message of hope in the later steps, the Twelve Steps can change our life. Beyond the discipline and structure of the My House Men's Group, we need to change our hearts, and the 12 Steps help us to do just that. For a more in depth look at the Twelve Steps, please refer to Fr. Emmerich Voigt's 12 step materials, the White Book of Sexaholics Anonymous, and the Final Freedom in the resource section. There are numerous workbooks that can be purchased as well to guide us through the steps.

One of the most important lessons from the 12 steps is sharing our experiences of freedom with others. Dr. Bob (AA cofounder) said that Bill W (other AA cofounder) was the first person he had ever met who knew what he was talking about with alcoholism from his lived experience.

If you ever read the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, you will notice that over three quarters of the content are personal testimonies of freedom from addiction. In order to stay sober, we need to reach out of ourselves and help others.

Though there may be the temptation to stop attending group once we have attained some sobriety, men with long term sobriety stay plugged into their accountability system. The beauty of the program is that as we grow in freedom, we can help others and give to them what we have graciously received.

Conclusion for Three Pillars

My House Men's Group members show their commitment to freedom through daily choices and actions. We may desire to stop lusting, and say that we want to stop, but until we demonstrate a commitment to change through daily actions, what good are these desires? During group we are accountable about how many days we chose to put the armor on through the three pillars. St. Paul never said to take the armor off in Ephesians 6, and though the weight may be heavy at first, we will start to see the true blessing of being able to fight. There is a strong connection between faithfully following the Three Pillars and long term sobriety, and those who want freedom are willing to fight and do whatever it takes.

INTIMACY FOR MARRIED MEN

“Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, (love) is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.” 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a

Restoring trust and building marital intimacy requires humility and giving of ourselves. Many of us may immediately think of sex when we hear the word intimacy, but we have often neglected the spiritual and emotional components of connection. Men who are struggling with sexual addiction also struggle with what several authors refer to as sexual or emotional anorexia. Just as someone with anorexia nervosa starves themselves from food and nutrition, the sexual or emotional anorexic actively withholds emotional, sexual, or spiritual intimacy from their spouse. Whether there is an actual anorexic patterns or not, true intimacy or “into me see” involves connecting entirely to our wives spiritually, emotionally, and physically (1 Thessalonians 5:23). The three dimensional level of intimacy may not come naturally for many of us, but helps to restore trust with our wives and can bring marriage to a much closer level. Similar to the “three dailies” from Dr. Weiss, there are intentional ways that we can improve marital intimacy.

Though it may take time and effort to knock down the walls that are keeping us from true intimacy, we can rebuild intimacy in the following ways.

Spiritual Intimacy

Praying with our wives daily is a recommended start for developing spiritual connection. We can grow in spiritual intimacy with our wives in a variety of ways, including offering up prayer intentions, going over the readings and saint of the day, discussing spiritual reading together, thanking God for each other, going to mass together, praying the rosary together, and praying before going to bed. Many of us are aware of the power of prayer and may be praying individually, but we are called to be the spiritual leaders of our family. Beyond just married men, spiritual intimacy can be a beautiful way for engaged couples to prepare for their marital covenant. Some men have expanded their spiritual leadership to also include their children in some of the above listed ways. Even if our wives are asleep or out of town, we can be creative and write prayers down for them, or leave a prayer on their voicemail.

Emotional Intimacy

Praising our wives and expressing our feelings to them develops stronger emotional intimacy in the marriage. Praising and affirming the amazing characteristics of our spouse helps us to honor the daughters of God whom we have often taken for granted in the past. It may be easy to praise the way they look, cook, or do things for us, but we want to also honor their talents, and amazing characteristics such as their intelligence, inner beauty, leadership, good humor, and compassion. Marriage during recovery can feel like a roller coaster and there will be ups and downs, but we have a choice to pursue our wives out of love.

Expressing emotions involves being vulnerable and allowing our spouse to see us at a deeper level. Telling one's wife about emotions that were experienced throughout the day helps us to open up and let them into our lives. Examining what we are truly feeling builds our emotional maturity as well. For example, underneath the feeling of anger that we may have experienced at work, there may really be feelings of embarrassment, pressure, nervousness, intimidation, fear, or confusion. Our past lifestyles of lust often involved running away from difficult emotions and disconnecting from others. It is time to lovingly take down those walls and pursue emotional connection with the woman we promised our lives to. Our wives may need time to receive and trust the emotional intimacy, but opening up and pursuing them out of love is a healing process.

As mentioned in the previous section, we can always leave messages and notes if there is not the chance to talk to them directly each day.

