

LINDELL RECOVERY NETWORK

# SEXUAL ADDICTION

*The Way Out of the Web*

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KEYS FOR LIVING LIBRARY





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*The Addiction and Recovery Series*

# SEXUAL ADDICTION

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# A PERSONAL NOTE

*from Mike Lindell*

My passion is to see people recover from addiction! And that's why I'm proud to partner with author June Hunt and Hope for the Heart, and so excited to use the *Keys for Living* as part of the Lindell Recovery Network. People everywhere are struggling with addictions, wounds, and challenges in life. They need hope. They need help. And the *Keys for Living* provide that hope and real answers from God's Word.

This is the best material I've seen in biblical counseling and caregiving . . . with over 100 topics that speak to almost every presenting problem. There's nothing else like them. They take God's Word and apply it to life's challenges.

The *Keys for Living* are exceptional and outstanding resources for those who need help in overcoming the obstacles they face, and above all, to find Christ.

Read this book. Share it with others. Ask God in prayer to make it real in your life.

May God bless you as you do it!



Mike Lindell

Lindell Recovery Network



# INTRODUCTION

Do you know an adult who has not been confronted with the lure of pornography? I don't. . . myself included. I still remember the night, years ago, when I checked into a hotel in a city where I was to speak at a prayer breakfast. After meeting with the executive committee the night before the event, I returned to my room and turned on the television, hoping to catch the news.

While unpacking my suitcase, I flipped from channel to channel, not paying particularly close attention. I didn't see a news broadcast but I kept the television on, hoping something would eventually come on.

Something came on all right. The next time I looked up, male strippers were luridly parading across the television screen. *Wait a minute!* I thought, flabbergasted. *I'm at a family-friendly hotel chain. I didn't pay extra to gain access to 'adult programming.'* *How can this be happening?*

Quickly, I changed the channel. But how many travelers—alone at night, far from home—don't? During my three decades of biblical counseling, hundreds of strugglers have recounted a strikingly similar scenario: “It seemed so harmless at first.” After all, who would know? What could it hurt? But before long, they found themselves ensnared—trapped in a complex, all-consuming web of sexual addiction.

Never will I forget taking my mother to visit her dear friend Susan. We arrived around midnight, and the next morning we visited her well-attended, warm-spirited church.

As the service began, I became aware that the media was present, but the pastor was not. I later learned that the young pastor, a gifted Bible teacher, had been arrested for soliciting a prostitute.

Later that day, I made the comment to Susan, “What's so sad is that his wife is going to be blamed for not meeting his needs.” Stunned, Susan confided, “Why, that's exactly what I was thinking! I had just assumed that if she had met his needs, he wouldn't have gone to a prostitute.”

Very simply, I explained, “No one can make another person engage a prostitute or commit any sin. She can’t make her husband sin—she doesn’t have that power! It was his choice. Basically, he has inner needs that are not being met, and he is trying to satisfy them illegitimately.” The truth is, this couple’s sexual relationship may be normal. Yet, as is the case with many who give in to temptation, he was seeking illicit sex rather than bonding with his wife.

Most likely, his wife experienced intense confusion—knowing that they weren’t actually sharing true intimacy. In reality, his sexual relationship was not with his wife, but rather with sexual passion.

As God would have it, I had just finished writing much of the material that follows, and by the end of that same day, the pastor had a copy in his hands. The very next day he called to request a copy for each of the elders, hoping they too would gain understanding and insight.

Too many people—men, women and teenagers in epic proportions—are shackled to the shame of sexual addiction. And a large percentage feel they are caught in a web and are too entrapped to get out.

But for those who are trapped within the sinister trap of this web, there is hope. Matthew 19:26 says, “*with God all things are possible.*” The Lord can deliver anyone from the web of sexual addiction. I pray that, by the power of God’s Word and the practical principles contained within these pages, you or someone you know will experience the way out and live in true freedom.

June Hunt  
*Founder, Hope For The Heart*

# SEXUAL ADDICTION

## *The Way Out of the Web*

It starts with a single thread . . . and before long, a spider weaves an intricately designed web with only one intention—to capture prey.

It starts with a single picture, a single sexual image that pops onto the computer screen. And before long, you're ensnared, entrapped in a complex, all-consuming web of sexual addiction. You're undeniably stuck—you look around and all you see, all you think about, is sex. You're obsessed with erotic excitement, continually contemplating where and when you'll feed your sexual appetite.

Like an alcoholic who craves alcohol, you crave sex—you must have sexual stimulation. But there's another side to what is called *sexual addiction*: What stimulates also brings *shame* . . . with an unrelenting fear you'll never find your way out of the web.

God created sexuality and blessed it within the context of marriage. And He can help you break free of the binding web that keeps your mind captive. He can give you the strength to break free from the web, and He can replace harmful passions with healthy ones.

Even if you feel that your mind and your heart have been too defiled, remember that God is a Redeemer—a Deliverer! There is no willing soul He can't make clean.

*“You, LORD, have delivered me from death,  
my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling,  
that I may walk before the LORD in the land of the living.”*

(PSALM 116:8–9)



# DEFINITIONS



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*“Some seemingly harmless avenues of modern entertainment are actually dangerous back alleys leading to sexual seductions.”*



Saint by day, sex addict by night.

Mark is fully aware of the dangerous dynamics that accompany a double life. He has lived on both sides for more than 30 years—constantly dodging suspicion, continually fearing getting caught. Always wrestling with guilt and shame, but *still* he can't stop, he can't end his insatiable drive for sexual excitement. And that's why, like the alcoholic who craves a drink or the chain smoker who craves a cigarette, Mark craves sex, out-of-control sex, which categorizes him with millions of others around the world as a sex addict.

By day, Mark serves as a pastor and counselor, teaches at a Christian college, and volunteers on the local school board. But by night, Mark slips over to the seedier side of town, losing himself in lust, the shadows hiding his shame.<sup>1</sup> And Mark will be the first to admit:

*“Everything in the world—the lust of the flesh,  
the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—  
comes not from the Father but from the world.”*

(1 JOHN 2:16)

## What Is the Scope of Sexual Addiction?

The respected titles, the reviling behavior, just don't “add up.” Not only is Mark a pastor respectfully addressed as Reverend Mark Laaser, he earns a PhD in psychology, tagging him also as Dr. Mark Laaser. Mark is supposed to be a model of spiritual discipline—an expert on assessing and controlling human behaviors. But his addiction gets the best of him, and it is the demon that drives his life.

Since college, Mark has struggled with excessive “self sex,” and in graduate school he starts visiting X-rated bookstores and patronizing massage parlors, where he has sex with so-called “masseuses.” These practices continue while he's working vocationally as a pastor and

counselor, but eventually, Mark's nighttime and daytime worlds merge. Hurting vulnerable women who come to his counseling practice becomes part of his sexual addiction as Mark initiates affairs with several of them.<sup>2</sup>

The scope of Mark's sexual addiction is *staggering*. Hiding behind his religious exterior, he's like a lion in cover:

*"Like a lion in cover he lies in wait.  
He lies in wait to catch the helpless;  
he catches the helpless  
and drags them off in his net."  
(PSALM 10:9)*

Sexual addiction is . . .

**Compulsive.** A compulsive dependence on erotic excitement, resulting in detrimental patterns of thinking and behaving.

**Immoral.** The Greek noun *porneia*, translated as "fornication" or "immorality," is an umbrella word that covers all forms of sexual immorality.<sup>3</sup> We are told to "*put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry*" (Colossians 3:5).

**Enslaving.** The Greek word *douloo* means "to bring under bondage or enslave."<sup>4</sup> The Bible says, "*They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity—for 'people are slaves to whatever has mastered them'*" (2 Peter 2:19).

Have you ever wondered whether those who have been caught for years in the snare of sexual addiction can ever be set free? The simple answer is *Yes!* God's Word gives absolute assurance that anyone can be set free. The Bible says,

*"My eyes are ever on the LORD,  
for only he will release  
my feet from the snare."  
(PSALM 25:15)*

## Sexual Desire vs. Lust

**Question:** “At what point does normal sexual desire turn into lust?”

**Answer:** It is natural to be attracted to someone, but unnatural to *sexualize* a person. When your mind moves from normal attraction to consuming passion to do a sexually-impure act, then you experience lust. The Bible says,

*“Do not let sin reign in your mortal body  
so that you obey its evil desires.”*

(ROMANS 6:12)

## What Are the Streets into Sexual Addiction?

At age 11, Mark discovers pictures—pictures of naked women, pictures today he would describe as soft porn. Mark is fixated. The images imprinted on his mind eventually preoccupy his thoughts. The young son of a preacher next finds himself caught up in another vice: stealing *Playboy* magazines from the local drugstore.

“I knew that stealing was bad,” Mark recalls. “But I was willing to go ahead with it because the high was so fantastic of what I was experiencing.”<sup>5</sup>

For *many* people sinking in the sands of sexual addiction, their first introduction to pornography came during childhood. The idyllic picture of innocent children building castles in the sand is too often marred by the quicksand of lust. The Bible says,

*“If anyone causes one of these little ones—  
those who believe in me—to stumble,  
it would be better for them to have  
a large millstone hung around their neck  
and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.”*  
(MATTHEW 18:6)

### Back Alleys Leading to Sexual Addiction

Some seemingly harmless avenues of modern entertainment are actually dangerous back alleys leading to sexual seductions:

**Advertisements**—provocative lingerie, perfume, billboards, and catalogs containing sensual images

**“Adult”**—bookstores, peep show booths, and night clubs

**Cards**—pornographic postcards, playing cards, and photographs

**Computers**—Internet sites, sex chat rooms, and sexual games

**Covert businesses**—escort services and massage parlors

**Movies**—slasher films, R-rated and X-rated films

**Music**—sexually explicit lyrics

**Nudity**—topless bars, nude beaches, and nudist camps

**Printed literature**—pornographic books, magazines, cartoons, and comics

**Telephone**—900-numbers, phone sex, sexting, and videos on cell phones

**Television**—cable, soap operas, and videos portraying sensuality and adultery

When you find yourself heading down the wrong street, follow this instruction from Proverbs . . .

*“Above all else, guard your heart,  
for everything you do flows from it.*

<sup>24</sup> *Keep your mouth free of perversity . . .*

<sup>25</sup> *Let your eyes look straight ahead;  
fix your gaze directly before you.*

<sup>26</sup> *Give careful thought to the paths for your feet  
and be steadfast in all your ways.*

<sup>27</sup> *Do not turn to the right or the left;  
keep your foot from evil.”*

(PROVERBS 4:23–27)

## “Harmless” Porn

**Question:** “Pornography is harmless so why should it ever be illegal?”

**Answer:** Pornography is far from harmless. Everyone who’s been caught in the web of sexual addiction has obliterated that myth.

Pornography is addictive and often leads to abuse of others.

According to the Federal Bureau of Prisons, 76 percent of those convicted of an Internet-related crime against a child were also guilty of physically abusing children, with an average of 30 child victims each.<sup>6</sup>

All of us would be wise to share the resolve of King David:

*“I will not look with approval on anything that is vile.”*

(PSALM 101:3)

## What Is the Springboard into Sexual Quicksand?

Visualizing simply won't suffice.

By the time he's in high school, Mark takes his sexual addiction to the next level, wanting to "act out" his sexual fantasies, wanting *more* sexual excitement. Mark continues to look at magazines but he also begins viewing pornographic videos, and his masturbation habits heighten.

Mark's one great hope—the one person he thinks can pull him out of the sexual quicksand is his high school sweetheart, Debra. Debra knows nothing of Mark's secret life, and Mark believes marriage will be the cure for his crazed sexuality. He remembers thinking, *All this crazy stuff in the past—that will be over now. I'm getting married. I'll have a regular sexual partner.*<sup>7</sup>

But old habits die hard, and early into his marriage Mark finds himself once again feeding his sexual appetite with pornography. The sexual quicksand eventually swallows Mark. And 15 years into their marriage, Debra indeed will be one of many strong arms God uses to pull Mark out.

If only every addict would heed these words found in the very first book of the Bible:

*"If you do what is right,  
will you not be accepted?  
But if you do not do what is right,  
sin is crouching at your door;  
it desires to have you,  
but you must rule over it."*

(GENESIS 4:7)

## Pornography

**Pornography** is the depiction of erotic activity for the purpose of arousing sexual, lustful excitement.<sup>8</sup>

**Pornography** is from the Greek word *porne*, which means “prostitute or harlot.”<sup>9</sup>

**Pornography** debases sexuality and ridicules Christian values in favor of lust and immorality.

The Bible says,

*The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality  
but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.”*

(1 CORINTHIANS 6:13)

## Nudity and Porn

**Question:** “Since God created the human body as sexual, what’s wrong with nudity and pornography?”

**Answer:** God ordained human sexuality for intimacy in marriage and for procreation. Pornography and indiscriminate nudity are designed simply to arouse sexual lust.

Jesus said . . .

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

(MATTHEW 5:27–28)

## Soft-core Pornography<sup>10</sup>

**Soft-core pornography** is the depiction of adult nudity or non-explicit sexual activity between adults.

**Soft-core pornography** is usually not illegal.

Regardless of what many say is legal, it is always wise to know and obey God's laws and to follow only those who do.

Exodus 23:2 says . . .

*"Do not follow the crowd in doing wrong."*

## Objection to Legal Porn

**Question:** "Since adult bookstores, X-rated movies, and other types of adult pornography are usually legal, why should anyone object to them?"

**Answer:** Legality is not synonymous with morality.

Just because something is legal doesn't make it morally right.

Lawmakers often respond to pressures of lobbyists or the most vocal special interest groups, settling for less than the excellence set by God's moral law.

Sadly, many whose business it is to make laws do not realize or believe . . .

*"We must obey God rather than human beings!"*

(ACTS 5:29)

## Medical Books vs. Porn

**Question:** “Are all sexually explicit images pornographic?”

**Answer:** No. A medical book containing sexually explicit pictures is designed to teach or inform others and would not be considered pornographic. A presentation of the human body from an artist’s viewpoint may not necessarily be considered pornographic either. Consider Michelangelo’s *David*.

