



A 12-week Daily Workbook
LEADER'S GUIDE

Striving for Absolute Purity

PROVEN MENTM Ministries, Ltd.
www.ProvenMen.org

Leader's Guide

for the 12-Week Daily Workbook

Striving for Absolute Purity

by

Proven Men Ministries, Ltd.

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).”

This *Leader's Guide* is a companion to the *Striving for Absolute Purity* study. It is a step by step guide, designed to help you form and conduct small support groups. Each man separately works through the 12-week study and then weekly gathers discussing what they learned, receiving additional training, and openly sharing struggles and victories. Small groups are encouraged, because a *PROVEN*[™] life requires open and vulnerable relationships with others.

Proven Men Ministries is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization dedicated to training others to live holy and pure lives. It operates under the trade name of *1 Way Out of Pornography* for purposes of the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). Your tax-deductible support of Proven Men Ministries and 1 Way Out of Pornography helps expand our reach to those trapped in sexual bondage.

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The *PROVEN*™ Model For Small Groups

You can lead others into striving for absolute purity, breaking free from the grip of sexual sins, and experiencing lasting freedom in Christ. This *Leader's Guide* will help you position others in receiving God's healing and being changed by Him from the inside out. Successful small recovery groups begin by embracing and applying the following six essential components of a *PROVEN* life into your own life and then into the group you lead:

P – Passionate for God As you take the focus off of yourself (including your rights and circumstances) and put it on to the Lord, you will discover the perfection and goodness of God, who deserves to be praised. Your new found *passion* for the Lord will replace the lust for selfish desires and practices. During times of intimate worship you will receive God's very nature and experience His healing in all areas of your life.

R – Repentant in Spirit Until you see your conduct as evil, because it separates you from closeness to God, you won't truly want to change. *Repentance* is not self-manufactured or merely having feelings of guilt or shame. Rather, it is a gift from God, granted to those who humbly seek Him with all of their hearts. When you confess your sins and submit to the Lord, you will be restored and renewed.

O – Open and Honest One of the main reasons people turn to pornography, masturbation, lust or fantasy is to keep from being vulnerable. It was relationships in which you were once hurt, and therefore, it is from open relationships which you now hide. However, your heart and soul inwardly long for true intimacy. Fortunately, God will enable you to trust again. He will also teach you how to be *open* and to permit feelings to return so that you can engage in fulfilling and real relationships, instead of escaping into the false forms of intimacy which have ensnared you.

V – Victorious in Living You cannot overcome temptation and sin in your own strength. Yet, by joining God's winning team and remaining in His camp, you'll lead a *victorious* life. Each moment you yield to the Lord and rely upon His power, your actions become pure and holy as He is pure and holy.

E – Eternal in Perspective When dwelling on the temporary (your present circumstances), you act according to immediate thoughts and desires. Taking on an *eternal* perspective, on the other hand, brings hope and perseverance during temptations and trials. By looking to God's promises and allowing the Holy Spirit to be your guide, you will live out peace and joy in all circumstances. No longer will you be worn out from chasing after temporary pleasures or defeated from the constant battle of trying to control life.

N – Networking with other *PROVEN Men*™ You were created for relationships; first, with God, and next, with others. True networking (seeking out and engaging with others on a vulnerable level), provides a way of living out your real purposes. Other *Proven Men* are also a great source of encouragement! Two *PROVEN Men* are as iron sharpening iron.

Small Group Leader's Guide

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Striving for Absolute Purity

Small Group Leader's Guide

I. Introduction

You are to be commended for your desire for leading a small group and pointing others in the direction of freedom from bondage to sexual sins. There are plenty of people who need to link together with someone possessing a loving, comforting and non-judgmental heart. Therefore, you have a incredible opportunity.

There are a few things you must accept before leading a small group, including that you cannot rescue your fallen brother and you cannot make anyone live out purity and righteousness. No matter how enthusiastic you are and regardless of what truth you possess, you will not “convince” others to either hate sexual sins or love the Lord with all of their hearts. Just as salvation does not result from fine-sounding arguments (1 Corinthians 1:17), deliverance from bondage to sexual sins (and moving towards *absolute purity*) is not obtained by following the latest program (Colossians 2:20-23). Spiritual battles can only be won through prayer, by relying upon the Lord, and in using the weapons God provides (Ephesians Chapter 6). Yet, as a fellow soldier, you can remind others of the Lord’s battle plan and encourage them through your example of obeying God’s commands. Your sacred duty, however, will be to pray, and pray, and pray even more for the men in your group. You will also be asked to show the love of Christ to them.

In short, the goal of a *PROVEN Men* purity group is to position each one to be healed *by God* through a deepening intimate love relationship *with the Lord* so that they experience the joy of walking victoriously in God’s power and in unity with Him. As a facilitator, you will inspire group members primarily by living out holiness and by loving and being devoted to them. When you model a *PROVEN* life (**P**assion, **R**epentance, **O**penness, **V**ictorious living, **E**ternal perspective, and **N**etworking with them), you can anticipate seeing them become *PROVEN Men*.

The *Striving for Absolute Purity* study also well suited for men who do not greatly

struggle with sexual purity, but desire to grow deeper with the Lord and live out a *PROVEN* life. As explained in Chapter XI, successful men's groups have used these materials as Bible studies. Although this guide utilizes a small recovery framework for most of the discussion, the same principles apply to general men's studies and groups.

II. Who Should Lead a Small Recovery Group?

You don't need to be a trained minister to lead a small recovery group. Many of the best small group leaders are ordinary Christian men that have faced similar difficult struggles and are now living a victorious life (2 Corinthians 1:3-5). In fact, men who have besetting sexual sins want to know that the group leader can really identify with their struggles. Expect that some men will think that God's grace is reserved for others and they are left alone to struggle throughout life. Your humble example will help open their eyes to the same hope and victory offered to all men who turn to the Lord. Yet, you don't need to have been the worst sexual sinner in church to be able to lead this type of a group. If you have a heart panting after God and compassion for men struggling with sexual sins, then you more than qualify – even if it has been a dozen years since you last looked at pornography or masturbated.