Physical Intimacy

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church and handed himself over for her to sanctify her, cleansing her by the bath of water with the word, that he might present to himself the church in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.” -Ephesians 5:25-27

The beautiful innocence of marital sexuality was intended to bring us closer to our spouse and to God. When St. Paul instructs us to love our wives as Christ loved the church, we are reminded of His ultimate self-gift on the cross. Jesus poured out His body and gave Himself completely to us through His passion and death. John Paul II wrote that the opposite of Christ's self giving love is not hate, but involves using someone for our selfish pleasure. He adds that lust reduces a person into an object to satisfy a need, and adultery of the heart (Matthew 5:27-28) can take place within marriage. (George Weigel, *Witness to Hope*) Though patterns of lust have entered our hearts, our sexual desire can be redeemed into the beautiful, innocent, self-giving love that God created it to be.

Part of our recovery is discovering the beautiful truth about our sexuality. George Weigel wrote that John Paul II viewed sexual love in marriage as an act of worship, and stated that the self-giving love of sexual union was an icon of the interior life of God. We are called to let go of any lust that takes away from the self-gift to our spouse. In the past, many have struggled with fantasy and objectifying thoughts while making love to their wife. Praying with one's spouse before sexual intimacy and immediately surrendering any lust to God, helps to keep us pure in these beautiful moments. The eyes have been called the window to the soul, and looking deeply into the eyes of our spouse can help to keep us out of the fantasy world. Closing our eyes or being in a dark room can lead to old memories and fantasies entering our minds during marital intimacy. Dr. Douglas Weiss, a well known author on sexual addiction, encourages recovering men to verbally affirm their wives during these intimate moments as well. Speaking deeply into our wife's hearts helps us to build intimacy and stay connected.

Some recovering men have found that a mutually agreed upon time of abstinence can provide a time of healing for couples who have been deeply wounded by lust. Abstinence provides a time to focus on emotional and spiritual intimacy, and helps spouses not take the sexual gift for granted. It can be helpful for us to have a discussion with our wives about the forms of intimacy that bring us closer to God and to each other.

There may be certain forms of foreplay and physical affection that are strongly connected to the fantasy world that need to be removed, and we should be honest with ourselves here. Though fantasy and disconnection may be patterns from the past, the good news is that through God's grace we can experience the true meaning and beautiful innocence of the marital embrace.

We are called to freedom, and there is a level of innocence and beauty that we can attain in the gift of marital intimacy, despite the habits from the past. The call to marital chastity is a beautiful challenge from our Church, but ultimately it develops deep respect and love between husband and wife.

Restoring Trust

As married men we will have a special cross in front of us in the recovery process. The pain, grief, and hurt that we have inflicted on our wives does not heal overnight, and we need to be patient and humbly serve them. After violating trust and wounding our wives deeply, it is not our place to force our wives into recovery, or make them go into therapy. We can let them know of groups and resources that are available for their healing, but our primary focus is on our personal recovery. The Twelve Steps are very helpful in our healing process, and give us the opportunity to look at our own issues and shortcomings at a deeper level.

Within the first year of recovery, our primary job includes staying sober, hearing our wife's pain, owning our own issues, and serving our wife and family. Though we may be experts at shifting blame onto our wives, it is time to enter the humbling journey of changing the things that we do not like in ourselves, and making amends for our past.

When our wives become sad and regretful about the past, we can listen to their pain and own the issues that we are responsible for. Some of us may need to be careful about beating ourselves up in the process, and trying to take responsibility for too much, but simply listening and being with them during these difficult moments is a tremendous blessing.

Though we may be confident that we are changing and healing, our wives have no idea if we will continue making progress and sometimes if we are even making progress. Did some of us not tell them many times that we would never do it again? Receiving the Sacraments of Confession and the Eucharist regularly, consistent group attendance and sobriety, working with a marriage counselor, and growing with them spiritually, emotionally, and physically are the ways to heal the wounds. This will require keeping our mouth closed when we want to blame our wives, and asking God for humility and strength. Our wives are not accountability partners, and sometimes recovering men tell their spouse too much about the tempting thoughts and glances that they are experiencing. Many wives want to know if there are any relapses, or crossing of primary boundaries, and some may want to know about the secondary boundaries and consequences.

(See section on primary and secondary boundaries)

God has the power to heal our wives in His time, but it is time for us to focus on cleaning every room in our own house first. There is a My House Women's Group available for wives, and other groups are available in the resource section.

Therapeutic polygraph tests can be a helpful gift to restore trust that has been broken with past acting out, and many recovering men are thankful for the extra accountability that the test offers to their program. Breaking through the lies and deception with a polygraph can also help to relieve our wives from feeling like they always have to check up on us. Of course these should be set up with a therapist, and are not recommended in every case.