Proverbs 17:24 says,

*“A discerning person keeps wisdom in view,  
but a fool’s eyes wander to the ends of the earth.”*

## Hard-core Porn

**Hard-core porn** is the depiction of explicit or bizarre sexual activity that is clearly offensive and blatantly degrading to human beings.

**Hard-core porn** is the common term for *obscene*, which may also mean that it is illegal.<sup>11</sup>

**Hard-core porn** can include urinating, defecating, or vomiting on another.

The Bible says,

*“Let us behave decently, as in the daytime,  
not in carousing and drunkenness,  
not in sexual immorality and debauchery,  
not in dissension and jealousy.  
Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ,  
and do not think about how to gratify  
the desires of the flesh.”*  
(ROMANS 13:13–14)

**Heterosexual porn** depicts explicit sex acts between males and females, including oral and group sex.

**God's Mandate:** *“Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral”* (Hebrews 13:4).

**Homosexual porn** depicts explicit sex acts between members of the same sex.

**God's Mandate:** *“Do not have sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman; that is detestable”* (Leviticus 18:22).

**Kiddie porn** depicts children having sex with adults and with other children. Child porn is illegal to own or produce and is especially used by pedophiles. (Pedophilia is “a sexual perversion in which children are the preferred sexual objects.”)<sup>12</sup>

**God's Mandate:** *“If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them if a large millstone were hung around their neck and they were thrown into the sea”* (Mark 9:42).

**Bestiality porn** depicts sexual activity between humans and animals, such as dogs, horses, pigs, or donkeys.

**God's Mandate:** *“Cursed is anyone who has sexual relations with any animal”* (Deuteronomy 27:21).

**Sexual-devices porn** depicts the use of “toys,” such as mousetraps, fishhooks, and rings on the sexual anatomy. In bondage sex, other devices such as handcuffs, wrist cuffs, ankle cuffs, bedpost straps, passion paddles, and chains are used to depict dominance and submission.

**God's Mandate:** *“The perverse of heart shall be far from me; I will have nothing to do with what is evil”* (Psalm 101:4).

**Sadomasochistic porn** depicts torture of all kinds, including bondage, rape, mutilation, and murder. Slasher films and “snuff” films are X-rated movies containing perverted sex acts and extreme violence, culminating in murder.

**God’s Mandate:** *“Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in your midst? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that person; for God’s temple is sacred, and you together are that temple”* (1 Corinthians 3:16–17).

## Classification of Illegal Porn

**Question:** “What determines whether sexual material is classified as illegal pornography?”

**Answer:** Material classified as illegal varies from country to country. However, in most countries, that which is obscene is considered illegal. In the 1973 case of *Miller v. California*, the United States Supreme Court established a three-part test to define what is legally obscene.

**Pornography** that is obscene . . . <sup>15</sup>

- **Appeals** to inordinately lustful appetites as understood by the community
- **Depicts** clearly offensive sexual conduct as defined by state law
- **Lacks** serious literary, realistic, political, or scientific value

**Obscenity** appeals to, and even urges, vileness instead of virtue.

**Obscenity** degrades the value of human beings.

The Bible says,

*“Among you there must not be  
even a hint of sexual immorality,  
or of any kind of impurity, or of greed,  
because these are improper for God’s holy people.  
Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk  
or coarse joking, which are out of place.”*

(EPHESIANS 5:3–4)

## Legislating Morality and Porn

**Question:** “Since we can’t legislate morality, why is there so much concern about pornography?”

**Answer:** We can legislate morality and we do in the sense that most laws deal with morality. Biblical laws, such as those against murder, lying, and stealing, are seen in the laws of every civilized society.

**Biblical Example:** The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:3–17)

- Laws generally reflect the morality of those who make them (but laws can never legislate morality in the hearts of people).
- Laws help restrain immoral behavior (but they have no power to make people moral).

Ultimately, who would want to live in a society where morality and the legal system are entirely disconnected? No one. We want to live in a community that provides legal recourse against robbery or assault. So then, why would anyone choose to allow the porn industry to produce sexually-exploitative products that are like weapons meant to assault human dignity and steal minds, hearts, and money?

Every legal code in human history has been undergirded by the (written or unwritten) moral code of the community, and laws reflect society's morals.

*“You shall not murder. . . . You shall not steal. . . .  
You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.”*  
(Exodus 20:13, 15, 16)

## What Is the Difference between Male and Female Sexual Addiction?

Here they come again: vows of “I’m never going to do that again!” But they quickly and repeatedly vanish as the addict plunges once again into a perverted pool of sexual pleasure. Strugglers ultimately come to believe there is no hope. They feel they are locked into a behavior that will dog them the rest of their lives.

Male and female addicts respond in different ways to their struggle. Female addicts often find coping strategies to manage their despair and shame. For example, some female addicts compulsively clean, shop, or pour themselves into family activities. Some turn to the church, serving in a variety of ways, while others will exercise, eat, or drink in excess. Each struggler is looking for something that will at least temporarily break the cycle of sexual addiction.

By contrast, men seem to be able to compartmentalize more easily. They think, *As long as I perform well at my job, then I’m okay.* At least, that’s the justification they give.

## Contrast Male and Female Sex Addicts

**Male Addicts** seek sexual passion.

**Female Addicts** seek closeness and connection.

**Male Addicts** are less relational—not necessarily involved with others.

**Female Addicts** are more relational—usually involved with others.

**Male Addicts** tend to involve spouses.

**Female Addicts** involve other men—not spouses.

**Male Addicts** are more apt to seek out prostitutes.

**Female Addicts** seek out acquaintances.

**Male Addicts** may “flash” themselves to others.

**Female Addicts** may flaunt themselves before others.

**Male Addicts** are more accepted by others.

**Female Addicts** are more condemned by others.

**Male Addicts** have many available support groups.

**Female Addicts** have few available support groups.

**Male Addicts** are less likely to lose their jobs.

**Female Addicts** are more likely to lose their jobs.

**Male Addicts** are called “studs.”

**Female Addicts** are called “sluts.”

**Male Addicts** are less likely to trade or sell sex.

**Female Addicts** are more likely to trade or sell sex.

**Male Addicts** don’t use uncharacteristically foul language.

**Female Addicts** often explode with foul language when alone or in a recovery group.

## Contrast Spouses of Male and Female Sex Addicts

**Husbands of female addicts** are more likely to divorce their wives.

**Wives of male addicts** are more likely to remain married to their husbands.

**Husbands of female addicts** are encouraged to divorce.

**Wives of male addicts** are encouraged to forgive.

**Husbands of female addicts** feel greater shame.

**Wives of male addicts** feel greater guilt.

**Husbands of female addicts** are viewed as victims of their wife's addiction.

**Wives of male addicts** are viewed as the cause of their husband's addiction.

**Husbands of female addicts** are slow to acknowledge their own dysfunction.

**Wives of male addicts** are quick to acknowledge their own dysfunction.

**Husbands of female addicts** are reluctant to seek help.

**Wives of male addicts** are eager to seek help.

**Husbands of female addicts** react more with anger.

**Wives of male addicts** react more with sadness.

**Husbands of female addicts** become controlling.

**Wives of male addicts** become depressed.

Who ultimately is responsible for a spouse's sexual addiction? Who is accountable for any act of sin? The addict is not to blame anyone else. The Bible makes it plain:

*"Each of us will give an account of ourselves to God."*

(ROMANS 14:12)

## What Is God's Heart on Sexual Addiction?

God's heart on any addiction is that we rely on the power of His Holy Spirit operating within us to be the overcomer Jesus has enabled us to become. While sexual sins are the only sins God declares to be a sin against our own bodies, no sin is unforgivable or too evil for the offender to be made clean by the Spirit of God. He longs for us to seek Him with our whole hearts, to renew our minds through the study of His Word, and to love Him above all else because He loves us above His own life.

*"I am the living bread that came down from heaven.  
Whoever eats this bread will live forever.  
This bread is my flesh,  
which I will give for the life of the world."  
(JOHN 6:51)*

The Bible makes it clear that God's heart is that we be the people He has called us to be. He wants us to enjoy the abundant life He has planned and provided for us. We are to be fully yielded to Him, free from bondage to sexual sins and all other sins, because . . .

**He has given us** all we need in Christ to live the godly life He has called us to live and which we desire to live.

*"His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness" (2 PETER 1:3).*

**He has promised us** to faithfully provide the means by which we can resist any temptation—sexual or otherwise—that comes our way, no matter how strong it is or how long we have yielded to it.

*"No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it" (1 CORINTHIANS 10:13).*

**He has freed us** from the control of sin over our lives and given us the

freedom to choose to obey Him rather than our own desires or Satan's desires.

*"If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed"* (JOHN 8:36).

**He has sanctified us** making and keeping us blameless both inside and out through the Spirit of Christ living within us, empowering us to be and do anything and everything God calls us to be and do.

*"May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it"* (1 THESSALONIANS 5:23–24).

**He has empowered us** to not only overcome addictions but also the pull of the world with all its alluring temptations and false teachings.

*"Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God"* (1 JOHN 5:5).

**He has put our old sinful** (addicted self) **to death** with Him on the cross, thereby freeing us to now live godly lives.

*"We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been set free from sin"* (ROMANS 6:6–7).

**He has instructed us** to offer every part of our bodies to Him to be used by Him to perform righteous deeds rather than the unrighteous sexual acts we committed in the past.

*"Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. For sin shall no longer be your master"* (ROMANS 6:13–14).

**He has provided us** with a new righteous way of life with Christlike thoughts and attitudes that we are to cultivate.

*"You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness"* (EPHESIANS 4:22–24).

**He has told us** how we can live the way God wants us to live.

*“Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace” (ROMANS 8:5–6).*

**He has made us** to no longer be slaves to sin, but slaves to right living by maintaining our commitment to follow His teachings.

*“Thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness” (ROMANS 6:17–18).*



# CHARACTERISTICS



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*“No one lives with  
more shame, isolation,  
and fear of alienation  
than the sex addict.”*



As a little girl, Marnie Ferree is exposed to an unhealthy, untrue, unbiblical equation: sex = love.

From age 5 to 20, she's indoctrinated in a skewed sexual code of conduct:<sup>14</sup>

- Significant relationships are supposed to be sexual.
- Sexuality is powerful and should be used to control and manipulate others.
- No one can be counted on to nurture or protect her.

The man who spews forth these lies isn't a child sexual predator who randomly plucks Marnie off a playground. He is considered a dear family friend, and to Marnie, a beloved father figure. It isn't until Marnie is well into her thirties that she comes to understand the diabolical deception behind his corrupt conduct, and it takes her just as long to realize that this alternative, nurturing father figure is actually her abuser.<sup>15</sup>

The twisted messages Marnie receives about sexuality, her neediness in a dysfunctional family, and her confusing experiences during her formative years all propel Marnie down a path of sexual addiction that almost dead-ends in suicide. The Bible gives this word of warning:

*"There is a way that appears to be right,  
but in the end it leads to death."*

(PROVERBS 14:12)

## What Are the Symptoms of Sexual Addiction?

The unholy equation of sex = love has firmly been planted in Marnie's mind, and during her teen years, she has already had multiple sex partners.

If Marnie wants to feel loved, *she has to have sex*. If Marnie wants to feel significant, *she has to have sex*. If Marnie wants to feel secure, *she has to have sex*. “I was trying to get nonsexual needs met sexually, and that was the only way I knew how to meet those needs,” she recalls.

Marnie’s first marriage is anything but monogamous and ends in divorce. Her second marriage ends up being pretty much the same . . . that is until a diagnosis of cervical cancer, caused by a sexually transmitted disease, brings her to a screeching halt. Marnie almost dies from surgical complications, but as soon as her body is healed, her sexual addiction shifts back into overdrive.

Marnie leads the proverbial double life. Some know her as sensual, but many perceive her as spiritual. Marnie teaches Sunday school, sings in the choir, leads a women’s Bible study, and publishes her Christian writings. “I was wracked with shame and tried time and time again to stop.” Marnie says painfully. “On the outside, I looked like I had it all together. On the inside, I was a total wreck.”

The double life Marnie leads totally demoralizes her, and in suicidal despair, she finally seeks help.

Not everyone who is sexually immoral is sexually addicted. While many adulterers and all rapists are sex offenders, such offenders are not all sex addicts. (Rape is an act of violence, a power play emanating from anger.) What constitutes a sexual addiction? Within the heart of every addict is a sense of shame—shame because they feel unlovable, unworthy, and unwanted—shame resulting from repeated failure and abandonment. This shame within an addict produces sexual beliefs and behaviors. Proverbs 18:3 says,

*“ . . . with shame comes disgrace.”*

(PROVERBS 18:3 WEB)

## What Constitutes a Sexual Addiction? (an acronym for the word SHAME)

Is your sexual activity . . .

- S—Secretive:** not within normal cultural boundaries and filled with guilt and shame (living a double life)?
- H—Hollow:** not a relationship with a spouse, but a relationship focused on sexual passion (prioritizing sexual passion over a person)?
- A—Abusive:** not uplifting to yourself or to others, but degrading to both (exploiting others and debasing yourself)?
- M—Mood-altering:** not facing difficult feelings, but seeking an emotional quick fix (using sexual passion for comfort or to avoid working through painful emotions)?
- E—Essential:** not believing you can live without frequent sex (convincing yourself that sex is the most important thing in life)?

*“People are slaves to whatever has mastered them.”*

(2 PETER 2:19)

## What Is the Spiral of Sexual Addiction?

*Abandonment* is woven throughout the spiral of sexual addiction. Every sex addict, a full 100 percent of cases, has experienced some form of abandonment, whether physical, emotional, sexual, spiritual, or a combination of all four.

Marnie’s abandonment issues begin with the death of her mother from colon cancer when she is just three years old. What compounds her sense of abandonment is that her mother is never mentioned or talked about in the family, creating a further disconnect for Marnie.