To lead a group, you must sincerely relate to their struggles, and you must be walking a victorious life. Although there are no hard or fast rules, generally a person should not lead a recovery group until they have been free from sexual bondage for about one year and are well equipped and accustomed to wearing God's armor. This is because there will be increased temptations in your life once becoming a leader of this type of a group. You must be prepared to meet these battles in the power of the Lord.

To be an effective leader, you will need to be able to accept constructive criticism and recognize your own limitations. God works mightily in a humble heart. He will constantly reveal more truth to you and impart wisdom, if your heart remains soft and your eyes are fixed upon Him. If you keep putting into practice each of the elements of the *PROVEN* acronym, you will be a godly leader and see the Lord working in your life and the lives of those in the group.

Have you worked through all of the suggested studies listed in the Appendix to

Striving for Absolute Purity? If not, commit to reading these resource materials. When you read them, don't simply try gaining insight or training for developing good leadership and communication skills. In fact, you may already possess many of these human skills. Instead, read them to open yourself to becoming a better communicator *with God*. Each of the books should further lead you to be more emptied of self. God does not need your (or anyone's) skill or talent. Instead, "*the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him* (2 Chronicles 16:9)." God wants your heart aligned with His heart and your mouth stating, "What do you want me to do, Lord?" and "Here I am, send me." In other words, unless and until you enter into true servanthood out of pure devotion to the Lord, you will remain ineffective in God's kingdom and your group will not reach the fullness of its potential. Use these resources as aids in going to the Lord to be divorced from the love of the world and to be broken from living for self.

When giving up selfish ambitions and totally yielding to Christ out of sincere love and thanksgiving, you'll be able to properly do His work. It is then that Galatians 2:20 becomes real in your life. It is then that you learn to know and do His will. It is then that you are able to be God's hands and touch others. Even after you become a group leader, keep asking the Lord to humble and guide you. Keep looking to Him for healing in your life, and keep petitioning the Lord to give mercy and grace to the men you lead.

Rest assured, when the Lord does call you to lead a group, He will light the way. With His strength and wisdom, you can effectively minister to others. This *Leader's Guide* is designed to be a resource to help you form and run a small recovery group. Yet, allow the Holy Spirit to be your main teacher and guide. Lean not on your own understanding or strength, but remain a needy, dependent servant of the Lord and He will guide you and work in the lives of the men you seek to serve (Proverbs 3:5-6).

III. Beginning the Process of Forming a Small Group

There are many things that need to occur before publically announcing the formation of a small purity group. Your attention to the following five preliminary items will make a big difference as to whether the group is successful. Don't take shortcuts.

A. Prayer

Prayer is the most important aspect of any ministry, especially with respect to the spiritual battles involved in sexual sin! You will need to be in daily prayer before and while you lead a small group. In fact, prayer is our way of relating to God. The only way that you will know and carry out God's will is by first knowing Him. And the only way you will remain walking in victory is to remain dependant upon the Lord. Similarly, the men you seek to guide won't be healed *by* attending your group. The spiritual battles they face will only be won through humbly moving God into action through prayer. Therefore, prayer must be the top priority in your life and modeled by you for others to follow.

Regardless of whether you are currently experiencing great prayer and communion times with the Lord, consider reading at least one book on prayer written by E.M. Bounds, such as *The Necessity of Prayer* or *The Power of Prayer*. Mr. Bounds has stated the purpose and manner of prayer in ways not duplicated. If your heart is eager to be closer to God in prayer, these books will help you climb to even greater heights!

B. Wife Support (for Married Men)

Married men, is your wife on board? Is she fully supportive? Be sure to have plenty of heart-to-heart talks with her. She will be affected. For instance, she may be reluctant for you to take a visible role, because some people will likely judge you, her husband. She is rightfully aware that some will be thinking you still give into pornography. Her concerns are valid. Not everyone in church will act godly. However, by God's strength, you both will stand up under trials.

If your wife is not in full support, then stay in prayer asking the Lord to reveal to you whether there is anything in your life that is a hindrance to her support. Be sure to search whether you are motivated by pride in leading other men. In addition, openly and honestly evaluate if you have truly demonstrated brokenness over your sexual and other relational sins and have sought full restoration in your relationship with your spouse. Listen to your wife. Find out why she is reluctant. She will have meaningful insights. Ask her if she senses that you still have a problem with pride or whether she fears that you will stumble once you target yourself to Satan as an example of a man walking in purity. Again, if you are walking in your own strength, you will fall.

After asking God to search your heart (and then acting upon what He shows you), if your wife is still reluctant, begin asking the Lord to change your wife's heart. Be patient and wait upon the Lord. When God calls, you will be able to follow. He won't call you without also leading your wife to support you.

Your wife's role in the overall process is important for other reasons. In fact, modeling an intimate relationship with her will be a model for others. Keep monitoring whether you are paying attention to her needs, maintaining open and honest communications, and being gentle and sensitive. Do these things not because others are watching, but out of genuine love for the Lord and for your wife. By continuing to live by the Holy Spirit, you will remain a man worth following – both by your wife and the men you want to lead.

C. Selecting a Co-Leader

If this is your first group, consider asking a spiritually mature man with a soft heart and passion for the Lord to co-lead with you. You will need and enjoy the support. Lay ministry is not easy and there will be many bumps in the road. Don't forget, the Lord sent out the disciples two-by-two (Mark 6:7). At a minimum, you must have an accountability partner that you can openly discuss your walk with the Lord, including any temptations or struggles you face. In fact, the lack of accountability is a major factor in leaders falling.

D. Obtaining Church Leadership Support

The greatest fear some men have is that others, and especially the church, will judge them. This is a huge obstacle in men being willing to contact you about purity or joining a group. Some believed that when they accepted the Lord as their Savior all sinful sexual temptations would simply go away. Because they continue to commit sexual sins, they think they are defective or the only Christian with this struggle. The intense shame leads to a desire to rely even more heavily upon coping mechanism, such as fantasy, pornography or masturbation, which, ironically, are the very things they are ashamed. This downward cycle of despair is not easily broken. Therefore, never lose sight of the fact that there is so much guilt wrapped up into sexual sins, especially for a Christian, that it can be extremely difficult to think that the church will not judge them. For many, it seems safer just trying to keep the sin hidden than risk judgment. Yet, when they see others, such as yourself, admit sexual

struggles and also realizing that the church leadership is committed to providing a safe source of healing, then the walls begin to crumble.