References for Intimacy for Married Men

Weigel, George (2001). *Witness to hope, the biography of Pope John Paul II*. New York, NY, Cliff Street Books

BACKUP PLAN FOR TEMPTATION

“I urge you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship.” -Romans 12:1

As mentioned in the section on sobriety, pornography, masturbation, sexual behavior outside of marriage, and marital intimacy that is not an authentic sign of God’s free, total, faithful, and fruitful love are the main categories that are considered a relapse in the My House Men’s Group. We must strive to be free from acting out in these areas, but there are smaller forms of lust that we need to let go as well. Underneath the acting out behaviors, there are often lustful patterns or occasions of sin that we need to be accountable about. If we loose sobriety or cross the smaller boundaries, there are also forms of self discipline that we commit to. We need to be accountable about a structured plan for our freedom.

Rewards for Sobriety

Many of us have put time, money, and energy into pornography and lust in the past, and it is time to celebrate the freedom of sobriety. Setting up specific rewards for milestones of sobriety such as 30 days, 60 days, 90 days, 6 months, and one year can help to keep us motivated when temptation comes back. Of course we still want to focus on working through one day at a time, but it can be nice to have something to celebrate about. Perhaps there is a particular item for a hobby, or tickets to a sporting event that are good incentives to keep pressing on. Married men might take their spouse out on a really nice date for a milestone in sobriety. The idea is to find something creative that fits our situation.

Beyond the external rewards, we are growing in the internal rewards of integrity, hope, authentic manhood, courage, being a better husband, being a better father, giving hope to others, and giving back to others. What a blessing it is to work towards freedom from the past, and to see the progress that is being made.

Primary Boundaries

Primary boundaries are a personalized list of the forms of relapse from our past. There may be other behaviors such as lying, contacting women from past affairs, going to strip clubs, or other actions that are personally on the same level as the sobriety guidelines. We do not need to go into any triggering details when stating our primary boundaries, and we are here to bring the facts of our past struggles into the light.

As a hypothetical example, Bob is a young single man in the group who struggled with pornography, masturbation, and occasional phone sex. Outside of these forms of relapse, he has never had sexual contact outside of marriage or done anything else that is on the same level as our sobriety guidelines. If John happens to ever go to a strip club or have sexual behavior outside of marriage, his sobriety days would start over, and he would add the new acting out behaviors to his primary list.

Though some of us may have been involved in paid sex, while others struggled solely with masturbation, the addictive roots of lust are similar. There are other forms of lust underneath primary boundaries that we need accountability for, which will be discussed later in the secondary boundary section. Long term freedom requires rigorous honesty, and our group is not here to condemn, but to fight the battle along side of each other.

Primary Consequence(s)

Just as a child needs discipline to respect his parent's rules, we need self discipline to maintain sobriety. Though some of the influences that may have lead to sexual compulsion such as abuse, neglect, shame, or early exposure to pornography are not our fault, it is our responsibility to put forth effort for healing. Primary consequences are designed to combat the moments of temptation by adding an extra level of accountability for our freedom.

Many of us are aware of the pain that lust has brought to our lives so far, and of the consequences of continued acting out. Spiritual apathy, separation, having another man raise our children, disease, emotional immaturity, loss of career, and even death are possible results of our acting out. Unfortunately the intense pleasure and emotional escape of the addictive cycle may lead to rationalizing and ignoring reality, which often perpetuates the pain, distance, and agony of those closest to us.

Having a backup plan for the moments of temptation helps us to actively put a deterrent in place for our freedom. The primary consequence is a self disciplined form of service, time, or monetary donation that we part with if there are any forms of losing sobriety. The penalty should be a realistic opportunity to refocus our efforts towards chastity. Solid primary consequences can be quickly followed through on without increasing shame and self loathing. Effort should be used to find something that has maximum significance for us, but minimum pain for our spouse, children, or others. The idea is to take responsibility for our actions and make some form of amend which can often increase our level of accountability and resolve to do what is right. It can take time and creativity to have the right relapse commitment, but we should put something in place as soon as possible, no matter how small it is. One recovering man committed to eating a large, raw, red onion if he ever fell again, while another man committed to anonymously donating \$20 (in addition to his regular tithe) to his parish if he acted out. Another popular consequence includes fasting for a certain amount of time if there are any relapses. Other examples may include volunteering time, giving away prized possessions, making anonymous donations, moving out for a certain period of time, giving up an activity that we enjoy, etc. Remember that we want to think of something that will be a realistic reminder during the moment of temptation.