“I have no category for ‘mom,’ or even for ‘mother,’” Marnie shares. “I had no sense of the person who was my mother, of her likes and dislikes, her hopes and fears, her dreams and disappointments.”<sup>16</sup>

Marnie also experiences abandonment from her father, who travels extensively and is away from home most of the time. Realizing her own craving for connection, Marnie describes sexual addiction as “‘quieting our spirits’ ache for perfect connection.”<sup>17</sup>

## The Downward Spiral of Sexual Addiction

**Curiosity** is a seemingly harmless temptation to view people as sexual objects. If the sexual temptation is not rejected but rather continually viewed, then the repeated sexual viewing becomes a habit.

*“Each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed”* (JAMES 1:14).

**Addiction** is a recurring stimulus in the brain. When a person experiences significant stimulation with highly sexualized images, the hormone epinephrine (or adrenaline) is secreted into the bloodstream by the adrenal gland. Epinephrine stamps emotional memories into the brain. These memories continue to resurface as flashbacks—regardless of the struggler’s desire to forget. In addition, powerful, pleasure-producing chemicals are released during the sex act that are highly addictive (the same chemicals that are released during cocaine use!).

*“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows”* (GALATIANS 6:7).

**Compulsive masturbation** is a response of sexual self-comfort to relieve the arousal. This act becomes part of a sexual ritual. This compulsion keeps the struggler feeling enslaved to masturbation.

*“Jesus replied, ‘Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin’”* (JOHN 8:34).

**Escalation** is the need for more explicit or shocking sexuality in order to be sexually stimulated. To feel the same chemical high, an escalation of sexual stimulation is necessary.

*“Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed” (EPHESIANS 4:19).*

**Desensitization** is when shocking sexuality no longer produces the same stimulation; therefore, the level required for stimulation escalates higher and higher.

*“Are they ashamed of their detestable conduct? No, they have no shame at all; they do not even know how to blush” (JEREMIAH 6:15).*

**Acting out** is a compulsion to do (to enact) what has been seen and imagined. The acting out feels *necessary* because the visual experience is no longer satisfying in itself.

*“The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery” (GALATIANS 5:19).*

**Despair** is the feeling of disgust that comes in response to the sexual behavior, and the struggler feels a sense of utter hopelessness with regard to any possibility of change.

*“I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do” (ROMANS 7:15).*

Many people assume certain addictions can never be overcome. However, any struggler can be rescued from any addiction. The Bible says . . .

*“The temptations in your life are no different  
from what others experience.  
. . . God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation  
to be more than you can stand.  
When you are tempted, he will show you a way out  
so that you can endure.”  
(1 CORINTHIANS 10:13 NLT)*

## What Are the Stages of Sexual Addiction?

For women, sexual addiction tends to be more relational in nature than for men. Marnie's sexual addiction is manifested in numerous affairs during both of her marriages. She is always searching for that "perfect" connection. Under the umbrella of sexual addiction, women typically are romance or fantasy addicts who are consumed with a real or imagined Prince Charming with whom they can have the ideal relationship.

Technology has many women on a slippery slope when it comes to sexual addiction, and many female sex addicts may find themselves at a further stage: engaging in cybersex to connect with their Prince Charming. Almost 80 percent of women who participate in sexually oriented chat rooms eventually meet their online partners there.<sup>18</sup>

According to Marnie, there often is a double standard associated with sexual addiction. When a man is a sex addict, people will excuse him with a "men will be men" mentality, whereas when a woman is a sex addict, crass and hurtful labels are ascribed to them. The resulting shame for a woman can be enormous, Marnie observes. The psalms describe this kind of painful shame, of reproach, of derision, and disgrace:

*"I live in disgrace all day long,  
and my face is covered with shame."  
(PSALM 44:15)*

### Stages of Sexual Addiction<sup>19</sup>

#### Stage 1

- **Activities:** Pornography, masturbation, promiscuity, homosexuality, prostitution, cross-dressing, fetishism, sex talk phone lines/chat rooms
- **Consequences (Low Risk):** Some behavior illegal, occasional job threat, usually considered "victimless"

## Stage 2

- **Activities:** Obscene phone calls, voyeurism (watching others, being a Peeping Tom), exhibitionism, sexual harassment
- **Consequences (Moderate Risk):** Always illegal, possible job loss, always involves a victim

## Stage 3

- **Activities:** Child molestation, pedophilia, sadomasochistic sex, incest, rape
- **Consequences (High Risk):** Always illegal, probable job loss, always involves a victim

Do not be deceived. Activities thought harmless by the world's standards can be deadly to the body, soul, and spirit. The Bible says,

*“Do not deceive yourselves.  
If any of you think you are wise  
by the standards of this age,  
you should become ‘fools’  
so that you may become wise.  
For the wisdom of this world  
is foolishness in God’s sight.”*  
(1 CORINTHIANS 3:18–19)

## What Is the Cycle of Sexual Addiction?

The last stop in the cycle of sexual addiction is the same for every addict: *self-condemnation*. Those who have been caught in the web of sexual addiction—held captive by its power, yet have also been set free—can identify these three distinct components of their journey: The Setup, The Sequence, and The Solution.

## The Setup

No one lives with more shame, isolation, and fear of alienation than the sex addict. Addicts believe they can't help the way they are. Each time they surrender to sexual temptation, sin's tenacious grip gets a stronger hold on their hearts. Sex addicts believe that the only solution to getting their love needs met is through sexual stimulation. Their minds and bodies are held captive to sexual passion.

*"I want to do what is good, but I don't.  
I don't want to do what is wrong,  
but I do it anyway."  
(ROMANS 7:19 NLT)*

**Worthless Feelings:** "I can't control my sexual urges."

"I feel like a failure."

"I'm not a good person."

**Withdrawal:** "I can't trust people."

"If they knew what I've done, they would be disgusted."

"If they knew the real me, they would reject me."

**Warped Assumptions:** "Sex is my greatest need in life."

"Sex is the solution to meet all my needs."

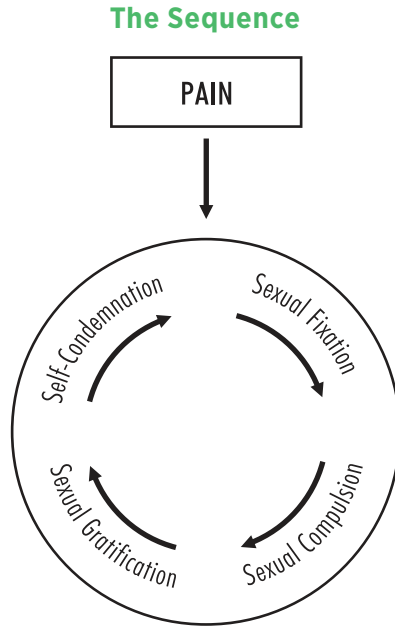
"Sex is the solace for all of my pain."

**Wrong Actions:** "There's nothing wrong with my purchase of explicit pornographic material."

"Pursuing sexual relationships outside of marriage doesn't hurt anyone."

"Practicing illicit sex with multiple partners is my own business."

*"A person may think their own ways are right,  
but the LORD weighs the heart."  
(PROVERBS 21:2)*



*“After desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin;  
and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.”*

(JAMES 1:15)

### 1. Sexual Fixation<sup>20</sup>

The struggler enters into an erotic, trancelike state in which obsessing on sex becomes a sedative for the addict’s emotional pain.

### 2. Sexual Compulsion

The struggler engages in compulsive, ritualistic routines that heighten the excitement and intensify the addict’s sexual arousal (cruising, pornography, stalking).

### 3. Sexual Gratification

The struggler—feeling a sense of sexual intoxication with a total loss of self-control—now commits the actual sex act.

#### 4. Self-Condensation

The struggler soon feels engulfed by shame, condemnation, and hopelessness. To find relief from painful self-condemnation and self-contempt, the addict escapes into another fixation on sex and the sexual cycle perpetuates itself—it starts all over again. The Bible warns of the destruction that is sowed from these kinds of seeds:

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

(GALATIANS 6:8)

#### The Solution

The last thing sexual strugglers need is rejection, although rejection is usually the first thing that occurs when they are found out. Strugglers who live their lives emotionally isolated because of their fear of discovery need:

**Emotional connection** with caring people who will offer *unconditional love* and *emotional support* no matter what

**Heart-to-heart sharing** with people who are safe enough that a struggler can *tell them anything* without fear of rejection

**Friend-to-friend commitment** with people who can be counted on in both happy and hard times and who will commit to *lifelong relationships*

**Spiritual relationships** with people who are mature in the Lord, have an active prayer life, and are willing to provide *spiritual guidance and support*

Because sexual addiction is an obsessive relationship with erotic passion, healing comes through secure relationships with loving people. Sexual addiction is an intimacy disorder. Therefore, those struggling with this disorder desperately need healthy intimacy. A safe place for addicts to begin opening up and moving out of their secret addictions is an accountability group of fellow strugglers or friends—ultimately, people who can “hate the sin, but truly love the sinner.” The Bible tells us,

*“There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.”*

(PROVERBS 18:24)

## What Are Forms of Female Sexual Addiction?

For Marnie Ferree who is totally unaware that she is wrestling with abuse and abandonment issues—the many sexual affairs she pursues are supposed to give her the affirmation and sense of significance she so desperately longs for. But instead of building her up, her sexual addiction tears her down. Instead of feeling significant, Marnie ultimately feels totally insignificant—and eventually, even suicidal.

If you pull back the curtain on female sexual addiction, you will find it has different faces and plays different roles. This often makes this addiction difficult to identify, and easy to deny. Sex addiction can range from mild to severe, involve one person or many, be enjoyed or just endured, provide a hideout or an escape. For women, sexual addiction is about connection, closeness, or getting comfort by “medicating” emotional pain—it’s never about sex

Sex is merely the means to an end but is never the end. Sex is what is *given* in an attempt to *get* what is lacking. Because sex is not the ultimate end, this addiction often remains unidentified and untreated. After all, how can a person be addicted to sex when it is merely a means of transportation to a desired destination?

And sex is just as addictive as any drug that a person might use in an attempt to escape pain. It produces just as much of a high. In truth, for the sex addict, the “means” becomes the mean master, the terrible tyrant, the diabolical destroyer. Yet most strugglers do not have a clue about their real struggle.

*“The waywardness of the simple will kill them,  
and the complacency of fools will destroy them.”*

(PROVERBS 1:32)

## Forms of Female Sexual Addiction<sup>21</sup>

### The Adulteress

- Has a “relationship” or “love” addiction
- Has established a precedence of promiscuity
- Has engaged in numerous affairs
- Has multiple sequential or simultaneous relationships

### The Anorexic

- Is no longer sexually acting out and is disinterested in sex with her husband to the point that she causes him to feel sex-starved
- Is desirous of engaging in numerous sexual encounters, but never with her spouse or
- Is not interested in acting out sexually with anyone, but instead obsesses over imaginary sex partners or fantasy relationships
- Is no longer acting out sexually or having imaginary sex, but has transferred her addiction to religion and is becoming more and more rigid

### The Co-addict

- Has an insatiable desire for increased sexual stimulation with other sex addicts
- Has a continual string of enmeshed relationships with other addicts while denying her own obsession with sex
- Has explosive relationships with sex partners who actively participate in compulsive pornographic sex with her

- Has a continual sexual preoccupation with how her sexually addicted husband acts out with her

### The Controller

- Seeks power by using her body sexually to exercise influence over men
- Seeks power by attracting affluent men and then attaching herself to them
- Seeks power by having men “grovel at her feet” or “eat from her hand”
- Seeks power over all sex partners through her relationship, romance, or fantasy addictions

### The Cyclist

- Has only certain periods of time when she is compulsively acting out
- Has some long periods of time when she doesn’t engage in sexually addictive behavior at all
- Has sex sprees called “acting out” during which she binges on sexual activity similar to the binge alcoholic or binge eater
- Has starvation sprees called “acting in” where she denies herself any sexual activity and may even convince herself she is “cured,” until the cycle begins again

### The Dreamer

- Fabricates romantic relationships in her mind and avoids acting out sexually
- Fabricates the belief that a man who exhibits common courtesy toward her has never-ending love for her
- Fabricates having a fantasy family with a passing stranger, a new acquaintance, or a neighbor
- Fabricates a fantasy life to avoid real life and obsesses about it to the point of being addicted to it

### The Exhibitionist

- Uses her body to get an adrenaline rush by sexually arousing others

- Uses her body to attract attention, acquire accolades, or achieve approval from others
- Uses her body to show off her titillating attire and sexually seductive maneuvers
- Uses her body to gain power over others by stimulating sexual desire within them, but not allowing them sexual access to her

### **The Looker**

- Is generally a young woman immersed in Internet porn, cybersex, or phone sex because of their accessibility, affordability, and anonymity
- Is particularly attracted to the relational aspects of Internet pornography (the “crack cocaine” of sex addiction)
- Is customarily involved in chat rooms, forming powerful relationships with people online and then generally progressing to physically acting out with them in person
- Is hooked by the power of pornography and any visual stimulus just as much as the average male

### **The Romantic**

- Is primarily focused on the pursuit and possession of a particular prey
- Is mesmerized by the feeling of falling in love, rather than the joy of the relationship itself
- Is enthralled by the intense, seductive cat-and-mouse chase
- Is disinterested in the relationship once the pursuit is over and the prey is snared

### **The Self-Stimulator**

- Chooses to masturbate within the world of pornography, cybersex, sexual fantasy, or without any outside stimulation whatsoever
- Chooses self-stimulation because of early sexual highs from child abuse or self-exploration
- Chooses to evade problems, ease pain, or elevate mood through habitual masturbation

- Chooses self-sex over marital sex to ignite her sexual desire for someone other than her husband in order to express anger toward him or to have leverage over him

### The Swapper

- Trades sexual activity for special favors, such as good grades in school from teachers, promotions at work from employers, or help with parental responsibilities from husbands
- Trades sexual satisfaction for expensive gifts or money spent on entertainment
- Trades sex for physical protection in a dangerous neighborhood, community, or country
- Trades sex regularly for the sense of satisfaction that her body has some value to others

Life is a series of choices. Just as a struggler is free to choose *slavery to addiction*, that same struggler is free to choose what the Bible calls “slavery to righteousness”—being compelled to do whatever is right in God’s sight. The result of the first choice is death, but the result of the second is clearly life.