Don't just expect that your pastor has experience in effectively addressing sexual sins. He may not know the long road that is often required for lasting freedom. Plan out how to seek and obtain church leadership support, including the pastors and leaders of men's ministries. Before beginning a group at your church, you must meet with certain key leaders. You should ensure that they support your vision and approach. They must also be gently convinced of issues involved in the healing process. Initially, approach the head pastor and let him know you want to form a small group modeled after the *PROVEN Men* materials. Share with him your heart and your desire to live out a *PROVEN* life and to lead others towards purity. Listen to his views regarding the healing path for those who struggle with pornography, fantasy or masturbation. Ask him to read this *Leader's Guide* and to visit the web site ProvenMen.org. Plan on having more than one conversation with him. Give him time to realize the great need for this ministry and to see that you are ready to lead the way.

The following statistics may help the head pastor realize the great need for his church to become proactive in the community (and the church itself) in addressing a significant and growing problem.

- Over 60% of all Internet web sites are pornographic in nature (MSNBC survey, January 26, 2002)
- 25 million Americans spend 1-10 hours per week viewing Internet pornography (Id.)
- 4.7 million spend over 11 hours per week viewing Internet pornography (Id.)
- The average age of a child exposed to hard-core pornography is 8-years-old (American Family Association, 2002)
- 27.5% of children under age 18 have visited pornography web sites, and 21% of children under age 14 have visited pornographic web sites (NetValue Interned Report on Minors Online, December 12, 2000)
- 6% to 8% of Americans are sex addicts (Nat'l Council on Sexual Addiction)
- 67% of Christian men struggle with pornography (LifeWay, 2001), and 20% of Christians regularly view Internet pornography (Focus on the Family, 2001)
- 37% of pastors admit that pornography is a struggle, and 33% of pastors have

viewed Internet pornography at least once in the past year (Christianity Today, 2001)

- 14% of the calls by pastors to Focus on the Family's Pastoral Care Line is about Internet pornography (Focus on the Family, March 2000).

It can be hard for a pastor to swallow, but most churchgoers struggle with some form of lust, such as pornography, masturbation or fantasy. In many churches it is believed to be nearly three-fourths of the congregation! The problem is real and needs a real solution. It will not go away by trying harder to keep sexual sins a secret. In fact, keeping the topic taboo only reinforces the guilt and shame that cries out in the minds of many to try escaping into still more fantasy and into a further flight from true intimacy. Open and honest communication regarding sexual sin is sorely needed in the church. Without it, healing will not result. The question is, **“Will your church be known as a place where sexual sinners are not ignored and not told to simply pray about it, and will it become a leader in providing a safe place of openness and healing?”**

Once your head pastor understands that you are asking to be part of the solution to a very real problem in his church and you are volunteering for front-line duty, he most likely will embrace your ministry and support your efforts to hold small groups. After the head pastor is on board, ask him for help informing other appropriate leaders and obtaining their support. Be willing to include other men in the process. You'll be blessed to have others share the load. Besides, it is not about you leading so much as it is about the Lord being glorified by the living sacrifices of men living out holy and faithful lives (Romans 12:1-2).

At some point, you will want the head pastor to make some form of an endorsement of the group from the pulpit. The church must be seen as a place of healing and in support of recovery from sexual sins. His open support is very important. It may not need to be anything more than you making an announcement one Sunday morning during church service and the pastor immediately stating something to the effect that he has reviewed the materials and hopes every man, including leaders, would join the group.

E. Knowing the Materials

It is important that you know the materials you will be using in your group. For

instance, you should have spent 12 weeks in the *Striving for Absolute Purity* study at least once, if not more. You should also read the book *False Intimacy*, by Dr. Harry Schaumburg, and the other books listed in the Appendix to the *Striving for Absolute Purity* study. Your knowledge of these materials will help sharpen your eternal perspective and demonstrate your capability and commitment to lead.

IV. Scheduling a Group

After receiving the support and approval from church leaders, there are a few logistical matters to attend before actually starting a group. First, have plenty of copies of the *Striving for Absolute Purity* workbook on hand. Next, give careful thought to the location, day, time and size of the small group meetings. Each of these things makes a difference. Even the timing and the manner in which you announce the group can influence a positive or negative response. The logistics are very important and must be well planned out.

A. Day, Time and Place for Meetings

The approximate start date and day of the week must be carefully selected. There are two best times to begin: (1) in mid-September, after school begins and ending before Christmas, and (2) mid to late January, after the holidays are over. Summer is usually too hectic to try to find 12 weeks free from vacations or nights filled with family activities. Regardless of when you run the first group, plan ahead for the next one for those who tell you that they cannot make it now, but want to know if and when it will be offered again. Expect that small groups will be small, especially the first ones. Don't be discouraged. Even if you are used to change just one life, it's worth it. Besides, just like teaching any Bible study, leading a small *PROVEN Men* group will probably bless you as much, if not more, than others! Moreover, as stated below, a smaller sized group is usually more effective.

The day of the week to hold meetings is an important consideration. While the wishes of potential members is important, you must ultimately decide the day. Begin by evaluating whether you have just one day of the week that you can protect or if you can be flexible, depending on the needs of those signing up. It must be a day you (and your co-leader) will be able to keep. For instance, if you travel at work, but can almost always keep from being away on Monday nights, then pre-select Mondays. Those that cannot attend on Mondays because

they have a college class or other event that night will need to re-arrange their schedules or wait until the next group.

Even if your day of the week is flexible, you may find that each man has a preference vastly different from the others. Some men are reluctant to give up Saturday mornings, because that day is spent on children's activities. Others might have classes or exercise routines three nights a week. You cannot cater to each man's schedule, and ultimately, you will have to select a day knowing that it will preclude some from attending. That's okay. Let them know that you will be holding the same study next semester and give them plenty of time to arrange their schedules.