For those of us who are married, it may be important to proactively plan our consequence with our wife based on logical principals, rather than waiting until it happens and making an emotional decision. It may be beneficial to come up with a few options for a primary consequence, and run them by the group, spiritual director, counselor, and spouse. It is important that a recovering person's wife does not become his accountability partner, but many spouses want to know when there is a relapse. The inappropriate thoughts and temptations are generally overwhelming to a spouse, even if she thinks she needs to know every detail. Many have found it

helpful to discuss some of the boundary violations with their spouse without details, and to let them know that a consequence is in place for the violation. (Please talk with a Christian counselor who specializes in sexual integrity here.)

Having a realistic plan in place that our wives and support system have agreed on can also help us steer clear of rationalizations that our wives will never find out, or that it will not bother them very much. A married man who has acted out with others outside of marriage may decide with his wife, priest, and counselor, that there will be a time of separation if he ever chooses to engage in sexual behavior with other people again. It is important to keep our heads up even after a relapse, and to look for the deeper issues that may have influenced acting out. Some of us may never go back, while others may attain long term sobriety after some initial setbacks.

Ultimately it is surrendering to God, living a sacramental life, becoming men of virtue, focusing on the Three Pillars, and breaking out of isolation that will lead to a transformation of heart and true sobriety from our old ways. It is important for us to really get to the underlying issues that influence acting out, and rebuild and repair our hearts in the process. Of course spiritual direction, counseling, in depth treatment at a sexual addiction treatment center, attending multiple groups, medical treatment, and other help may be necessary to gain long-term freedom.

Secondary Boundaries

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you, everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart." -Matthew 5:27-28

Secondary boundaries are lines which we wisely put in place to avoid temptation. Developing a system of secondary boundaries can help us establish discipline with the smaller, more subtle choices that often precede acting out. Instead of thinking of boundaries as things that we oppressively can't do any more, the idea is to think that it would not be wise to put ourselves in certain situations. Is our freedom and sobriety really worth the risk of having a little lustful curiosity? As God transforms our hearts, we will eventually not even desire to cross these lines.

We live in a culture with loads of sexual images and situations that trigger lust, but it is a choice to pursue lust, or to foolishly put ourselves in certain situations. As an example, we may feel the pull of lust while initially glancing at an attractive person in the grocery store. However, it is something different to deliberately follow them down the aisle to get a better view. In the first case, we can snap a rubber band or pinch ourselves, pray, and tell fellow group members during our daily accountability call. The second case involves more of an active choice to cross a line, and may require a more firm consequence. Secondary boundaries may involve particular people, locations, entertainment, or media that we know are not worth the risk of tempting ourselves. A few examples of secondary boundaries include:

- 1) Going on the internet without proper accountability software (see resource section for software)
- 2) Going into movie rental places while alone
- 3) Listening to inappropriate music or songs

- 4) Watching TV or movies while alone
- 5) Flipping through channels on TV
- 6) Watching cable or satellite TV
- 7) Intentionally being around people we have had lustful thoughts about
- 8) Engaging in lustful banter with others
- 9) Having unprofessional conversations with people we are lustfully attracted to
- 10) Talking to people our spouse would be uncomfortable with due to lust
- 11) Going to the magazine rack at stores
- 12) Using the internet on cell phones or PDAs
- 13) Driving through certain areas of town where we used to act out
- 14) Having more than a certain amount of alcoholic drinks in a day (obviously any drinking would be problematic for alcoholics.)
- 15) Going into stores that sell pornography or have access to inappropriate material
- 16) Reading books or media with lustful content
- 17) Watching television shows or movies with lustful content
- 18) Carving out unaccountable time
- 19) Having unaccountable money
- 20) Viewing newspapers, catalogs, or yellow pages
- 21) Looking at personal advertisements
- 22) Checking questionable emails
- 23) Going into underwear departments at stores
- 24) Going into locker rooms
- 25) Going into bars or night clubs
- 26) Deliberately taking second looks
- 27) Deliberately engaging in lustful thoughts

These are some initial ideas, but there may be other things that apply better to our personal situation. The idea is to put a game plan in place based on our lustful patterns from the past. This personal list can be added to as we learn more about the program, and we may be able to take certain things off of our list as our hearts change. Arresting the small areas of lust and winning the smaller battles can really lead to long term victory and sobriety in the bigger areas.

Secondary Consequences

Secondary consequences are a smaller deterrent to help us avoid crossing our secondary boundaries. Common secondary consequences include fasting for a period of time, taking away privileges such as television for a certain amount of time, donating a smaller amount of money to charity, volunteering for a period of time, etc. Men often report that making an immediate phone call, and then having a minor consequence that they complete within a short amount of time can help diffuse the secondary boundary violation before it turns into a relapse. We want to make sure that we can quickly follow through with the backup plan, and not develop shame and self loathing for the burden of consequences that have added up over time. Recall that these commitments should not directly benefit us, and that there should be minimal pain to our wife and family. For something such as second looks and lustful thoughts, we may put in a smaller consequence such as snapping the rubber band and immediately praying for the person.