God would not tell you to do something you couldn’t eventually do. Notice how the Word of God squarely addresses these two distinct choices and their vastly different consequence:

*“Just as you used to offer yourselves as slaves to impurity and to everlasting wickedness, so now offer yourselves as slaves to righteousness leading to holiness.*

*<sup>20</sup>When you were slaves to sin . . .*

*<sup>21</sup>What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death!*

*<sup>22</sup>But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.”*

(ROMANS 6:19–22)

## What Characterizes a Female Sex Addict?

Being familiar with the definitions, characteristics, and causes of sexual addiction makes it fairly easy for objective, honest people to identify its presence and its pressure in their lives. All addictions leave their prey feeling paralyzed and unable to move away from their pull to gain freedom from their enslavement. To do so requires immense personal effort, immersion in a recovery program, and immeasurable hope in God—hope that banishes fear and shame, hope that brings security and safety.

*“If you put away the sin that is in your hand  
and allow no evil to dwell in your tent,  
<sup>15</sup> then, free of fault, you will lift up your face;  
you will stand firm and without fear.  
<sup>16</sup> You will surely forget your trouble,  
recalling it only as waters gone by.  
<sup>17</sup> Life will be brighter than noonday,  
and darkness will become like morning.  
<sup>18</sup> You will be secure, because there is hope;  
you will look about you  
and take your rest in safety.”*

(JOB 11:14–18)

### Sexual Addiction Self-Test

The first step toward becoming healthy is identifying what within you is unhealthy. To assess whether the term *sexual addiction* applies to you, *honestly* answer *Yes* or *No* for each of the following statements.

- Y / N** I sometimes wonder if my sex-related thoughts and actions are typical in comparison with other women.
- Y / N** I have been unsuccessful in trying to stop or even decrease unacceptable sexual thoughts and actions.
- Y / N** I use sexual fantasies or sexual encounters to ease stress and anxiety or to lessen emotional pain and loneliness.

- Y / N** I experience guilt, shame, regret, or sadness after having real or even imagined sexual encounters that do not involve my spouse.
- Y / N** I feel more and more compelled to engage in sexual activity either mentally or physically.
- Y / N** I cannot have sex with my spouse without it being tainted by my sinful sexual activity.
- Y / N** I have to fantasize about past sexual encounters to help me experience sexual satisfaction.
- Y / N** I find myself becoming mentally or physically involved with one person after another in a quest to find my one true soul mate.
- Y / N** I truly believe a special someone exists who will one day satisfy all of my sexual longings, and then I will no longer need other sexual outlets or experiences.
- Y / N** I absolutely must have someone in my life to meet my emotional and sexual needs, no matter the cost or the risk.
- Y / N** I have put myself and my loved ones in harm's way in my quest for the perfect relationship or sex partner.
- Y / N** I have more trouble focusing and finishing tasks since my sexual preoccupation has increased.
- Y / N** I have suffered unpleasant repercussions and discouragement as a result of my inappropriate sexual activity.
- Y / N** I was sexually exploited when I was young.

If you answered even just a small number of these questions Yes, you would be wise to get involved in a sex addiction recovery program and to seek help from God and loving support from a small group of trustworthy people.

*"Sin shall no longer be your master,  
because you are not under law, but under grace."*

(ROMANS 6:14)





# CAUSES



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*“The faulty beliefs  
of sex addicts  
enable them to  
manufacture and  
believe their  
own elaborate  
defense systems.”*



She's a woman who's been wounded by the sin of sexual betrayal and has come to understand that it has nothing to do with sex. She is the wife of Dr. Mark Laaser.

Debra Laaser now knows that sexually addictive behaviors (such as viewing pornography or attending strip clubs) are only the tip of the iceberg. And the humongous mass of the proverbial iceberg lodged deeply within the soul of a sexually addicted person is weighed down with pain.

"I know today that Mark's soul was filled with pain before I even met him," Debra recalls.<sup>22</sup> When sexuality is awakened in children, then sexual acts are often mistakenly associated with love and nurturing, and a child doesn't have the discernment to distinguish the difference between the two. Then as adults, sexual behavior is equated with nurturing comfort and assumed to be necessary in order to deal with the stresses of life.

Childhood sexual abuse, a non-nurturing mother, and exposure to erotic material at an early age were contributors to Mark's sexual fixation and addiction. This ultimately laid the groundwork that eventually skewed his reality and led to sexual addiction.<sup>23</sup>

We've all asked ourselves, *Why did I do that?* The answer is simple: Our beliefs "birth" our behaviors. The messages we received in childhood, especially those regarding our own worth, relationships, and sexuality, formed our beliefs. These beliefs are powerful because from them come our priorities, choices, habits, and, yes, even our addictions.<sup>24</sup>

*"The simple believe anything,  
but the prudent give thought  
to their steps."*

(PROVERBS 14:15)

## What Are the Double Delusions of Sexual Addiction?

Debra Laaser has a very clear message she wants to send to every spouse who is a victim of sexual betrayal: *It's not about you.*<sup>25</sup>

The marriage partner who views pornography or has affairs is using sexual behavior as a coping mechanism to deal with painful feelings . . . and it is a sinful choice. Sex addicts doubly delude themselves into thinking that sinful sexual behavior will provide the comfort and connection they're so desperately seeking. But instead, all they're left with is guilt, shame, and a void that can best be described as a hole in the soul.

Delusions are unrelenting false beliefs about yourself and others. In other words, being *delusional* means you believe your own lies. The faulty beliefs of sex addicts enable them to manufacture and believe their own elaborate defense systems. This interactive process between beliefs and denials results in seriously impaired thinking, moving them further and further from reality. The Bible says,

*"The integrity of the upright guides them,  
but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity."*

(PROVERBS 11:3)

### The Double Delusions of Sexual Addiction<sup>26</sup>

The addict simultaneously lives in two worlds: the outward appearance of normalcy, and the inward state of depravity.

#### Unbridled Beliefs

All people and places, all joys and pains are seen by the addict through sexual lenses.

#### Distorted Defenses

Addicts must employ an army of defenses in an effort to not lose face when their behavior is attacked by others or by their own conscience.

### Justifications

Sex is the source of excitement.      “I have to have sex.”  
 Sex is the balm for abuse.              “I was molested as a child.”

### Blame Shifting

Sex is the remedy for rejection.      “You’re so unresponsive.”  
 Sex is the payment for performance. “My boss is too demanding.”

### Excuses

Sex is the panacea for pain.          “I have never felt loved.”  
 Sex is the salve for stress.            “I have to find ways to relax.”

### Arguments

Sex is the antidote to anger.         “You’re out to get me.”  
 Sex is the light of my life.            “She really did want it; she liked it.”

### Rationalizations

Sex is the treatment for tension.    “I just have to have more sex.”  
 Sex is the answer to anxiety.        “I have to relieve the pressure.”

### Denials

Sex is the basis for being.            “I didn’t do anything wrong.”  
 Sex is the key to comfort.            “I didn’t hurt anyone.”

*“How long will you love delusions and seek false gods?”*

(PSALM 4:2)

## What Is the Root Cause of Sexual Addiction?

Debra Laaser and Marnie Ferree both agree that the clinical term *sexual addiction* really is not the best label for compulsive sexual behavior.

They much prefer *intimacy disorder*, with Debra describing it as “a need to connect at a deep emotional and spiritual level with one’s spouse and with others but a lack of the skills to do so. The problem, then, is much deeper than sexual impurity itself. It is about a yearning for something more and a determination to find more—even at emotional, spiritual, and relational prices no human being can afford.”<sup>27</sup>

Marnie believes intimacy disorder is a more precise clinical term for sex addicts because they are looking for acceptance, approval, and affection. But ultimately, sex is a false substitute for intimacy.<sup>28</sup> At the root of many problems, including sexual addiction, is the attempt to meet the legitimate need for intimacy through illegitimate means.

### A Sex Addict’s Basic Belief

#### WRONG BELIEF:

“The most important thing in my life is sex. I will do whatever is necessary to get my sexual needs met.”

#### RIGHT BELIEF:

“The most important thing in my life is to be changed by an intimate love relationship with Jesus. My first priority is to love my Lord and then to love others with a pure heart. Jesus loved me enough to die for me, and He now lives in me. Because my body belongs to Him, He promises to meet all of my true needs.”

*“The body is not meant for sexual immorality  
but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. . . .  
Do you not know that your bodies  
are temples of the Holy Spirit,  
who is in you, whom you have received from God?  
You are not your own;  
you were bought at a price.  
Therefore honor God with your bodies.”  
(1 CORINTHIANS 6:13, 19–20)*

### 3 Inner Needs

We all have three inner needs: the needs for love, significance, and security.<sup>29</sup>

**Love**—to know that someone is unconditionally committed to our best interest

*“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you”* (JOHN 15:12).

**Significance**—to know that our lives have meaning and purpose

*“I cry out to God Most High, to God, who fulfills his purpose for me”*  
(PSALM 57:2 ESV).

**Security**—to feel accepted and a sense of belonging

*“Whoever fears the LORD has a secure fortress, and for their children it will be a refuge”* (PROVERBS 14:26).

### The Ultimate Need-Meeter

#### What do our inner needs reveal about us and our relationship with God?

God did not create any person or position or any amount of power or possessions to meet our deepest needs. People fail us and self-effort also fails to meet our deepest needs. If a person or thing could meet all our needs, we wouldn't need God! Our inner needs draw us into a deeper dependence on Christ and remind us that only God can satisfy the longings of our hearts. The Lord brings people and circumstances into our lives as an extension of His care, but ultimately only He can satisfy all the needs of our hearts. The Bible says . . .

*“The LORD will guide you always;  
he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land  
and will strengthen your frame.  
You will be like a well-watered garden,  
like a spring whose waters never fail.”*  
(ISAIAH 58:11)

All along, the Lord planned to meet our deepest needs for . . .

**Love**—“*I [the Lord] have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness*” (JEREMIAH 31:3).

**Significance**—“*For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future’*” (JEREMIAH 29:11).

**Security**—“*The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged*” (DEUTERONOMY 31:8).

Our needs for love, significance, and security can be legitimately met in Christ Jesus! Philippians 4:19 makes it plain, “*My God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.*”

### Considering the Need for Love

**Basic belief:** “I am unlovable.”

“If you really knew me, you wouldn’t love me.”

“I am bad—bad things should happen to me.”

- Feeling that no one really cares
- Feeling that people care only if they can get something

**Result:** “I must be powerful and in control to protect myself.”

Enters into a “relationship with sex” that is not based on love

**Examples:**

A relationship with passion, but using a wife  
    . . . but using a prostitute  
    . . . but using a child

Yet, regarding the need for love, God says,

*“I have loved you with an everlasting love;  
I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.”*

(JEREMIAH 31:3)

## Considering the Need for Significance

**Basic belief:** “I am unworthy.”

“If you really knew me, you wouldn’t value me.”

“I have failed—I’m a failure.”

- Feeling insignificant
- Feeling at fault for everything

**Result:** “I must be in charge to protect myself.”

Enters into a “relationship with sex” that can’t threaten the addict’s significance

**Examples:**

A relationship with passion by being a Peeping Tom  
 . . . by being a flasher  
 . . . by being a rapist

Yet regarding the need for significance, the Bible says,

*“He made us accepted in the Beloved.”*

(EPHESIANS 1:6 NKJV)

## Considering the Need for Security

**Basic belief:** “I am unwanted.”

“If you really knew me, you would abandon me.”

“I’ve lost hope in people—I’m hopeless.”

- Can’t depend on others to meet my needs
- Can’t risk rejection

**Result:** “I must be self-sufficient to protect myself.”

Enters into a “relationship with sex” so that the addict’s security won’t be threatened

**Examples:**

A relationship with passion by looking at pornography  
 . . . by staring at a stripper  
 . . . by watching a peep show

Yet regarding the need for security, the Bible says,

*“No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

(ROMANS 8:39 NLT)

## How Can You Find Freedom from Sexual Addiction?

Our God delights in making things new again. Jeremiah chapter 18 tells a story about a potter working with clay on a pottery wheel. As the potter shapes the moldable clay into a pot, he sees that the clay is “marred” and not turning out according to his plan. So, the potter crushes the clay and then gently begins to reshape it according to his design.

You may feel marred, broken, or damaged but the Lord loves you and wants to reshape you to reflect His image. He can make you new again and give you a new future, no matter what your past holds.

*“Don’t you realize that those who do wrong  
will not inherit the Kingdom of God  
Don’t fool yourselves. Those who indulge in sexual sin,  
or who worship idols, or commit adultery,  
or are male prostitutes, or practice homosexuality,  
<sup>10</sup> or are thieves, or greedy people, or drunkards,  
or are abusive, or cheat people  
—none of these will inherit the Kingdom of God.  
<sup>11</sup> Some of you were once like that.  
But you were cleansed; you were made holy;  
you were made right with God  
by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ  
and by the Spirit of our God.”*

(1 CORINTHIANS 6:9–11 NLT)

## 4 Points of God's Plan

Whether you're trying to make sense of your past, trying to overcome something in the present, or trying to make changes for a better future, the Lord cares about you. He loves you. No matter what challenges you or your loved ones are facing, no matter the pain or difficult feelings you may be experiencing, no matter what you've done or what's been done to you, there is hope. And that hope is found in Jesus Christ.

God has a plan for your life, and it begins with a personal relationship with Jesus. The most important decision you can ever make is whether you will receive His invitation. If you have never made that decision, these four simple truths can help you start your journey together with Him.

*“For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the LORD,  
‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you,  
plans to give you hope and a future.’”*

(JEREMIAH 29:11)

### 1. God's Purpose for You: *Salvation*

- What was God's motivation in sending Jesus Christ to earth? To express His love for you by saving you! The Bible says, *“God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him”* (JOHN 3:16–17).
- What was Jesus' purpose in coming to earth? To forgive your sins, to empower you to have victory over sin, and to enable you to live a fulfilled life! Jesus said, *“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full”* (JOHN 10:10).