You should hold weekly meetings. Between meetings it is wise (and strongly suggested) to have some form of contact with each man, whether by email or telephone. It need not be long, but it should be personal. Tell them you are praying for them and ask if they have specific requests or anything to share, whether struggles or victories. [One unique way to maintain contact is by asking the telephone company for a second telephone number in your home. Usually all that is needed, apart from paying the monthly charge for a second line, is an inexpensive special two-line adapter. That second line can be hooked up directly to an answering machine. Set the recorder to pick up without a ring and shut off the volume so that the men can call day or night without fear of waking your family. Be sure to remind them to call your regular telephone if they need to talk directly to you. Each day you leave a short, but very encouraging, message for the men to listen to and they leave a short message back. If a man does not call for a few days, give him an encouraging call. You will be so blessed by some of the messages they leave that it will be well worth the costs for the second line!]

The time of the meetings is also a factor. Meetings should last about 2 hours, such as 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Because you will meet with each person before the start date, as discussed below, you should have a good idea of their schedules when selecting the exact start time. You can be somewhat flexible on the time of the meetings, and even alter it slightly, once the group is formed. Yet, make sure that a specific time becomes fixed and each person commits to making it a top priority to arrive on time.

The location needs to be a place where you can control the privacy of the meetings.

You may meet in your home, if you have a private area. You can also meet at a room owned by the church, provided you can ensure privacy (such as a door with a lock on it). When selecting a location, be sensitive and maintain confidentiality. Guard against parading men through places where they will be forced to encounter others from church. Over time, however, many men drop their guards and even tell others that they are in the group. Regardless, be a protector of their confidences, even in selecting a particular room or location.

Once you decide upon a day and time, it is important that you develop a schedule and make it clearly known to those desiring to attend the group. You will be asking them to commit to making these exact dates a top priority. By actually recording the exact dates for the 12 weeks, you signal the importance. You will also be able to foresee any problem dates, such as a holiday or a conflicting church function. If one of the dates falls on a holiday or there is another reason that a meeting cannot be held, schedule it as an off night. As that date approaches, remind them of the off night, but stress that it does not reduce the importance of the *Daily Heartwork* during that time. You may also want to increase your outside contact with them, because two weeks is a long time away from face-to-face accountability and support.

B. Determining the Size of the Group

Smaller groups are better than larger groups. You want men to feel connected, to have enough time to share inner feelings, and to practice open communication regarding difficult topics. The group should be small enough that each man can pour out his heart to the Lord and engage in personal discussions. The number of men, besides the leaders, should range between two and five, although it is possible to hold a group with as few as one and as many as six or seven. If you have more than six men desiring to join a recovery group, it might be better to hold two groups (on the same or different nights depending on your schedule) or ask some to wait until the next session.

C. Making the Announcement

After completing all of the above pre-flight work, you are ready to announce the formation of a small group. Regardless of how excited you are or how willing to openly share your testimony or the nature of the group, you need to think about how your announcement

will be perceived by two types of groups: (1) those that need to be in the group, and (2) those that will not be in the group, including friends and spouses of those needing the group. A common mistake in first starting a small group is to make it sound like a meeting for recovering sex addicts. This will scare off many who would otherwise want to be in the group. In addition, a spouse might tell her husband that she does not want him being associated with a sex addict group and block him from joining. You can have the right intention, but fail to be sensitive to the needs and feelings of both groups.

In your announcements, focus upon the aspects of desiring purity and walking in holiness. Also, include the notion that this group is open to those who want to mentor others in the area of holiness and purity. This way, people who are prone to judge won't know if those in your group are ministering or being ministered.

There are many ways to get the word out, including announcements in the church bulletin and discussions at existing men's groups. (Samples are attached at Appendix A.) As stated above, it is very important that the pastor endorse and make reference to the group from the pulpit. For many, if they do not hear the pastor suggest something, they are afraid to get involved. He also has an influence in their lives, which you do not (at least not now). Once you succeed in getting your pastor's full support and understanding of the importance of the group, you may find that he even mentions some aspect of the group in sermons when talking about brokenness, holiness, or the healing power of God. In short, make efforts to cultivating clear understanding and appreciation of your group with your pastor. He will be a valuable co-laborer with you as you each work with men in different ways to see them grow in holiness and purity.

Plan to start making announcements at least four to five weeks before the start date of your group. Some men will be on vacation or away from church the day you begin your announcement. In addition, it often takes three times hearing an announcement for a person to act upon it. Therefore, make three or four announcements. Moreover, men will need time to really think about whether the benefits outweigh the risks. You will also want to leave plenty of time to individually meet with each person that has an interest in the group.

V. Selecting Members

Selecting members is crucial. Not everyone is ready to commit to this type of a group, and not everyone should be in your group. Before allowing a man to attend your group, you should meet one-on-one with him. Each man must clearly be willing “to do whatever it takes” to overcome sexual sins. He must have a deep desire to seek after and rely upon the Lord. He must also agree to make attending each session a top priority in his life and agree to confidentiality.

After making the announcement, you will likely have men mention something to you on Sunday morning as you gather for church. The reasons why men speak to you at this time are many, such as the sight of you reminded them of the need to talk to you or they did not want to call you during the week for fear that their wives might overhear them calling you. Normally, it is not the best time to talk in detail about the group. First, you want to be preparing your heart for worship. Second, you want to be available to meet and greet others who would whisper in your ear that they want to know more about the group. Finally, you simply do not have time to properly listen to their story. Tell them in a short positive way that the group is for those who desire purity and holiness. Encourage them to give you a telephone call or ask if you can call him to talk about the matter further when you can privately talk, and suggest they read the www.ProvenMen.org web site. When you next talk, go into more details, including that the primary focus of the group is upon purity and sexual brokenness. Spend a minute generally talking about the type of group that will be held. Ask him if he read the web site and if he has any questions.

Early on in this preliminary conversation, share some short aspect of your testimony to put him at ease. For instance, you may tell him that you were hooked on pornography or masturbated for years before you were finally ready to do whatever it took to experience lasting freedom. Some men think that they are the only ones who masturbates and others may have vowed never to confide in anyone. Hearing you admit to similar struggles can untie the knot holding them in secrecy.

In addition, let them know that you are so broken over your own sins that you won't judge him no matter what specific sin he has committed. Ask him if he would like to meet privately to discuss these matters further. Tell him that you would like to set aside about 90

minutes for a meeting in order to get to know him better, to fully explain the group, and to answer any questions he may have. Let him know that it is okay if he chooses not to meet with you or decides not to join the group after meeting with you.