Of course if the thoughts continue to go, or we take multiple second looks, there may be a stronger consequence to put in place.

FEEDBACK

During feedback, we offer accountability and support, and share our experience, strength, and hope with other men. During this time, we carefully avoid tangents, personal advice, or comments outside of the focus of sexual integrity. Feedback provides a time to encourage each other, but we are not here to condemn or judge other members.

Yelling, cussing, shaming, and rudely interrupting are not tolerated. In a healthy group, we are being accountable for our faults and trials weekly, and talking about our victories as well, while receiving encouragement and prayer from fellow warriors. The term “cross talk” is used in many support groups, and carries different meanings depending on the group. Alcoholics Anonymous addressed the issue in a “Box 459” newsletter from the General Service Office (G.S.O.) in September of 2006, which can be accessed at:
http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org/en_pdfs/en_box459_aug-sept06.pdf.

(The same newsletter opens with a story about Father Ed Dowling who was a good friend of Bill W, the co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous.) Another article from the 1994 Box 459 newsletter has a section on crosstalk as well.

As an accountability group focusing on the battle for purity, our meetings are based on praying together and being accountable about our journey to freedom from lust. Avoiding interruptions and attempts to fix or change each other keeps us focused on the biggest battle, which is allowing God to change us. Simply listening to each other’s progress in the battle, and being present are some of the biggest gifts we can offer to other men.

All of us must remember that we are in group to work on ourselves, and we are not in meetings to be each other’s counselor or spiritual director. We are not paying each other for professional advice or counseling, and it is not our place to fix others or tell them what they should do. Also, comments to others must be free from belittling or condemnation.

There are often very encouraging comments that are made by group members based on what other men have discussed during group. It can be helpful to share our experience, strength, and hope on the topic that we hear during group. Often, the most helpful support can be statements of encouragement and non-judgmental questions. If there is not enough time after check-ins for feedback that ties into our own recovery, there is always time after group to talk and daily phone calls to follow up.

DISCUSSION, CLOSING PRAYER, & DONATIONS

We are blessed with tremendous wisdom and beauty from our Church on the true meaning of sexuality. Learning about the Church's teaching, and growing in our faith is the main focus of our discussion time. The Catholic Church offers an incredible message of hope and freedom that we can continue to grow in and discuss. Devoting one third of our group time to our spiritual growth, and learning more about our Church's teaching on sexuality is our goal. The resources and teachings of the Catholic Church provide incredible meaning and truth for our lives.

Donations

We are a self supporting group that is working diligently to let men in other areas and parishes know that they are not alone with their struggles. A basket is passed around the room before the closing prayer, and though there is no requirement to donate, a suggested donation of \$3 will help these groups grow. The funds from the group collection are broken into three equal parts:

- 1) The parish or diocesan building hosting the My House Men's Group
- 2) Resources for group members
- 3) Promotional resources for groups in different parishes.

Closing Prayer

After discussion, we offer up prayer requests. One of the men closes the group by leading us in the prayer to St. Michael the Archangel. We then conclude with: "Our Lady Queen of Victory, Pray for us!" and "AS FOR ME AND MY HOUSE ... WE WILL SERVE THE LORD!"

Outside of the prayer requests from members, we can pray for all women that have been wounded by our lust, for the men that have not found a group yet, and for courage to reach out to others.

TASKS FOR MEMBERS

“Now the body is not a single part, but many. But as it is, God placed the parts, each one of them, in the body as he intended. If they were all one part, where would the body be?” 1 Corinthians 12:14-19

Active involvement in the group is a great source of healing, and a huge part of recovery is getting outside of ourselves to serve others. The most valuable resource for the groups is each other, and respect and serving each other is the foundation of a solid group. Though there are different stages of recovery that we are in and different talents that we bring to the group, we must stay together. The 12 step mentality of staying sober through helping others applies here, and all are invited to actively have a role. The following is a list of ways to serve the group, and let the group leader know if you have any other ideas.

- 1) Treasurer – The treasurer collects donations and keeps track of the group’s budget.
- 2) Resource Manager – keeps an up to date list of books, CDs and DVDs and keeps record of cash deposits for books and resources that have been lent to members.
- 3) Phone List Organizer – keeps an up to date phone / check in list which is provided at each group.
- 4) Promoter – Provides cards and promotional materials to local parishes and priests
- 5) Testimonials – Men who have attained one year of sobriety are invited to write their personal testimony, and send it to the central office.
- 6) Leader – Men who are loyal to the Catholic Church and Her teaching on sexuality are encouraged to become leaders of the My House Men’s groups, after demonstrating consistent effort in the group and stable sobriety. The group leader is the primary servant of a local My House Men’s Group. His tasks include attending the My House Men’s Group leadership training, and going through the Safe Environment Protocol for the Archdiocese.