## 2. The Problem: *Sin*

- What exactly is sin? Sin is living independently of God’s standard—knowing what is wrong and doing it anyway—also knowing what is right and choosing not to do it. The apostle Paul said, *“I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can’t. I want to do what is good, but I don’t. I don’t want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway”* (ROMANS 7:18–19 NLT).
- What is the major consequence of sin? Spiritual death, eternal separation from God. The Bible says, *“Your iniquities [sins] have separated you from your God”* (ISAIAH 59:2). Scripture also says, *“The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (ROMANS 6:23).

## 3. God’s Provision for You: *The Savior*

- Can anything remove the penalty for sin? Yes! Jesus died on the cross to personally pay the penalty for your sins. The Bible says, *“God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us”* (ROMANS 5:8).
- What is the solution to being separated from God? Belief in (entrusting your life to) Jesus Christ as the only way to God the Father. Jesus said, *“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me”* (JOHN 14:6). The Bible says, *“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved”* (ACTS 16:31).

## 4. Your Part: *Surrender*

- Give Christ control of your life, entrusting yourself to Him. Jesus said, *“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?”* (MATTHEW 16:24–26).
- Place your faith in (rely on) Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior and reject your “good works” as a means of earning God’s approval. The Bible says, *“It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast”* (EPHESIANS 2:8–9).

Has there been a time in your life when you know you've humbled your heart and received Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior—giving Him control of your life? You can tell God that you want to surrender your life to Christ in a simple, heartfelt prayer like this:

“God, I want a real relationship with you.  
I admit that many times I've chosen to go my own way  
instead of your way.  
Please forgive me for my sins.  
Jesus, thank you for dying on the cross  
to pay the penalty for my sins.  
Come into my life to be my Lord and my Savior.  
Change me from the inside out and make me the person  
you created me to be.  
In your holy name I pray. Amen.”

### What Can You Now Expect?

When you surrender your life to Christ, you receive the Holy Spirit who empowers you to live a life pleasing to God. The Bible says, *“His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life . . .”* (2 Peter 1:3). Jesus assures those who believe with these words:

*“Truly I tell you, whoever hears my word  
and believes him who sent me  
has eternal life and will not be judged  
but has crossed over from death to life.”*

(JOHN 5:24)





# STEPS TO SOLUTION



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*“When God calls  
you to avoid  
sexual immorality,  
He will enable  
you to do it.”*



It seems inconceivable, but the strength of spider webs has been likened to steel. Dr. Frauke Grater, a German scientist at the Heidelberg Institute for Theoretical Studies, makes the following observation: “Silk fibers exhibit astonishing mechanical properties. They have an ultimate strength comparable to steel, toughness greater than Kevlar (a synthetic fiber), and a density less than cotton or nylon.”<sup>30</sup>

And the webs of sexual addiction Mark Laaser and Marnie Ferree found themselves entangled in were just as strong and seemingly unbreakable. They just couldn’t get free. Every desperate attempt simply drew them back into their isolated, shame-filled worlds. They were caught in the middle of their webs, and filled with self-contempt.

But there is One stronger than both spider silk and steel—the Sovereign Lord. He stands ready to rescue and redeem the ensnared—those willing to cry out to Him,

*“Keep me free from the trap that is set for me,  
for you are my refuge.”*  
(PSALM 31:4)

## Key Verse to Memorize

In the Old Testament, Joseph serves as our role model for fleeing from sexual immorality. When the wife of Potiphar (the captain of Pharaoh’s guard) tries to seduce Joseph to sleep with her, there is no pausing or pondering on his part. He immediately flees, knowing even a single second can mean the difference between standing or falling with regard to the commands of God, *“Though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her”* (Genesis 39:10).

The same values that prompted Joseph to escape from a married woman inspired Paul to caution believers:

*“Flee from sexual immorality.  
All other sins a person commits  
are outside the body,  
but whoever sins sexually,  
sins against their own body.”  
(1 CORINTHIANS 6:18)*

## Key Passage to Read

Whatever God tells you to do, He will equip you to do. When God calls you to avoid sexual immorality, He will enable you to do it. Don't live as a prisoner of past defeat. Live in light of your high calling!

When you say *No* to sexual immorality, remember, blessings will abound and the character of Christ will become more deeply ingrained in your spirit. God's decrees and ordinances are not meant to deny us; they're meant to protect and preserve us, enabling us to live holy lives and to heed our heavenly calling. God couldn't have made it more clear when He said, *“Be holy, because I am holy”* (1 Peter 1:16).

### 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

*“As for other matters, brothers and sisters,  
we instructed you how to live in order to please God,  
as in fact you are living.*

*<sup>2</sup> Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus  
to do this more and more.*

*For you know what instructions we gave you  
by the authority of the Lord Jesus.*

*<sup>3</sup> It is God's will that you should be sanctified:  
that you should avoid sexual immorality;*

*<sup>4</sup> that each of you should learn to control your own body  
in a way that is holy and honorable,*

<sup>5</sup> *not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God;*  
<sup>6</sup> *and that in this matter no one should wrong  
or take advantage of a brother or sister.*  
*The Lord will punish all those who commit such sins,  
as we told you and warned you before.*  
<sup>7</sup> *For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life.*  
<sup>8</sup> *Therefore, anyone who rejects this instruction  
does not reject a human being but God,  
the very God who gives you his Holy Spirit.”*

### Why Avoid Immorality?

<b>You will</b> please God. ....	v. 1
<b>You will</b> prove that you can take instruction from God. ....	v. 1
<b>You will</b> respond to the authority of God. ....	v. 2
<b>You will</b> be in the will of God. ....	v. 3
<b>You will</b> be sanctified (set apart). ....	v. 3
<b>You will</b> control your own body. ....	v. 4
<b>You will</b> do what is honorable and holy. ....	v. 4
<b>You will</b> not display passionate lust. ....	v. 5
<b>You will</b> not be like the heathen. ....	v. 5
<b>You will</b> not wrong another person. ....	v. 6
<b>You will</b> not take advantage of another. ....	v. 6
<b>You will</b> not be impure. ....	v. 7
<b>You will</b> live up to your holy calling. ....	v. 7
<b>You will</b> not reject God. ....	v. 8

## Closing the Door on Immoral Relationships

**Question:** “I recently became a Christian. How can I close the door on past sexual relationships and move into morally pure relationships?”

**Answer:**

- First, admit that each immoral relationship was sinful.
- Second, ask the Lord to break the bond between you and each sex partner with whom you have been involved.
- Third, present your body as a living sacrifice to the Lord. That is, take every aspect of your life (your sleeping, eating, exercising, etc.) and give it to God on a daily, moment-to-moment basis.
- Finally, renew your mind by fixing it on God. Readily recognize what He wants from you and quickly respond to it.

Whenever you feel an inappropriate attraction to someone, stop and pray in this way: “Lord Jesus, may I see (name) as you see (name)—through your eyes. I pray I will grow more and more into the godly person you created me to be. In the holy name of Jesus I pray. Amen.”

*“Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice,  
holy and pleasing to God—  
this is your true and proper worship.  
Do not conform to the pattern of this world,  
but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.  
Then you will be able to test  
and approve what God’s will is—  
his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*  
(ROMANS 12:1–2)

## How to Have a Transformed Life

For Mark Laaser, the door out of sexual addiction isn't opened, it's *busted down*. And he doesn't have a single regret that he ultimately walked through it.

After decades of a disturbing and dangerous double life, Mark finally gets caught. A colleague at his counseling practice finds out about one of his affairs. Mark is immediately fired, and several days later enters a treatment center for sexual addiction. The following months for Mark are filled with pain as he reflects on childhood memories and experiences, absorbs the impact of the abuse he perpetrated on others, and grieves over the humiliation he's brought to his wife and children.

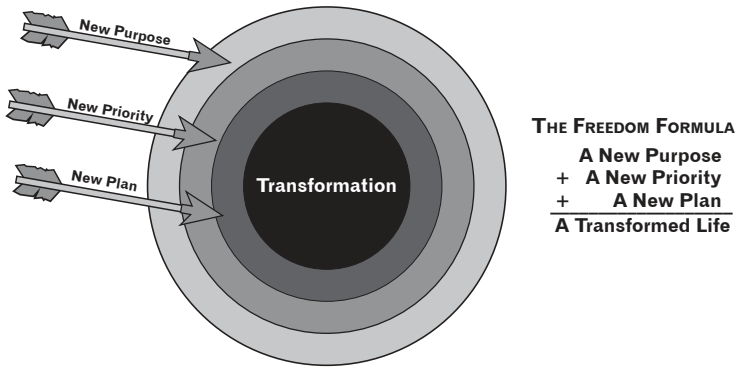
But there is also joy—the renewed hope of healing, the freshness of an honest lifestyle, and restored relationships with his wife, family, and friends. Yet Mark will tell you that perhaps the greatest blessing of all is finally finding peace, and he “wouldn't trade it for the world.”<sup>31</sup>

When you trust Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you are given a new identity. The Bible says you are not just a creation of God, but a child of God. You are “set apart,” you are in His family, you receive His nature, and you are to reflect His character. What an extraordinary privilege! Because sexual sin doesn't reflect Christ accurately, you can be assured that He has already provided a way out for you:

*“The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.”*

(1 THESSALONIANS 5:24)

## Reaching the Target: Transformation!



### Target #1—A New Purpose

**God's purpose for me** is to be conformed to the character of Christ.

*“Those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son” (ROMANS 8:29).*

— “I’ll do whatever it takes to be conformed to the character of Christ.”

### Target #2—A New Priority

**God's priority for me** is to change my thinking.

*“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (ROMANS 12:2).*

— “I’ll do whatever it takes to line up my thinking with God’s thinking.”

### Target #3—A New Plan

**God's plan for me** is to rely on Christ’s strength, not my strength, to be all He created me to be.

*“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (PHILIPPIANS 4:13 NKJV).*

— “I’ll do whatever it takes to fulfill His plan in His strength.”

## My Personalized Plan

Experiencing true transformation begins with a choice. I choose to take that first step toward having a transformed life—toward walking away from addiction and becoming all God created me to be.

### Open the Door Out of Addiction

**I will . . .**

**Decide** that I really do want to be set free.

- “I am ready to take responsibility for my addiction.”
- “I am sick and tired of being in this bondage.”
- “I am willing to go to war in order to win over my addiction.”

*“Prepare your minds for action and exercise self-control” (1 PETER 1:13 NLT).*

**Dispel** the myth that I don’t need help.

- “I admit that I’m out of control.”
- “I admit my sexual addiction is sin.”
- “I admit I can’t change myself.”

*“Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me” (PSALM 51:10).*

**Deal** with the secret of having been abused in childhood. (Some experts say that over 80 percent of addicts were sexually abused and over 90 percent were emotionally abused.)<sup>32</sup>

- Talk with a friend about my experience of being abused—let go of the secret.
- Talk to a counselor who is trained to help victims of childhood sexual abuse.
- Talk to the perpetrator(s), but only when my counselor and I have worked through a plan for doing so, and only when it is safe to do so. (It is best to take someone with me to confront my abuser(s). Remember: Confrontation is biblical.)

*“If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along” (MATTHEW 18:15–16).*

**Discern** the inner need(s) I have tried to satisfy through sexual passion.<sup>35</sup>

- Is it my need for unconditional love?
- Is it my need for significance?
- Is it my need for security?

*“You desired faithfulness even in the womb; you taught me wisdom in that secret place” (PSALM 51:6).*

**Determine** to let Jesus meet my needs.

- Ask Him to forgive me for my willful sin.
- Ask Him to come into my life as my personal Lord and Savior.
- Ask Him to meet my deepest inner needs.

*“My God will meet all your needs” (PHILIPPIANS 4:19).*

**Dedicate** my life to the Lord Jesus.

- Let His will be my will.
- Let God be Lord of my life.
- Let Christ have absolute control.

*“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it” (LUKE 9:23–24).*

## How to Break Free

Marnie Ferree is a strong advocate of 12-step work in healing from any addiction, including sex addiction. After admitting to having a problem, the addict starts to understand their inability to change in their own strength. In this surrender, you entrust your life to God to change you. This hope of healing is found in Romans 12:2: *“Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”* In this way, struggling people discover how to meet the high calling found in Romans 12:1: *“Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.”*

According to Marnie, breaking free occurs through a threefold approach: (1) acquiring knowledge about genuine, healthy intimacy; (2) committing to sexual behavior only in marriage; and (3) coming to the understanding that our most important need is not sex but intimacy in a relationship—acceptance, approval, affection. Marnie concludes, changing beliefs and behaviors can truly transform a sex addict.<sup>34</sup>

Imagine you, as a bank president, receive word that a time bomb placed inside the bank’s vault is set to go off at midnight. The combination lock has been electronically jammed. If you don’t get rid of the bomb, the bank will be destroyed. You must break the code! Similarly, in every addict’s mind, a sexual time bomb threatens to destroy both the body and soul. With the right combination you can break the code. The Bible says,

*“Whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom,  
and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard,  
but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.”*

(JAMES 1:25)

## Cracking the Code

The mind of every addict is locked by faulty beliefs. Your beliefs are what you think regarding your own value, your relationships, and your sexuality. They determine all of your behavior. If your thinking is faulty, your findings are faulty, and then the way you function will be faulty.

The Bible tells you not only that you *can* change, but also *how* you can change. Romans 12:2 says, *“Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”* You must reprogram your mind with the right code—with the truth. Every day for the next 12 weeks, read the following life-changing truths. Pray that God will open your heart. Jesus says,

*“The truth will set you free.”*

(JOHN 8:32)

### Your Need for Love<sup>35</sup>

**False Belief:** “I am unlovable. Sex gives me the feeling of being loved.”

**True Belief:** You are loved. God loves you.

— Jesus loved you enough to die on the cross for you.

*“God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (JOHN 3:16).*

— Your heavenly Father loved you enough to adopt you into His family.

*“See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!” (1 JOHN 3:1).*

**Conclusion:** While sex should always be an expression of love, sex is not love, love is not sex. Sex is sex. Love is a commitment that seeks the highest good and very best for another person. Since God loves you in this way, He will give you the ability to develop other loving relationships in which sex is not a substitute for love. The Bible says . . .