A. The Initial Meeting

The next meeting, which is referred to as the “initial” meeting, should be in person. (A detailed sample model of an initial meeting is attached at Appendix B.) Again, reserve 90 minutes for this initial meeting, because there is a lot to cover. In addition, you will want to take your time, because he will be nervous about sharing secret sins. Be the first one to share your struggles (and victories). Also, be ready to affirm them, especially after he shares his story. Because of the nature of the meeting and need for privacy, do not meet in a public place, such as a restaurant, because it is not conducive for open conversations, weeping, or demonstrating affirmation. At the end of the meeting, give him a warm hug. This really demonstrates your love and non-judgmental attitude.

1. Sharing Your Story

Be enthusiastic, but not phony, about *PROVEN Men* small groups in general and for your love for him. Although you want to cover all of these items in the sample outline of an initial meeting attached at Appendix B, don’t simply read it to him. You need to be a good listener and flexible. You will want to begin by sharing your story, because it breaks the ice and shows your vulnerability. It will also provide hope.

Expect there to be some fear or apprehension on the part of the man who wants more information. Many men have made oaths to themselves never to tell another person that they masturbated, and they sure won’t be the first one to admit such an act. Therefore, during this face-to-face meeting, seek to put him at ease. For instance, tell him that the outline of the meeting will be you sharing your story, asking him to share his, and discussing the causes and cure for struggles with sexual temptations.

Your story might go something like this: “I had been exposed to pornography as a child and I began a life of masturbation, pornography, fantasy and lust. This led me to shy away from intimate relationships, even later with my wife and certainly with God. I had made an oath never to tell anyone about my sexual sins, but that God has set me free.” At this

point, you would provide more details, but still keeping it to a condensed version in order to have plenty of time for them to share theirs, and for you to thereafter explain the path of victory. It is appropriate to admit that the road to freedom was long and hard fought, but be sure you let him know you are now walking in victory. The goal is not to brag, but to show hope. Let him know the reason why you share that you have not masturbated in years and how your relationship with the Lord is growing. Make it clear that you are not boasting, but giving hope that others can have this freedom. In fact, many men think that spiritual maturity is just for a few chosen people. They need to know that years ago you did not have a quiet time or were shallow on the inside. Also, make it clear that you won't judge his sin and you are so broken over your own sin that you have no room to judge others no matter what sin.

2. Listening to Their Story

When you finish your story, ask him if he would share the sexual matters with which he struggles and to tell his story. Expect that some people will want to tell you about the many ministries or good deeds they have done, because they do not want to be judged and want you to think they are worthy of your time. Allow some of this to go on for a few minutes and tell him you can see how the Lord has used them, but gently steer the conversation back to how they got started in the sexual practices and where they are now. Most men will have been exposed to pornography at an early age, and some will have been abused by a family member. Don't interrupt him as he is sharing difficult details. If he cries during his story, let him continue. It is okay to put a hand on his shoulder as you silently listen or say "go on." But **don't** cut off his story with well-meaning statements like "I understand," "that's too bad," or "we all have suffered." Otherwise, it will break the moment or he may feel that he need not share further details. After all, most are expecting rejection, not the love of Christ through you. They will be quick to shut down if they think you are uncomfortable. Be sure to love and affirm each man with facial expressions and leaning towards them as you listen intently. When he has finished, tell him you hurt for him. Allow some dialogue, even a hug.

After he completely finishes his story, you can ask some questions or, if appropriate, share more about your story. But don't try to outdo him or make it seem like you are

comparing. At some point, you need to politely ask if he minds answering some questions. If he agrees, ask for some details he may not have fully stated, such as:

- When was the last time you masturbated? How many times a week?
- When did you last look at pornography in magazines? on the Internet? How often?
- When did you last have sex with someone other than your wife? How often?
- What sexual thing is the biggest struggle you now face?

To be an effective leader, you need to know where each man is at today and what battles they will face.

In addition, some of the men may have had homosexual encounters or involved animals in their sex acts. Be prepared for this to be revealed. Don't look horrified or shocked. We all are only a step away from these things. Sin never satisfies. For instance, people progress from Playboy to Penthouse to much more hard core magazines over time. It is just a faster pace for some than others. In the end, our minds are given over to lust and self pleasure to the point that God permits us to turn our attentions towards other men and animals (Romans 1:24-27). If you judge, you won't be able to help them. They already feel like they have no hope of redemption, and you will confirm this lie if you make any sin taboo. Guilt and shame does not turn us towards, but away from God. We then return to the one thing that we think deadens the pain (sexual sins), which only causes the cycle to continue. Break the mold. Hug and tell the man you love him. Show Christ's love and forgiveness. To God, all sins are evil and separate us from Him. We have no right to rank them.

You may find that the more you meet with a man, the more he will "remember" his past and the more he will speak of sexual sins not mentioned at the first meeting. Part of it may be a testing of your reaction, and part of it a subconscious effort to keep things hidden (as they have done for years). Tell him that there is freedom in the confession of sins. Also tell him that you have no more secrets, and therefore, Satan has no hold on you. Encourage the men to confess and tell you all of their sins. Let them have the same freedom. Also, tell them, in a very non-judging way, that God says He is faithful to forgive each sin we confess (1 John 1:9). Have the attitude of personal gratitude and hope when you share these type of verses. Therefore, encourage them to confess all of their sins and ask God for forgiveness. It

may be impossible to recount every sexual sin, but tell them if anything else comes to mind right now (or even later) to confess it. Give the men freedom to share with you another time any other parts of the story they may have forgotten or overlooked. For instance, if a person spent 20 years of lusting after women, and assuming there were only 10 lustful thoughts a day, that is over 70,000 sinful fantasies. Even if the men are repentant over this lifestyle of lusting, they could not now specifically confess each one. But, be sure to allow them the opportunity to confess the nature of each sexual sin. (During the small groups, keep reminding the men for all sins that occur in the future, they are to confess each and every lust or other sin, one-by-one. They must develop the practice of turning away from it immediately, accepting no pleasure from it. Teach them to keep the account short, never letting it build up again!)