As mentioned in the introduction, your thoughts and feedback are important to developing the structure of the group.

WHY DOES SEXUAL ACTIVITY BECOME ADDICTIVE?

“Avoid (sexual) immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the immoral person sins against his own body.” – 1 Corinthians 6:18

Though there can be discomfort associated with the words “sexual addiction” and “sexual compulsion”, there are hopeful explanations and solutions for healing. Beyond drugs and alcohol, we can develop addictions to behavior such as eating, gambling, and sexual activity. Carnes (2001) defines addiction as a pathological connection with a mood-altering substance or behavior. The treatment of sexual addiction is a new and exciting field, which formally began in the 1980s. This section provides an overview of common influences of sexual addiction. There is also a piece on the cycle of addiction.

There is freedom attainable from addiction, and our actions from the past do not have to dictate our future. The physiological and psychological roots of the addiction will now be explained.

Physiological Explanations

Our bodies are strongly bonded to our wife during sexual intimacy through neurotransmitters, which create an intense sense of pleasure and emotional connection. "During sex, chemicals called endorphins and enkephalines rush to the excitement center (pre-optic neuron) of a man's brain, filling it to the highest possible level." (Weiss, 2002 p. 15) In addition to endorphins and enkephalines, research indicates that strong emotional bonds are formed by oxytocin and vasopressin, which are released during sexual climax. Indeed, God has a beautiful design for union and connection with the one flesh union between husband and wife.

Outside of marital intimacy, these same neuro-chemicals can bond us to images, fantasies, and other people. According to Roller (2004), sex addicts experience enhanced need for the mood altering neuro-chemicals from sexual behavior, which target the same neuro-pathways as alcohol and cocaine use. As with other addictions, people begin to experience a level of tolerance with certain forms of acting out, which can lead to a progression of sexual behavior. Many of us have put ourselves in situations or done things that we never would have imagined years ago. Many of us have triggers that proceed acting out that we have strongly rewarded over time. In a famous experiment, Pavlov noted that dogs associated the ringing of a bell with feeding time, and eventually began salivating at the sound of the bell. We often associate certain triggers with sexual arousal, such as the person who becomes aroused at hearing the high pitched noise of a dial up internet connection. Instead of ringing the bell (fantasy or trigger) and feeding the dog (sexual release), a little pain and discipline can refocus us and snap us back into reality (Weiss, 1998). Many who are breaking out of smoking and sexual habits have been helped by snapping their wrists with a rubber band when intrusive thoughts come back. Though the rubber band technique sounds simple, it can be a powerful physical reminder of our commitment to group.

Patterns of sexual addiction distort our sexual gift into a selfish form of pleasure. Many of us have been bonding for years to fantasies and pornographic images through masturbation, and there may patterns of sexual contact with others as well. We have bonded to this fantasy world thousands of times, and it takes perseverance to stop. Many men thought that their struggles would go away once they got married, but how can any wife compete with a fantasy world, which their husband connected with long before they even met? Despite these habits and patterns, putting in positive effort and progress through the recovery process can make a huge difference. The physiological components are influences, but patient perseverance through God's grace and consistent recovery can give us freedom.

Psychological Explanations

“If mental health can be defined, as M. Scott Peck says, as a commitment to reality no matter what the cost, addiction can be defined as its direct opposite: evading reality no matter the cost.” (Carnes, 2001 p.1)

There are psychological roots to sexually addictive behavior, including past abuse, neglect, and trauma. Men in group may have experienced emotional, physical, or sexual abuse from family members or other trusted adults. Issues such as abandonment, divorce, and neglect are all possible sources of pain, and sexual behavior can quickly become a source of medicine from an early age (Weiss 1998). Many of us have had difficult times in our past, and the rush or high from sexual release can become a reliable way to self soothe. After the high wears off, the deep wounds remain, and we are left with emptiness and despair.

It is not uncommon for men to report that they engage in sexually compulsive behavior during stressful times. Instead of embracing the pain and suffering of life, sexual release provides a temporary medication that numbs one's senses. We are more likely to fall into lust and temptation when there is devaluation. The acronym HALTS (hungry, angry, lonely, tired, and stressed) has been used in recovery groups to identify common times of weakness. There may be other patterns of emotional, social, financial, spiritual, nutritional, or physical devaluation. Looking at some of the underlying emotions and devaluations beneath behavior can lead to actually taking care of ourselves in a healthy way, and truly meeting our needs.