*“[Love] is not self-seeking.”*

(1 CORINTHIANS 13:5)

### Your Need for Significance

**False belief:** “I am unworthy. Sex makes me feel significant.”

**True belief:** You already have worth. God has already established your worth.

— God created you. Therefore, you have worth.

*“You created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb” (PSALM 139:13).*

— If you are a Christian, you have worth because Christ lives in you.

*“To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (COLOSSIANS 1:27).*

**Conclusion:** Sex does not give you significance. You are significant because you are a new creation in Christ with a new source of power. He is your source of power and significance. The Bible says . . .

*“His divine power has given us everything we need  
for a godly life through our knowledge of him  
who called us by his own glory and goodness.”*

(2 PETER 1:3)

## Your Need for Security

**False belief:** “I am unwanted. Sex numbs the pain of my insecurity.”

**True belief:** You are wanted. The Lord wants you.

- The Lord wants to be your Shepherd throughout life.

*“The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing”* (PSALM 23:1).

- The Lord wants to walk with you through life.

*“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you  
pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk  
through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze”*  
(ISAIAH 43:2).

**Conclusion:** Sex does not give you security. Your security is found in a love relationship with the Lord. This true security can never be taken away from you.

*“The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you;  
he will never leave you nor forsake you.  
Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.”*

(DEUTERONOMY 31:8)

## Cracking the Code with the Freedom Formula

**Don’t Focus** on the negative “combination.”

Every time you focus on quitting a sexual obsession, you will want it all the more. Living under the “law” never changes you. If you focus only on what you shouldn’t do, you will be pulled more powerfully to do it.

- “I need to quit thinking about sex.”
- “I won’t rent X-rated movies.”
- “I have to get over this addiction.”

- “I shouldn’t call the sex line.”
- “I’ll quit cruising next month.”

*“The power of sin is the law”* (1 CORINTHIANS 15:56).

**Focus** on the positive “combination.”

- **A new purpose**—“I want to reflect the character of Christ through what I see and do.”

*“[I am] predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son”* (ROMANS 8:29).

- **A new priority**—“I will do whatever it takes to have a pure heart and a transformed life.”

*“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind”* (ROMANS 12:2).

- **A new plan**—“I will rely on Christ’s strength, not on my own.”

*“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”* (PHILIPPIANS 4:13 NKJV).

## **A Transformed Life: God’s Gift of Self-Control**

**Commit to . . .**

**Seeing** pornography as sin

**Destroying** all erotic material

**Purchasing and reading** only uplifting material

**Avoiding** tempting situations

**Turning** quickly to a preplanned project (exercise, hobbies, reading, etc.) when tempted

**Focusing** on Philippians 4:8–9 when tempted

**Making** needed changes in old routines (driving route, television, reading material, etc.)

**Blocking** all adult X-rated programs from TV, your phone and computer, when at hotels

**Resisting** channel surfing on TV

**Being** accountable to a friend each week

**Memorizing** and applying pertinent scriptures

**Breaking** the chain of obsession

The Bible tells us . . .

*“Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right,  
whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—  
if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—  
think about such things.”*

(PHILIPPIANS 4:8)

## Lustful Desires in a Christian

**Question:** “I am a Christian, so why do I still have a problem with lust? Why do I want to do what I know is wrong?”

**Answer:** Paul spoke to this very problem in Romans 7:21–24 when he said,

*“Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?”*

Paul goes on to answer his own question by saying the answer is Jesus—relying on the Spirit of Christ, who lives within you to be your source of power for change (verse 25). Surrendering your struggle to Jesus is the beginning of breaking free as you rely on His strength to help you overcome your addiction.

*“You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh  
but are in the realm of the Spirit,  
if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you.”*

(ROMANS 8:9)

## How to Walk the Pathway to Purity

On his pathway to purity, Dr. Mark Laaser placed a nonnegotiable stop sign: No sexual activity for at least 90 days. Sex addicts who hope to find healing must first agree to a “celibacy contract,” and that includes those who are married. “This contract reverses a sex addict’s core belief and shows that ‘sex is not my most important need.’”<sup>56</sup>

Dr. Laaser likens sexual addiction to food addiction. Food addicts can’t stop eating forever, and most sex addicts are either in marital relationships or one day will be; therefore, it is unlikely they will stop having sex forever. So the key to victory is learning how to control sexual urges, practicing restraint, and operating within boundaries. “Married sex addicts, likewise, will learn that sex with their spouse is appropriate and beautiful when, instead of being a way to avoid intimacy or escape negative feelings, it expresses the intimacy of the marriage.”<sup>57</sup>

Does the thought of purity seem impossible to you? Unattainable? Take heart. God would never call you to be pure without giving you all that you need to be pure. So be encouraged. As you yield your life to Him, you have God’s guarantee that you can have a pure heart and live a pure life. The Bible says,

*“God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life.”*

(1 THESSALONIANS 4:7)

### Purity

(an acrostic for the word PURITY)

**P—Participate** in an accountability group dealing with sex addictions.

- Meet regularly and talk specifically each week.
- Set realistic guidelines and goals.
- Admit each time that you slip.

*“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up” (ECCLESIASTES 4:9–10).*

**U—Uphold** boundary lines that must be off limits.

- With the help of an accountability partner, make a list of times in your daily routine, places in your home, in the community, or on the Internet where you are tempted.
- With your accountability partner, establish ways of breaking routines and setting boundaries (for example, installing blocking or monitoring software on your computer or changing schedules) to avoid tempting situations.
- Establish a regular pattern of accountability by giving your accountability partner permission to ask you about your behavior and, where necessary, make further changes in your routine to avoid temptation.

*“The prudent see danger and take refuge, but the simple keep going and pay the penalty” (PROVERBS 27:12).*

**R—Rid** yourself, your home, and your work area of all sexually addictive items.

- Throw away all pornography.
- Clear away all erotic paraphernalia.
- Discard addresses and calling cards of all sexual contacts.

*“Wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight; stop doing wrong. Learn to do right” (ISAIAH 1:16–17).*

**I—Incorporate** the power of Christ daily when temptation overwhelms you.

- “Lord, I’m relying on You to be my Redeemer.”
- “Lord, I’m depending on You to be my Deliverer.”
- “Lord, in my weakness I need Your strength.”

*“‘My [Jesus’] grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I [Paul] will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me” (2 CORINTHIANS 12:9).*

**T—Take** on positive habits of discipline, such as exercise, sports, regular sleep, and new hobbies.

- Choose to make a to-do list of healthy activities you enjoy.

- Choose to do one item from the list when you are tempted.
- Choose to write a letter, call a friend, or help someone in need.

*“Whoever heeds discipline shows the way to life, but whoever ignores correction leads others astray” (PROVERBS 10:17).*

**Y—Yield** your mind to meditating on and memorizing Scripture.

- Read a chapter from the New Testament each day.
- Read Romans chapter 6 once a week.
- Read Colossians 3:1–5 each day and memorize Philippians 4:8–9.

*“Get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you” (JAMES 1:21).*

## The Secret Struggle: The Jim Cress Story<sup>58</sup>

Taken from: HOW TO DEFEAT HARMFUL HABITS  
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*When I [June Hunt] asked Jim Cress—my friend and former co-host on Hope In The Night—if he would share his story . . . I felt doubly blessed when he said yes.*

When I was four, an older boy in my neighborhood convinced me to perform a sexual act with him. To this day, I vividly remember my surroundings—the sounds, the smells, and the sight of several other boys watching my every move. I admired and trusted this older boy and sincerely believed, since he suggested it, this must be the right thing to do.

From that point onward throughout early adolescence, my life was filled with sexual experimentation. As a young boy, I developed an insatiable desire to connect with neighborhood girls, often encouraging them to sneak away so we could kiss, sexually fondle each other, or even attempt what we thought was actually “sex.” During many a sleepover at friends’ homes, kissing and sexual touching the girls would be the grand finale of the night.

A healthy physical connection with another person was painfully absent in my home, which fueled my desperate search. Born fifth in a family of six children, my parents had little to give emotionally. Affection and affirmation were almost nonexistent as my parents grappled with the daily dramas of raising a family. I have no enjoyable memories of my father during those years—no recollection of his trying to build a relationship with me. Although our family attended church three times a week, my father never talked with me about sexuality, the Christian life, God, or anything else of substance.

Not only did my home lack of healthy forms of touch, but there were also times when my father would angrily whip me with a belt. And my undiagnosed ADHD—Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder—only compounded my ever-deepening feelings of loneliness, shame, rejection, and confusion.

When I was 12, an older boy began talking to me about masturbation. Prior to that, I had developed serious misgivings about it, having heard it could give me acne or cause me to go blind. My worldly-wise friend, however, quickly dismissed these myths and showed me how to masturbate, adding that, if I wanted to really enhance the experience, I should look at racy pictures of women.

I carefully noted his instructions, even though the part about looking at pictures of women made no sense to me. Even so, a few weeks later, when I tried it for myself, I looked at a department store catalog. My friend knew what he was talking about—I was instantly hooked.

Thus began my secret habit, which, over time, developed into an addiction to pornography and masturbation. During those years, I couldn't find actual pornography, but my mom had several catalogs in the house—"poor man's pornography"—which laid the foundation for an "arousal template." Pictures of women in lingerie became my favorite type of visual stimulation.

Throughout my teen years, I participated actively in church and was, in fact, growing spiritually. I earnestly believed that, if I prayed enough, did church activities enough, and dated good Christians enough, I would finally win the war with lust. My plan did not work.

In my twenties, I sincerely believed that if I attended a Christian college and surrendered my life to full-time Christian ministry, I would find the solution to my problem. I was sincere, but sincerely wrong.

Still, I convinced myself that if I could just marry a beautiful, Christian woman, I would certainly find the solution. My plan worked—until, as a newly married man, I found myself one night unable to get my way sexually. To my deep dismay, my old, dark habit came roaring back. Even as I was earning a master’s degree from seminary—actively involved in ministry—my secret struggle continued.

My wife’s discovery of my addiction seemed, at first, to be the worst thing that could have happened. As it turned out, it was one of the best. My secret had been exposed, and I was held accountable. Understandably, Jessica felt devastated. In fact, she and I experienced a several-year period of celibacy as each of us dealt with our emotional wounds. Although I didn’t enthusiastically embrace it at the time, I now see that this period afforded me valuable time to rid my brain and body of the toxic grip of a lifetime of sexual addiction.

Through years of individual, marital, and group counseling, I came to realize that sex was not my greatest need. I learned that sex addicts are highly likely to have experienced damage to their self-worth as children—trauma that damages their ability to bond with and trust others. I faced my issues of childhood abandonment and gained understanding of how my sexual fantasy was a futile attempt to escape the reality of my painful past. I forgave my “four-year-old self” for naïvely participating in my own sexual abuse. And I came to realize that no amount of sex could fill the hole in my heart—a spot reserved for God alone.

During my recovery, I also experienced a rich healing in my relationship with my father. Dad and I shared many tender moments and deep, honest conversations about life, our relationship with each other, and God. When my father died, we were at peace.

God continues to redeem the tragedies of my past, using my abuse, abandonment, and pain to give me empathy and compassion so I can offer help and hope to others. Today I minister as a licensed professional counselor and certified sex addiction therapist . . . to help others who are trapped in the bondage of sexual addiction.

The search for sexual gratification is no longer my master—Jesus Christ is my Master. Through His grace, I have experienced the truth of Genesis 50:20: *“What others meant for harm to me, God meant for good.”*

## How to Sever “Soul Ties” and Strongholds

Severing “soul ties” and strongholds begins with a strong sense of *powerlessness*.

Marnie writes, “Like many other biblical principles, this one involves a great paradox. It’s only through surrender that there can be salvation. Only through admitting defeat can victory be gained.”<sup>39</sup>

Sex addicts must seek God’s help and surrender their will and life to God. For Marnie, that didn’t come easily. Five months into therapy, Marnie still isn’t sexually sober, and then all of a sudden she finds herself at a watershed moment. Whose will would she obey—her own or God’s? Will self or the Sovereign One be on the throne of her life?

### Making the Choice

A 2:00 a.m. phone call to a friend in recovery jolts Marnie into finally making the decision that will determine the course of her life. Her friend tells her, “Marnie, this is really pretty simple. Either you believe God is in control and you submit to that—or you don’t. There aren’t any other choices.”<sup>40</sup>

The black-and-white of those words ultimately deliver Marnie from her gray world of compromise, rationalizations, and justifications. She gets down on her knees and surrenders her will to God, and as a recovering sex addict, it’s something she has to do on a daily basis.

When two people engage in a sexual relationship, a soul tie is established between them. Fantasizing about an illicit relationship with another person can create an unholy bond with that person in your mind and heart. All sexual relationships outside of marriage need to be broken, even if they occurred in the past and are over. Begin by praying . . .

God, thank you for loving me in spite of my wrong choices. I confess each sexually immoral relationship as sin. Through your supernatural power, I ask you to break all unholy sexual bonds that exist between me and anyone else. I pray that the soul ties with (names) be broken. (Pray this sentence naming each person with whom you have been sexually and/or emotionally involved.) Lord Jesus, from this moment on, I will rely on your power and live in your strength.

*“Do you not know that he who unites himself  
with a prostitute is one with her in body?  
For it is said, ‘The two will become one flesh.’  
But whoever is united with the Lord  
is one with him in spirit.”*  
(1 CORINTHIANS 6:16–17)

## Severing the Stronghold

When a series of sexually impure relationships occur, a sexual stronghold is formed. Until God demolishes that stronghold, you will continue to behave in the sexually impure patterns of the past. Pray that the sexual stronghold be demolished.

Lord Jesus, I affirm that sex is not my master. You are my Master. Through the supernatural power of Christ, I pray that you destroy every stronghold—physical, mental, emotional, and sexual—in my life. Keep me from justifying impure thoughts. May I see my sin as you see it and hate my sin as you hate it. Lord, I give you control of my life.

*“Though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does.  
The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world.  
On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.  
We demolish arguments and every pretension  
that sets itself up against the knowledge of God,  
and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”*  
(2 CORINTHIANS 10:3–5)

## How to Answer Key Questions about Sexual Addiction

Debra Laaser refers to it as the million-dollar question asked by sexually betrayed wives: “Will I ever be able to trust my husband again?”