3. Describing the Healing Path

Plan to include all of the word pictures contained in the suggested initial meeting (see Appendix B), when describing the reasons why we turn to sexual sins and what is involved in the healing process. Word pictures help keep your discussion interesting and aid the person in identifying with and remembering key points. In fact, word pictures sometimes speak to men in ways other forms of communication cannot.

The best place to start is the reason God created people and the role and relationship we have with Him. Many men do not have a good grasp of God's purpose or plan for mankind. That is part of the reason many think that God is not good or that spiritual maturity is reserved for just a few men chosen by God. Spend time explaining the nature of the relationship the Lord wants with each man. Several of the word pictures or analogies relate to this issue. Next, tell them that God is inviting them to join with Him in intimacy, and if they reach for the Lord, God will respond. You must position the person to realize the need for taking their eyes off of themselves (including their circumstances), and fixing them intently upon the Lord. A real and fulfilling relationship will result! Finally, you should explain the root issues of sexual sins (selfishness and pride) in order for the men to know where the battle is and how to approach it. This will lead into a discussion of the approach of your small group meetings.

Again, plan on using each word picture and analogy, because they help set the stage for understanding the cause and cure for sexual struggles. In addition, if you use the same word pictures with each man, you will be able to refer back to them again in a group setting and all the men will be on the same page. Plan to read through the suggested initial meeting outline several times in order to become comfortable with the word pictures. You might also want to reread it just before each meeting with a man. Attached behind the sample initial meeting is a bulleted outline to remind you of the word pictures and the topics to cover. Feel free to make additional notes on it. Have it on the table as you talk to a man in the initial meeting. Because it is a broad outline, you will not be distracted by an occasional glance to it.

4. Inviting a Man to Join

Never press a man to join. It needs to be the right timing for him, and he must be willing to do whatever it takes for healing to occur. You will regret convincing someone to attend, because he will not be ready to be healed and will likely disrupt the rest of the group. In fact, it is unfair to the others in the group for you to allow a man into group who needs to be constantly “convinced” of his sin, openly shifts blame, or argues each point you try to teach. The group will digress into a debate, instead of a place to meet with and be healed by God. Always remember, your role is to be available to minister to those ready to receive God’s healing and to provide a safe atmosphere where that can be accomplished. It is not your job to plead with anyone to join the group or to convince them to give up their sins. If they are not ready, they should not be in the group. Those not ready now, can always join a later group (should the Lord tarry and it be His will – James 4:15) .

At some point during your initial meeting be sure to discuss their relationship with the Lord. Ask them directly if they have trusted Jesus as their Savior, and have them tell you how and when. Unless they have placed personal faith in Christ alone for salvation, the Holy Spirit does not permanently indwell in them and lead their lives. The most a non-Christian will get from the group is self-help and practical things to do in order to reduce the extent of sin. In short, God’s power to live a *PROVEN* life is only available to those adopted as sons through faith. The good news is that God desires all to become His children and He will save anyone who calls out to Him in faith (2 Peter 3:9, Romans 10:13). If you have any questions

about their conversion, try sharing your testimony as part of a discussion of what it means to ask Christ to become your Lord. If they are not ready to accept Jesus as Lord, you need to seek the Lord whether they are ready for the group. At a minimum, provide them with other testimonies and tracts which clearly state what it means to trust Jesus as Lord and Savior, such as the article at Appendix E to the *Striving for Absolute Purity* study, keep praying for them, and keep spending time with them to lovingly and gently win them over to Christ.¹

After the initial meeting, all of those willing to do whatever it takes to receive God's healing and who agree to make the weekly study and meetings a top priority should probably be asked to join. Although certainly not required, some group leaders ask each man to fill out a written application to help to solidify commitments. (A sample application is attached at Appendix C.) The requirement of filling out an application can give men an opportunity to gracefully bow out if they do not really want to be a part of the small group. However, most men wait until the group is about to start before contacting you, and therefore, it could be impractical to require applications. Use your judgment.

B. Repeat Attenders

Twelve weeks may be enough for many men to be set on a path towards walking in victory. For others, however, it is too short. Therefore, consider permitting some men to repeat the group meetings, provided that they are really committed and as space permits. There is so much packed in the 12 weeks, that it is still fresh and exciting the second (or third or fourth) time through. In fact, as discussed below, encourage all of the men to redo the 12-week study with another man. (See *Your Next Study* in the Appendix to *Striving for Absolute Purity*.)

C. Bondage to Other Sins

On occasion, men that struggle with anger (or are in bondage to other sins) will ask to join the group because they want to live a *PROVEN* life. Although other men in the group

¹ Although many are afraid of using the term "born again" or "born from above" that is the words Christ used to describe what happens when a person turns from living for self and to trusting completely in Him for life everlasting (John 3:3-18). In essence, we become new spiritual beings at the moment we trust Christ. Yet, it is not critical that you use these terms so long as a heart change and complete surrender occurs such that Christ Himself would say that the man has become born again as His adopted son.

may feel uncomfortable sharing sexual sins while another man confesses anger, if the person is really ready to do business with God and devote himself to healing, it could be a good idea to allow him to participate. However, carefully evaluate whether the man is humble and teachable. You will need to be sensitive at each meeting and regularly remind the man addressing the non-sexual sins of his need for sensitivity, vulnerability and loyalty to the group. Remind him that others could feel uncomfortable, especially if he never shares difficult struggles or if he is not vulnerable with his own weaknesses and sins. In short, there is a place for men who want purity and holiness in all areas of their lives, because all forms of sin stems in some way from a common root issue of pride and selfishness. Each man shares much in common and the healing path is the same for anyone desiring to be pure and stamped *PROVEN* by God.

VI. Structure of Small Group Meetings

As an initial matter, you need to encourage the men to attend every meeting and to attend on time. It is your responsibility, however, to end on time. Show discipline and respect by never running late. Delete some discussion if you have to, but end on time. If they choose to stick around and visit in the parking lot, that's fine. The meetings should have set begin and end times.

Be sure that each meeting contains all of the elements of the acronym *PROVEN*, listed below:

P – Passionate for God. Meetings should always begin and end in prayer. They should also have other elements of praise and **passionate** worship, such as singing songs, reading psalms, and thanking the Lord for His mercy. Each week, bring a portable CD player and your favorite worship songs, together with the words on sheets of paper for each man. If you play the CD loud enough and have the words to follow, all men will join in and sing. This is a wonderful way of bonding with each other, being open, and worshiping the Lord.