Our patterns of sexual activity may indicate some of the underlying wounds that we have not dealt with. Perhaps the man who was brought up with controlling parents now obsesses with dominant fantasies where he finally has a sense of power. The executive who grew up in critical and pessimistic home may turn to the seductive affirmation of another woman, as he is swept into an emotional affair that becomes sexual. Looking below the surface into the patterns of our sexual behavior may help us discover some of the wounds we are running from.

Sexually compulsive behavior tend to stunt emotional growth by medicating difficult feelings such as resentment, loneliness, stress, exhaustion, or fear. Spouses or significant others begin to feel like a parent instead of a companion to a man who is constantly running away from pain and failing to demonstrate leadership during difficult times. Some wives say that they feel like a roommate instead of a spouse. The recovery process will entail embracing painful emotions and reality, which helps us grow as men of integrity.

Though there are difficult growing pains in the process of healing from sexual addiction, the dignity and peace that is gained far outweighs the crosses that we will bear on a daily basis.

Sexual Addiction Cycle

According to Carnes (2001), there are four phases of the sexually compulsive cycle. The first phase includes being preoccupied or obsessed with fantasy and sexual thoughts. During the second phase, known as ritualization, a routine is practiced that leads to the sexual behavior. Sexual behavior leads to despair, and feelings of powerless and even intense pain. The pain and despair often promote the preoccupation and ritualization of another cycle. (Carnes 2001) Weiss (1998) builds upon the previous cycle with several categories. Pain agents are the first category and involve emotional discomfort, unresolved conflict, stress, and the need to connect. The next stage is disassociation, where the person disconnects from themselves. Next is the altered state, where fantasy and mental imagery take over.

Pursuing behaviors are the actions that set up the acting out behavior. The person then acts out through pornography, masturbation, or sexual acts with others. The final component is time, and people develop patterns of frequency for acting out, which may range from hours to months (Weiss 1998).

Combining the two cycles from Carnes and Weiss can provide a fruitful explanation and understanding of the cycle of sexual addiction. We often experience emotional discomfort with feeling such as loneliness, resentment, stress, or shame. The emotional pain agents often lead to a desire to escape and disconnect, which for many of us was learned from a young age. After detaching comes the preoccupation or altered state. We may imagine acting out, fantasize about future sexual situations, or recall past sexual relationships. After a while the fantasy leads to actions such as leaving the office, driving to particular areas of town, surfing through cable television channels, or perusing the magazine rack at stores; which is known as the pursuing behavior or ritualization process. The acting out through pornography, masturbation, or sexual contact creates the intense neuro-chemical reward which intensely bonds us to the person, image, or fantasy that we are using. Perhaps we will promise ourselves to never go back, but after a certain amount of time the cycle often starts back over.

We are encouraged to personalize the cycle to our own experience, which provides greater awareness and understanding about how this process continues in our life. The good news is that we have others to help us when we enter a time of deprivation or begin to disconnect from reality. Though we may be in the state of pursuing behavior or ritualization, there are forms of self discipline and practical solutions which can help us out.

These thoughts and explanations can feel burdensome at times, but the good news is that patterns of sexual addiction are not a life sentence. We are here to celebrate the progress and positive steps we are taking to break past patterns. We need to take the recovery process seriously, and a successful combination includes regularly receiving the sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist, spiritual direction, attending as many accountability groups as possible (at least one per week, but multiple meetings are much more effective) and finding a Christian counselor who

works with sexual addiction. Indeed there is hope, and our “test” can truly be turned into a testimony.

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RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

My House Program - Archdiocese of Omaha

“An initiative aimed at fostering the virtue of chastity by building awareness of the effects of pornography in society, offering support and healing for those harmed by it, and educating Catholics on what they can do to protect their families from its influence.”

My House Women’s Group

A support group for wives and significant other who have been wounded by our struggles with lust. The group is facilitated by Ruth Leininger,

Blessed are the Pure in Heart (pastoral letter) Bishop Robert W. Finn

“A Pastoral Letter on the Dignity of the Human Person and the Dangers of Pornography”
Diocese of Kansas City, St. Joseph

Bought with a Price (pastoral letter) Bishop Paul S. Loverde

“Pornography and the Attack on the Living Temple of God”
Diocese of Arlington, Virginia

Breaking Free (book) Steve Wood

Contraception: Why Not? / Revised Edition (CD) Janet Smith

“Our culture believes that contraception is one of the greatest inventions of the late twentieth century. Promoters of contraception argue that it will decrease unwed pregnancy and abortion and improve marriages. The evidence is overwhelming, however, that since contraception has become widely used, unwed pregnancy, abortion, and divorce have greatly increased. In this new and revised edition of her famous presentation, Prof. Smith argues that contraception has actually had a negative influence on our understanding of the meaning and purpose of sexuality and has led us to view babies as an unwelcome consequence of sexual intercourse, rather than a gift.” (from www.mycatholicfaith.org)