According to Debra, rebuilding trust is a process, and countless women struggle more with the lies than the sexual betrayal. Their mindset goes something like this: *If he’s lied about having affairs, what else has he lied about?*

True healing and restored trust occur between a husband and wife only when full disclosure takes place. The unfaithful spouse must “put all the cards on the table” so that both parties in the marriage know precisely what they’re dealing with. “Knowing the whole truth is foundational to building a new life together because the new structure must be built on honesty and openness. And it doesn’t require you to uncover all the facts.”<sup>41</sup>

### Sex Talk Lines

**Question:** “I am addicted to calling sex talk lines They give me an incredible high and leave my mind feeling intoxicated with sex. How can I stop?”

**Answer:** Everyone has a deep-seated inner need to feel significant, but phone sex with a stranger gives you a false sense of significance. To be set free from this sexual addiction, you need to replace what is false with what is true. . . .

**The truth is:** You are so significant that Jesus not only died on the cross for you, but also designed a wonderful plan for your life.

**The truth is:** Phone sex will never give you lasting significance.

**The truth is:** Your sense of significance will only come by realizing you were created in the image of God.

You will feel no greater sense of significance than when you are being conformed to the character of Christ. Pray: “Thank you, God, for promising to conform me to the character of Christ.”

*“Those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son.”*

(ROMANS 8:29)

## Lustful Fantasies

**Question:** “How can I control my lustful fantasies? I simply can’t stop fantasizing.”

**Answer:** God would never tell you to stop lusting without giving you the power to stop. Centuries ago, Martin Luther painted a graphic picture of this truth by quoting an even older proverb—“You can’t keep the birds from flying over your head, but you can keep them from making a nest in your hair.” The starting point for victory is realizing that when a sexual thought flashes into your mind . . .

**You must redirect** that sexual thought or replace it. You are the only one who controls how long you will entertain a thought—how long you will dwell on it.

**Make a covenant** with your mind that you will not allow an immoral thought to reside in your heart.

**Make a commitment** with your eyes not to maintain a gaze that leads to an immoral thought. Follow Job’s example:

*“I made a covenant with my eyes  
not to look lustfully at a young woman.”  
(JOB 31:1)*

## Mentally Sexualizing Others

**Question:** “How can I stop mentally undressing every attractive woman I see?”

**Answer:** The moment you find yourself facing sexual temptation, you must immediately . . .

**Turn your eyes** away. Say to yourself, “I refuse to dwell on that thought. I refuse to let my eyes lead me into sexual sin.”

**Turn your mind** toward integrity. Say out loud, “I’m determined to be a man of moral integrity.”

**Turn in prayer** to God and say, “Lord, I’m committing myself to be pure in both my mind and my body. I’m turning away from impurity and turning to you for purity. I’m yielding my thoughts and desires to your power to make me pure.” The Bible says . . .

*“Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord  
must turn away from wickedness.”  
(2 TIMOTHY 2:19)*

## Masturbation

**Question:** “I am not married and I struggle with masturbation, a habit I developed as a teenager. I am a Christian and the guilt is overwhelming. How can I overcome this sexual addiction?”

**Answer:** Masturbation is not mentioned in Scripture, but it is a perversion of what God intended by virtue of the fact that it is self-focused and self-gratifying. God designed sex to bond a husband and wife together, to be mutually gratifying and other-focused. This biblical principle applies here: *“I have the right to do anything,’ you say—but not everything is beneficial. ‘I have the right to do anything’—but I will not be mastered by anything”* (1 Corinthians 6:12).

The implication is that anything that has mastery over you is sin because Christ should be your Master. A major step in gaining mastery over guilt-producing habits is to take immediate control of your thoughts at the first urge. . . .

**Pray** for God’s highest purpose for your life: “Lord, I’ll do whatever it takes to be conformed to Your character” (Romans 8:29).

**Say** to yourself, “My body belongs to God. I will do only what is pleasing to Him” (2 Corinthians 5:9).

**Distract** yourself from this compulsive desire by doing a positive, physical activity such as standing up and moving, cleaning something, engaging in exercise, or taking a “cold shower.”

**Do something** positive: phone or text a friend who’s in recovery, read a recovery devotional, journal what you’re feeling in the moment, read God’s Word, pray, or repeat this promise from Scripture six times: *“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”* (Philippians 4:13 NKJV).

As a Christian, hold on to this promise: You have Christ living in you, imparting to you His divine power to live a godly life.

*“Thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin  
... You have been set free from sin  
and have become slaves to righteousness. . . .”*

*Just as you used to offer yourselves as slaves to impurity  
and to ever-increasing wickedness,  
so now offer yourselves as slaves to righteousness  
leading to holiness.”*  
(ROMANS 6:17–19)

## Teen Addicted to Internet Porn

**Question:** “My teenage son is addicted to pornography on the Internet and refuses to stop accessing it no matter what I say. What can I do?”

**Answer:** While an Internet filter should certainly be applied, many Internet users have learned to circumvent the system. Nevertheless, you need to communicate and maintain your convictions and boundaries about pornography.

**Tell** your son that because you love him, you will do whatever it takes to help him become a young man of moral character.

**Remove** the computer from his room and move it to an open family area. (If it’s already in an open location, then make sure someone is in the room with him whenever he uses it.)

**Emphasize** the point tht no matter how much he says he needs a computer for school, accessing pornography was his choice; and therefore, he has chosen his own consequence.

**Explain** why you are being so firm. Say . . . “Son, we love you and want you to have increased freedom. But we also know pornography has such a strong pull that many people become addicted. That’s just one reason we are prohibiting you from accessing porn sites. But there are other reasons: — “Pornography poisons your mind, and at the same time pollutes our home.

- “Pornography not only violates our values, but it also offends the heart of God—it debases the very human beings He made in His image.
- “Because you’re having such difficulty with self-control, you’ve left us with no choice but to revoke all computer privileges when you are alone. After a month, we can talk about how you can regain our trust.”

Scripture addresses the seriousness of sin:

*“If your right eye causes you to stumble,  
gouge it out and throw it away.  
It is better for you to lose one part of your body  
than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.  
And if your right hand causes you to stumble,  
cut it off and throw it away.”*  
(MATTHEW 5:29–30)

## Pornography Affects the Marriage Relationship

**Question:** “Doesn’t pornography enhance a couple’s sex life?”

**Answer:** Pornography is addictive and often leads to abuse of others. It debases sexuality and ridicules Christian values in favor of lust and immorality. God ordained human sexuality for intimacy in marriage and for procreation. To the contrary, pornography is designed simply to arouse indiscriminate sexual lust.

Pornography introduces perversion into your marriage and home life—a perversion that diverts from the true intent of something or turns something to a wrong end or use.<sup>42</sup> By attempting to enhance your sex life through pornography, you risk corrupting the beauty God intended for you to experience in your sexual union with your mate.

**Pornography** typically leads addicts to . . .

- **Devalue** their mates. Love turns to lust for the “ideal” sexual mate.
- **Force** their mates to perform perverted acts. The beauty of the sexual union turns to unnatural acts seen in pornographic materials.
- **Commit** adultery. Pornography encourages careless sex.
- **Pass on** the addiction to children, who then become addicted. They are often used and abused.

Just as pornography is progressive, all sexual addiction, if not stopped, progresses into more blatant and risky behavior. What was once sexually stimulating fails to arouse in the same way. More explicit acts are required to create the same sexual excitement as previously experienced.

*“You will bear the consequences of your lewdness and your detestable practices, declares the LORD.”*

(EZEKIEL 16:58)

## How to Find Your Way Out of the Web

*Stop the rituals . . . stop the fantasies . . .* says Dr. Mark Laaser.

Many sex addicts don’t realize they go through rituals before sexually acting out. Discerning those rituals is the first step in exercising discipline over them. For example, a sex addict may be stimulated by something he or she sees on TV. He then gets in the car, drives to an ATM machine to get money, and then ends up at a massage parlor. Healthy boundaries must be put in place to halt ritualistic behavior, and in this case, that would mean avoiding all sexually graphic material on television.

Fantasy is a symptom of the spiritual and emotional condition of sex addicts, distracting them from painful feelings.<sup>43</sup> It is also one of the greatest hurdles to get over on the road to recovery because sex addicts have countless images and memories emblazoned in their minds. Victory comes through examining the *whys* behind the fantasies, addressing the painful feelings, and discussing them with a trusted friend, pastor, or counselor.

Many who have become addicted to pornography on the Internet promise themselves or others they will stop, only to keep coming back for more. Even finding ways to get around the Internet filters, blockers, and controls on their computers can become an exciting adventure. Realistically, aside from canceling or totally blocking Internet access, there are no 100 percent guarantees that can keep addicts from accessing sexually enticing materials.

There are, however, creative ways to help addicts become free or gain control of their addictive behavior. Freedom begins with a commitment to the Lord to do whatever He wants you to do in order to be sexually pure. Based on that decisive commitment, the next step is to strategically plan for success.

*“You need to persevere so that when  
you have done the will of God,  
you will receive what he has promised.”*

(HEBREWS 10:36)

### Ways Out of the Web<sup>44</sup>

The following suggestions will help you follow through with your decision:

**Use** a Christian Internet service provider (ISP) that filters the Internet at the server side and requires a password before you can change the controls. (Allow your spouse or a trusted friend to keep you accountable by password-protecting the filter.)

**Cancel** all Internet access for a period of time to help break the cycle of sexual addiction.

**Employ** the use of a filter that blocks late-night access to Internet pornography. Several Internet guardian programs allow the password holder to limit access to the Internet at certain times of the day.

**Find** a guardian filter that is guaranteed to work with your Internet browser.

**Use** an ISP or Internet filter that allows the password holder to access a protected file that tracks all Internet activity. This serves as a major reminder that all Internet activity will be monitored, and it prohibits the user from erasing the history of Internet sites that were visited.

**Accept** the reality that monitoring software provides a helpful alternative to blocking software. Trusted friends are e-mailed all the sites you visit each month with questionable sites flagged, enabling them to hold you accountable for the material you view on the Internet.

**Be sure** your Internet filter either sifts out pornographic e-mails or stops you from being linked to pornographic sites. This is necessary because e-mails that invite access to porn sites are so common.

**Place** your home computer in a part of the house where there is heavy traffic and where the computer screen can be easily seen. Avoid places where computer use can be secretive or hidden.

*“Nothing in all creation is hidden  
from God’s sight.  
Everything is uncovered and laid bare  
before the eyes of him  
to whom we must give account.”*  
(HEBREWS 4:13)

## How to Help: Use Accountability Questions

Many who have known success in their struggle with sexual temptation say, “I wouldn’t have made it without someone holding me accountable. God knew that’s what I needed!”

But at times, having an accountability partner isn’t effective. Why? Many strugglers hope no one will ask them specifically how they are doing sexually or when they have recently acted out.

Asking specific questions is a key component of effective accountability. Strugglers need to know that they are going to be asked targeted questions. They also need to know they will have someone *trustworthy* to hold them accountable. The Bible says,

*“If someone is caught in a sin,  
you who live by the Spirit  
should restore that person gently.  
But watch yourselves,  
or you also may be tempted.”*  
(GALATIANS 6:1)

### Accountability Questions

Say, “Since we last spoke . . . ”

1. **Have you** thought about someone in a lustful way?
2. **Have you** been exposed to pornography intentionally or unintentionally? If so, what kind and how many times?
3. **Have you** looked at anything else sexually stimulating such as magazines, movies, videos, TV, advertisements, Internet sites—even if by accident? How did you respond?
4. **Have you** listened to anything sexually arousing such as phone sex?

5. **Have you** “objectified” someone—that is, looked at a person merely as a sex object?
6. **Have you** flirted with anyone or used sexual humor to flirt or seduce someone?
7. **Have you** contributed to someone else’s struggle with sexual temptation?
8. **Have you** attempted to attract the inappropriate attention of another person? Have you used provocative behavior or any form of exhibitionism?
9. **Have you** used the fantasy stored in your memory to act out sexually?
10. **Have you** had thoughts about having an affair? If so, with whom? Have you done anything to move toward acting on this affair?
11. **Have you** acted out sexually in any way? Does your spouse know? Who else knows?
12. **Have you** twisted the truth or lied to me in any way?

*“Whoever conceals their sins  
does not prosper,  
but the one who confesses  
and renounces them finds mercy.”*

(PROVERBS 28:13)

### **Additional Accountability Questions**

**In what areas of your life** do you sense a need for change?

**Have you been pure** in your thought life today?

**Do you need** to confess any sin?

**How is your spiritual life?** Have you been praying regularly? Have you read the Bible every day?

**On a scale of 1 to 10** (10 being BEST), where would you say your spiritual, emotional, and relational intimacy is with your spouse?

**Is there** a question you hoped I wouldn't ask?

**Note to Accountability Partners/Recovery Sponsors:** Any of these questions can be exchanged for other questions. During your first session together, ask your sponsoree to select three or four questions they feel are most crucial to their struggle.

Ask, "Are there specific areas where you know you need to be held accountable?"

After several sessions, ask, "How is this accountability working for you?" "If our positions were reversed, what would you do differently if you were me?"

Remember, Christ is shaping and maturing both of you through this time of accountability, and you want the struggler to be set free.

*"As iron sharpens iron,  
so one person sharpens another."*

(PROVERBS 27:17)

## How to Tell the Absolute Truth to Your Mate

If you want a *full recovery* from your sexual addiction, then you must make a *full disclosure* of your sexual addiction. If you want the hope of *full healing* for your marriage, then you must make a *full disclosure* to your marriage partner.

You may try to fight taking this step, especially if you are thinking: *But God forgives and forgets!* While that is true of God, we are called to be accountable to others for our failures. Because of all the lies, deception,

and cover-ups inherent in addictive behavior, disclosing the absolute truth is necessary for three essential reasons: (1) to become a person of integrity, (2) to learn to speak the truth, and (3) to seek to rebuild trust.

Invite God to teach you to be trustworthy with the truth:

*“Guide me in your truth and teach me,  
for you are God my Savior,  
and my hope is in you all day long.”*  
(PSALM 25:5)

### Write a Full Disclosure

To ensure you say what needs to be said, write out your disclosure first.