R – Repentant in spirit. Make it clear that the men are encouraged to confess sin and seek **repentance** during each meeting. Tell them that at any time they are led to confess sin and be repentant in spirit to let you know, and even to raise their hand and ask for this opportunity. Never seek to fabricate repentance, but provide opportunities for it. In addition,

set an example by making confessions. They will only be as open as you are! During most meetings, purpose to gently ask if anyone stumbled. Finally, during closing prayers, each man should be allotted time to pray, and by following your example, they will often confess sin and pour out their hearts to the Lord in prayer. Therefore, guard the prayer time each week!

O – Open and honest. **Openness** is one key weapon against guilt and shame and other relational blocking mechanisms that lead towards false intimacy. The leader must model open, honest and vulnerable communications. Discuss your failings (as well as victories, because there needs to be an element of hope!). The more open you are, the more open they will be. Similarly, if they sense that some topics are off limits, they won't feel freedom in sharing certain things. Also, model openness in your relationship with your wife (if married) and with others. Confess when you gave the silent treatment. Share how you asked for forgiveness, as well as how readily it was given. Some men need more training in areas such as fostering a healthy relationship with a spouse, developing good communication skills, and offering or receiving forgiveness. Therefore, be ready to give life examples, such as how to listen without trying to fix problems, openly communicate on sensitive topics, or stop a fight in progress.

V – Victorious in living. Are you walking in victory? Do the men sense your excitement about the Lord? Do they want what you have? Tell the men that they are not recovering sex addicts, but are, instead, children of God. We are to carry that name (His name) because of the righteousness of the Lord. The message is one of hope, not despair. God forgives us the moment we ask for forgiveness, not when we feel like we are worthy of it! We will walk in **victory** each moment we are led by and cooperating with the Lord (Galatians 5:16). The key point is that victory is by God's power, not our own (John 15:5).

E – Eternal in perspective. By keeping an **eternal** perspective, each man will experience and retain God's vision and hope for his life. In addition, an eternal focus will help when setbacks happen. Remind them not to throw in the towel, but to take on the eternal perspective that the goal is to live intimately with God and to enjoy His righteousness. Setbacks can actually have the *positive* effect of motivating us to putting down the shovel of self-effort and becoming even more repentant, needy and dependent upon the Lord. Living

out our purpose in life – to love God with all of our hearts and love our neighbor as ourselves – is what really matters and brings peace, joy and meaning into our lives.

N – Networking with other *PROVEN* Men. It is important that men bond and develop vulnerability and intimacy with each other. Again, we were created for relationships with God and with others. It is our hiding from real intimacy which results in turning to false forms of intimacy, such as pornography, fantasies and other sinful ways of avoiding transparency and genuineness in relationships. Therefore, purpose to become true friends with others, without limitations or barriers. For instance, set a practice of hugging each man at the start and conclusion of each meeting. (Model this also in outside relationships with other men.) In addition, foster a team spirit. Consider using the word picture of a mountain climbing team, such as on the front cover of the *Striving for Absolute Purity* workbook. Tell the men that we are all tied to the same rope, and if one falls, it affects the others! Convey that, at times, one in the group will be taking the lead in sharing exciting experiences with the Lord and at other times the same person will be following the footsteps of another. Godly teamwork and camaraderie are true forms of **networking**. They will also help demonstrate why we should all make it a top priority to be at every meeting and doing the *Daily Heartwork* assignments in the workbook.

In addition to generally incorporating each *PROVEN* element, be prepared each week with the specific content of the meetings. There are definite goals to be accomplished in each meeting on the path to a new and *PROVEN* life. Stated another way, group meetings are far more than providing a place for men to meet to confess sins or offer kind words of encouragement. The *Striving for Absolute Purity* study and weekly meetings are designed to position each man to meet with and be changed by God. A detailed suggested outline for each week is attached at Appendix D. Yet, feel freedom in alerting and shaping the weekly meetings around your specific group. In fact, you could spend one-half of the time during a particular meeting in confession, praise and worship, including singing, praying, and taking turns reading from Psalm 51 and 119 in the first person (i.e. listing the specific names of each man in the group or the term “we” in place of where the author was speaking of himself or others).

A. The Role of Leaders During Meetings

One of your largest roles is to provide a place of safety and trust. You want to foster an atmosphere where the love of Christ is communicated and each member feels comfortable in sharing his pain and failings. It is not your responsibility, however, to bring healing to a man or to break his denial. Avoid the temptation to convince or coerce a man to change. Just as God does not favor us when we use shame or guilt based techniques to attempt to coerce anyone into accepting His free gift of eternal salvation, He will not bless shaming tactics of one man urging another to live out a pure and holy life. Instead, God uses His unconditional love to draw men into intimate relationships with Him. It is through a growing relationship that He heals the deep scars in hearts and souls. Therefore, we must not use shaming with our fellow servants to get them to step in line. For instance, avoid asking each week who did not do their study. Besides, it will be obvious in the weekly discussions. Be an encourager by sharing how the Lord used what you learned this week. Shame and guilt are part of the tools Satan uses as a means of tightening the grip of bondage. In contrast, receiving God's love and living by the Holy Spirit remove sin's noose. Therefore, purpose to keep loving the men and making them feel accepted and a part of the group.

Although you are responsible for keeping the right focus in the group, you should not hog all of the time in teaching. These are recovery groups, not lectures. Be a good listener and foster godly discussions. In doing so, you'll be sincere in caring for and training them! In addition, each man will take ownership of a principle when he is lead to realize it himself.

Come prepared with an objective in mind, yet be flexible to needs of men on any given week. You should know the stories of each man, because you met with them privately before the group began and because they shared their stories and circumstances in the first meeting. You already know if a man has a great fear of abandonment or if they have been abused as child. Therefore, you can tailor some discussions in these areas. However, you should not allow the meetings to digress into chit-chat or become overly focused upon someone's particular circumstances. Be sure to incorporate the main points from each week into your meetings. By discussing portions of the study during the meetings, it emphasizes the importance of each man completing the Daily *Heartwork*.