The Final Freedom (book) Douglas Weiss

“This book gives hope for recovery. Many have attested to successful recovery from the practical recovery information in this book alone.” (www.sexaddict.com)

The Five Love Languages (book) Gary Chapman

“Are you and your spouse speaking the same language? While love is a many splendored thing, it is sometimes a very confusing thing, too. And as people come in all varieties, shapes, and sizes, so do their choices of personal expressions of love. But more often than not, the giver and the receiver express love in two different ways. This can lead to misunderstanding, quarrels, and even divorce. Quality Time, Words of Affirmation, Gifts, Acts of Service, and Physical Touch. Dr. Gary Chapman identifies five basic languages of love and then guides couples towards a better understanding of their unique languages of love. Learn to speak and understand your mate’s love language, and in no time you will be able to effectively love and truly feel loved in return. Skillful communication is within your grasp!” (from www.garychapman.org)

The Good News about Sex and Marriage (book) Christopher West

“This easy-to-read, question-and-answer book by Christopher West offers a fresh, relevant, and convincing presentation of the Church’s teachings on human sexuality and marriage. Rooted in Pope John Paul II’s revolutionary Theology of the Body, this book is great for RCIA, Pre-Cana, and adult education classes.”
(From www.christopherwest.com)

Pure of Heart: Breaking Free from Porn (CD set) Jason Evert

“This new 5-disc CD set provides ten strategies to help men to conquer in their daily temptations with lust, with special emphasis on breaking free from pornography. It also features meditations read by Fr. Stan Fortuna, one of which is a powerful homily Pope John Paul II delivered to college men, long before he became pope. If you, or someone you love, struggles with pornography or simply lust in general, these CDs will be a blessing in your battle with temptation.” (from pureloveclub.com)

Pure Manhood (book) Jason Evert

“Teenage guys are often told to be gentlemen, and to treat women like ladies. However, they are rarely given concrete steps on how to do this. In *Pure Manhood*, Jason Evert challenges young men to look to Christ as the model of masculinity and purity.” (From pureloveclub.com)

White Book (book) Sexaholics Anonymous

Why NFP? Understanding Chastity in Marriage Jason Evert

“These days, the odds are against successful and lasting marriages. So what can help a marriage today? The true teachings of the Catholic Church. In this talk, you'll learn about the beautiful vision of marriage taught by the Church--and how couples can live out this vision daily. Full of vital information, yet filled with characteristic humor, Jason Evert explains the role of chastity within marriage and why this virtue actually strengthens the love between a man and a woman. The use of natural family planning (NFP) within a marriage is beautifully discussed. This talk will help every couple--whether newly engaged or already married. Perfect for marriage preparation classes.” (From pureloveclub.com)

Winning the Battle for Sexual Purity (DVD & CD) Christopher West

“In this straight talk with men, Christopher West addresses the struggles in the area of sexual purity and lust that many, if not most, men face on a regular basis.” (from www.christopherwest.com)

Christopher West www.christopherwest.com

-numerous Catholic resources on sexual purity, Theology of the Body, and the Church's teaching on the gift of human sexuality

Catholic Therapists www.catholictherapists.com

Clean Hotels www.cleanhotels.com

Covenant Eyes www.covenanteyes.com

-computer software that provides accountability reports and / or filtering for the internet

E5men www.e5men.org

-powerful group of men that pray and fast together

National Coalition for the Protection of Children and Families www.nationalcoalition.org

-A Christian group that is taking a bold stand against pornography, and Phillip Cosby heads the Kansas City office. The National Coalition's mission statement is “moving the people of God to embrace, live out, preserve and advance the truth of biblical sexuality”

Billings Method www.billings-ovulationmethod.org

Couple to Couple League www.ccli.org

One More Soul www.omsoul.com

Pure Love Club www.pureloveclub.com

-Jason and Chrystalina Evert's website with lots of information about purity from a Catholic perspective

Safe Eyes www.safeeyes.com

-computer software that provides accountability reports and / or filtering for the internet

Sexaholics Anonymous www.sa.org

-12 step approach to recovery which is available in many large cities

Serenellians www.pornnomore.com

The King's Men www.thekingsmen.us

True Knights www.trueknights.org

-Ken Henderson provides a Catholic approach to men's purity and growing as a true warrior of God

Unity Restored ur.solucionxpress.com

-an overview on healing from pornography and sexual compulsions from a Catholic perspective

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