- Pray for the courage to write an honest account of your sexual acting out history. “God, I ask for your moral courage to tell the complete truth.”
- Make a chronological time line beginning with your earliest inappropriate sexual experiences up to the present.
- Do not hide anything concerning how you have acted out sexually, with whom, how many times, and where. But do not share unnecessary details or any titillating descriptions.

### Making the Disclosure

A *onetime* full disclosure to your spouse is necessary and nonnegotiable. Ideally, the disclosure would take place in the presence of one who can help facilitate the disclosure, such as a counselor trained in addiction recovery.

- First, share your sexual history with the counselor who can make helpful suggestions.
- Next, when you and your spouse are prepared to meet together with the counselor, make plans to arrive in separate vehicles, as it may be too difficult for your spouse to share a ride home following the session. Likewise, you may want to arrange a place to stay for the night if your spouse needs time and space to be alone to process what she’s been told. Do not push your marriage partner for reconciliation or intimacy.

- As you begin to share your disclosure, take full responsibility for all of your actions.
- Never disclose your addiction by eking out information little by little, bit by bit. No matter how difficult it may be, tell the truth and nothing but the truth!

The Word of God gives this crucial counsel:

*“Whoever conceals their sins  
does not prosper,  
but the one who confesses  
and renounces them finds mercy.”*

(PROVERBS 28:13)

## How to Write an Inventory of Your Life and Addiction

To accelerate your recovery process, be specific when you write out your sexual history. Be thorough, honest, and prayerful. Ask God to bring to your mind every sexual encounter.

*“I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity.  
I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD.’”*

(PSALM 32:5)

### What to Include in Your Sexual Inventory

**Experience:** Make a list of all of your sexual experiences, beginning with your very first. How old were you, who was present, and what do you remember about that experience?

**Lies:** Make a list of all the ways you have lied and been dishonest in your addiction.

**Excuses:** Make a list of all of the excuses you have used to justify your actions. (“I’m just a very sexual person by nature.”)

**Rationales:** Make a list of all the rationales you have made in your addiction. (“No one will ever know.”)

**People hurt:** Make a list of all the people you have hurt, including loved ones you have “stolen” time from when you were acting out.

**Employment:** Make a list of all the times you acted out or were lost in fantasy while at work.

**Costs:** Make a list of all the “costs” of your addiction(s). Make a tally, “billing yourself” at your hourly pay rate for all the time you’ve spent fantasizing and acting out. This will give you a more clear perspective of just one “cost” of your addiction.

*“If a wicked person [an addict] turns away from  
the wickedness [addictive behavior] they have committed  
and does what is just and right, they will save their life.  
Because they consider all the offenses they have committed  
and turn away from them, that person will surely live; they will not die.”*  
(EZEKIEL 18:27–28)

## How Addiction Contributes to Sexually Transmitted Diseases

An STD (sexually transmitted disease) is an infection transmitted by an infected person to another person through sexual activity, whether vaginal, anal, or oral sex or intimate skin-to-skin contact.

**Bacterial STDs** can be cured with antibiotics.

**Viral STDs** can never be cured. Symptoms, such as sores or warts, can be treated, but the virus remains in the body, causing the symptoms to flare up again and again.

**Historically:** In the sixteenth century, *syphilis* was the only identified venereal disease (VD). Then, in the nineteenth century, *gonorrhea* joined syphilis as a cause of infertility. Both were classified as incurable until the discovery of penicillin in 1943, which eradicated VD as a major public health issue.

However, the unrestrained sexual revolution of the 1960s became a breeding ground for a myriad of STDs (the new label), including Chlamydia and HPV in 1976 and HIV/AIDS in the early 1980s. Today there are more than 25 STDs.

### Curable Sexually Transmitted Diseases (Most Prevalent)<sup>45</sup>

<b>Chlamydia</b> (most common bacterial STD)	
<b>Classification</b>	Bacteria—produces pus
<b>Transmission</b>	Vaginal, anal, and oral sex, or from mother to child
<b>Symptoms</b>	Males and Females: Asymptomatic or: – Males: Discharge from penis – Females: May experience discharge and pain when urinating
<b>Harmful Effects</b>	Females: Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID), sterility, risk of contracting HIV/AIDS increased

<b>Gonorrhea</b> (second most common bacterial STD)	
<b>Classification</b>	Bacteria—highly infectious
<b>Transmission</b>	Vaginal, anal, and oral sex, or from mother to child
<b>Symptoms</b>	Males and Females: Asymptomatic or: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Males: Pus from urethra, burning during urination</li> <li>– Females: Painless sore, rash, fever, fatigue, pus-like discharge</li> </ul>
<b>Harmful Effects</b>	Males: Sterility, scarring of urethra, and urinary tract problems Females: Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID), sterility, damage to heart and brain

<b>Syphilis</b> (oldest known STD)	
<b>Classification</b>	Bacteria—produces highly infectious sores on the genitals or mouth
<b>Transmission</b>	Vaginal, anal, and oral sex, or from mother to child
<b>Symptoms</b>	Males: Swollen, non-painful ulcers on genitalia, fever, enlarged lymph nodes Females: Discharge, burning during urination, venereal type wart
<b>Harmful Effects</b>	Males: Damage to heart and brain, blindness Females: Damage to heart, brain, and nervous system; can cause birth defects or death in newborns Males and Females: Death, risk of contracting HIV/AIDS increased

<b>Trichomonas</b>	
<b>Classification</b>	Parasite—causes genital infection
<b>Transmission</b>	Vaginal and anal sex, or from mother to child
<b>Symptoms</b>	Males and Females: Asymptomatic or: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Males: Discharge from the penis and burning during urination</li> <li>– Females: Foul-smelling vaginal discharge and genital pain, vaginal bleeding, swelling, and irritation of the genitals, painful urination</li> </ul>
<b>Harmful Effects</b>	Males and Females: Risk of contracting HIV/AIDS increased Females: Premature rupture of membranes that protect unborn babies

**Incurable Sexually Transmitted Diseases** (Most Prevalent)

<b>Genital Herpes</b> (herpes simplex virus) HSV-1 associated with the mouth; HSV-2 associated with the genitals	
<b>Classification</b>	Virus—infects skin and mucous membrane
<b>Transmission</b>	Vaginal, anal, and oral sex Congenital
<b>Symptoms</b>	Males and Females: Asymptomatic or painful blisters or sores on the genitals, buttocks, thighs, or mouth
<b>Harmful Effects</b>	Males and Females: Genital ulcers, higher risk of HIV

<b>Hepatitis B</b>	
<b>Classification</b>	Virus—common blood-borne infection
<b>Transmission</b>	Vaginal, anal, and oral sex Congenital and needles
<b>Symptoms</b>	Males and Females: Asymptomatic or yellow skin/eyes, fatigue, nausea
<b>Harmful Effects</b>	Males and Females: Liver damage, cancer, ultimately death

<b>HPV</b> (Human Papilloma Virus or “genital warts”)	
<b>Classification</b>	Virus—infects skin and mucous membrane
<b>Transmission</b>	Intimate skin-to-skin, vaginal, anal, and oral sex
<b>Symptoms</b>	Males: Wart-like genital growths Females: Asymptomatic (may be detected by a pap smear)
<b>Harmful Effects</b>	Males: Cancer of the penis and anus Females: Causes 99 percent of cervical cancer Males and Females: Genital warts

<b>HIV/AIDS</b> (Human immunodeficiency virus, Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome)	
<b>Classification</b>	Virus—invades immune system destroying it over time
<b>Transmission</b>	Vaginal, anal, and oral sex, needles, or from mother to child

<b>Symptoms</b>	Males and Females: Asymptomatic or flu-like symptoms (fatigue, fever, aches) initially  Later: Skin and oral lesions, diarrhea, difficulty breathing (pulmonary infections), difficulty thinking (meningitis)
<b>Harmful Effects</b>	Males and Females: Intestinal infections and <i>Candida</i> mouth infections, immune system failure, TB, cancer, and death

## How to Win the Spiritual War

The Bible tells us that we are engaged in an ongoing battle—a spiritual war against three enemies: the world, the flesh, and the devil:

*“As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, <sup>2</sup> in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. <sup>3</sup> All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.”*  
(EPHESIANS 2:1–3)

**The “world”** refers to ideas and lies that are in opposition to God.

*“You adulterous people, don’t you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God” (JAMES 4:4).*

**The “flesh”** refers to our sinful nature and our desire to live out of our own abilities independent of God.

*“I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature [flesh]. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out”* (ROMANS 7:18).

**The devil—Satan**, the adversary of God—wants to defeat the followers of God.

*“Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour”* (1 PETER 5:8).

### Spiritual Warfare Prayer

Whether you realize it or not, you have an enemy of your soul whose purpose is to defeat God’s purpose for your life. Although sexual enticement may have been your snare, spiritual warfare can be the means to set you free. Every time you sense the snare of sexual temptation, pray this prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you that the blood of Jesus purchased the full forgiveness of my sins and that I am your child forever. Because Jesus lives in me and because He has supernatural power, I realize that I have His supernatural power to overcome any sin.

(Read Revelation 12:11 and Colossians 1:27.)

Because Jesus has victory over Satan and his demons, I choose to live in His victory.

(Read Colossians 2:13–15 and 1 Corinthians 15:57.)

In the name of Jesus, I command that any power not from God leave me. No demonic power has authority over me because greater is Jesus, who is in me, than Satan, who is in the world.

(Read James 4:7 and 1 John 4:4.)

Lord God, I ask you to take back any ground the enemy has gained in my mind, will, and emotions, and to enable me to firmly stand my ground.

(Read Ephesians 6:13.)

My body is the temple of your Holy Spirit, and I refuse to allow it to be used for any ungodly purpose.

(Read 1 Corinthians 6:19.)

Put a hedge of protection around my body, a guard around my mind, and blinders around my eyes.

(Read Job 1:10.)

Make me aware of anything that is not pleasing to you.

(Read Psalm 139:23–24.)

Conform me to your character and fill me with your Spirit.

(Read Romans 8:29 and Ephesians 5:18.)

From this moment on, I will rely on your power and live in your strength.

(Read Philippians 4:13.)

In the powerful name of Jesus I pray. Amen.

*“May God himself, the God of peace,  
sanctify you through and through.  
May your whole spirit, soul  
and body be kept blameless  
at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.  
The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.”*  
(1 THESSALONIANS 5:23–24)

## Epilogue

Mark Laaser and Marnie Ferree have been set free!

Every single one of their sexual sins has been forgiven—they are clean before God.

They have been redeemed from the pit, freed from the web of sexual addiction.

They have received the Lord's unconditional love and ceaseless compassion.

They have been given the comfort of Psalm 103:2–4, *“Praise the LORD, my soul, and forget not all his benefits—who forgives all your sins . . . who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion.”*

Indeed, Mark and Marnie's lives have not only been redeemed for eternity, but they've also been redeemed for a purpose in the here and now. Mark and his wife, Debra, founded Faithful and True Ministries, a Christian recovery ministry for people struggling to overcome sexual addiction. Dr. Mark Laaser has gone on to become one of the foremost experts on sexual addiction in both the Christian and secular communities.

And Marnie became a licensed marriage and family therapist and founded Bethesda Workshop Ministry, which provides intensive clinical workshops for sex addicts, their spouses, and sexually addicted couples. In 1997 she founded a treatment program, which was the first of its kind in the country, for female sex addicts.

If God can rescue Mark and Marnie, He can rescue you—no matter the length of your addiction or the strength of the web that entangles you. Both of them testify to the Lord's life-changing work in their lives, for . . .

*“Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble,  
and he saved them from their distress.  
He brought them out of darkness,  
the utter darkness, and broke away their chains.”*

(PSALM 107:13–14)



# SCRIPTURES TO MEMORIZE



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*“First seek the counsel  
of the LORD.”*

(1 KINGS 22:5)



God's Word offers the hope and promise of a changed life. The Lord will renew your mind—transforming the way you think, act, and live—as you saturate yourself in His Word. In the following questions, the bold-faced words serve as prompts to help you more easily memorize the verses related to this topic. May God's truth come alive to you, flourish in you, and flow through you.

Is it **God's will** that I **avoid sexual immorality**?

*"It is **God's will** that you should be sanctified:  
that you should **avoid sexual immorality.**"*

(1 THESSALONIANS 4:3)

Does God expect me to **not be impure** in thought or action?

*"God did **not** call us to **be impure**,  
but to live a holy life."*

(1 THESSALONIANS 4:7)

Is it possible to have **committed adultery** in my heart?

*"Anyone who looks at a woman lustfully  
has already **committed adultery**  
with her **in his heart.**"*

(MATTHEW 5:28)

Why should I focus **my eyes on the Lord**?

*"**My eyes** are ever **on the Lord**,  
for only he will release  
my feet from the snare."*

(PSALM 25:15)

To live a life of purity, must I **put to death whatever belongs to my earthly nature?**

**“Put to death . . . whatever belongs to your earthly nature:**

*sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires  
and greed, which is idolatry.”*

(COLOSSIANS 3:5)

How can I **not look lustfully** at another?

*“I made a covenant with my eyes **not to look lustfully** at a young woman.”*

(JOB 31:1)

What does it mean when the Bible says,  
**“A man reaps what he sows”?**

*“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked.*

**A man reaps what he sows.**

*Whoever sows to please their flesh,  
from the flesh will reap destruction;  
whoever sows to please the Spirit,  
from the Spirit will reap eternal life.”*

(GALATIANS 6:7–8)

Will God allow me to be **tempted beyond what I can bear?**

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

(1 CORINTHIANS 10:13)

What must I do to ensure that I **do not conform to the pattern of this world**, and how can I know **what God's will is** for my life?

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

*Then you will be able to test  
and approve **what God's will is**—  
his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

(ROMANS 12:2)

What kinds of **things** are most beneficial for me to **think about**?

*“Whatever is true, whatever is noble,  
whatever is right, whatever is pure,  
whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—  
if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—  
**think about such things.**”*

(PHILIPPIANS 4:8)





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(Jeremiah 29:11)*

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