A point worth repeating is this: For the group to flourish, you must model vulnerability. Share details on how you deal with your wife (if married) and others, including the good and the bad (i.e. times you encourage them spiritually and times you picked a fight). Most men in your group will likely have a fear of true intimacy and lack good communication skills at a vulnerable level. Your examples will be helpful to others.

In addition, guard against comparing group members with each other or with yourself. God's timing is perfect for each person. Let them know that there is no optimum time for healing and it will look differently for each person. Do, however, remind them that when you first began dealing with your own sin, it was a difficult and long battle. Tell them not to expect to be at the same level as you are at right now. Continue to affirm and encourage each man. Similarly, do not view yourself as an expert or someone who has arrived. If you merely tell others how to fix their own problems, you will thwart healing. In fact, a person must learn to see the problem and solution for themselves in order to grow. That is why it is often best to ask a good question than try to give a great answer to their problem. Although it takes time and patience for results to be seen, in the end, the men will be able to address other situations, rather than become dependent upon you to tell them how to react when new problems surface.

Finally, be sure that during each meeting you pray for each person specially and by name. You'll be surprised how others will model after the way you pray. Some will begin praying specifically for the other men. Also, pray from your heart and don't be concerned about fancy words. Many men are afraid to pray in public, because they don't think that they speak very well. If you find yourself praying to impress them, then confess it as sin and ask for forgiveness. Paul told his spiritual children to model after him as he follows after Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1). Being a leader is a big responsibility. In fact, whether you ask them to or not, your fellow group members will be modeling after you. That is one reason you should read *The Necessity of Prayer*, by E.M. Bounds, to ensure the way your pray is a godly model. Especially in your prayer life, strive for intimacy and purity, and desire to glorify God. Your prayers can and should be a conduit for the Lord's will being accomplished. It will also equip you in training others to do the same!

B. Confidentiality and Other Ground Rules

It is important to provide group members with a few ground rules to follow, such as confidentiality and guidelines regarding how to show respect and love during group meetings. They are important, because each member must view the group setting as a safe place to share personal matters. Below are six recommended general ground rules.

1. Maintaining Strict Confidentiality. Confidentiality is perhaps the most important ground rule. The men must agree that what is shared in the group stays in the group. Nothing will clam up a man more than thinking his story will be made known to others. Make sure that the notion of confidentiality includes even the names of the group members. Tell each member that if they violate this confidence, they should humbly confess it and seek forgiveness.

Expect that a church leader may ask you who is in the group. If you are not prepared to give an answer, you might feel compelled to tell him. Therefore, plan ahead how you will respond. The first question you should ask is, “Why do you want to know?” It is likely that they are simply curious. Your question may end the inquiry as they realize that they really do not need to know. If they give a response such as, “I’m just curious.” Tell them that you made a vow to the men not to disclose their names and ask the leader to help you honor the request. Chances are he will agree that he does not need to know. If he still presses, tell him that you will need to get approval from the group members, or at least tell him that you cannot give out their names because of a covenant you made with them. Also, share how this might ruin the ability of you to lead a group or forestall healing in the men. If this still does not work, before giving into pressure to divulge the names, you should tell him you need time to pray about it and seek wise counsel, such as from the head pastor or elders of your church, before sharing the names.

2. Taking Responsibility for My Own Actions. Each person must realize that they alone are responsible for receiving healing from the Lord. You cannot do it for them. Similarly, they must understand that healing is a process with a purpose and there are no shortcuts. Looking to a program to fix you or for a list of things to avoid will not produce lasting freedom (Colossians 2:20-23). Therefore, they must commit to making it a high priority to use the *Striving for Absolute Purity* study each day to meet with the Lord, who

alone can heal and change them. In so doing, however, they must humbly and willingly cooperate with God and rely upon His strength to overcome.

3. Attending Group. It is vital that each man commit to attending each meeting. First, it is not fair to others if they miss a meeting. Each man in the group will have shared their deepest secrets and become vulnerable with the other men. A unique bond forms between the men, and when one man is missing, the dynamics are affected. Second, the man who does not attend a particular meeting will miss out on valuable opportunities to practice being open, as well as miss out on learning important truths gained from group interaction and times of teaching.

Ask each man to make attending each and every meeting a high priority. They should commit to rearranging their schedules to avoid conflicts and to attend the meetings even when they are tired or do not feel like it. If they simply cannot make a meeting, they should notify you in advance. In addition, each man should commit to attending on time. If they must be late, tell them they should slip in quietly and not disrupt the meeting by announcing their presence and shaking hands. Be sure to tell the men that it is better for them to arrive late, even if only for the last 30 minutes, than to miss group.

4. Participating in Meetings. If you are not diligent in running the meetings, some men will only share on a surface level or maintain a comfort zone they will not cross. Ask each man to commit to working hard at recognizing and sharing feelings. To help them in this area, keep referring during meetings to the *Feelings Chart* at Appendix F to the study. Ask the men to commit to being open, real and vulnerable while participating in discussions. Tell the men that a common defense mechanism to avoiding intimacy is bringing up side issues, arguing over disputable doctrines, or raising other matters, which take away from an atmosphere where all are encouraged to share difficult personal issues and work towards a healing path. Therefore, ask them to commit to staying on topic and sharing from their hearts.

5. Respecting Others. Remind the men that the group is just that, a group – one where all are able to grow and receive healing. It is important that each man show respect for the others, even those with difficult personalities. Ask each man to agree to be

mindful of any tendency they may have to dominate conversations or to monopolize discussions or sharing times. Those who are more vocal need to commit to limit their time so others have the same amount of time to share. In addition, each person must give undivided attention when another person is sharing. They should not interrupt them. Similarly, no one should judge another group member.

6. Keeping Evil Out. As stated above, the group is to be a safe place. Therefore, no one should bring into the meetings things that may cause another to stumble. For instance, warn the men to avoid discussing unnecessary graphic details about sexual matters, which might be a “trigger” for another or a stumbling block. It is appropriate to confess that they viewed pornography, but it would not add anything to the discussion if they shared the particular actress or other details of the fantasy to get the point across. Yet, make it clear that the men should not misuse or hide behind this limitation in order to justify in their minds that they can or should avoid being open and honest in personal sharing.

In addition, ask the men to especially abstain from viewing pornography or masturbating right before group time, which can influence their participation during the meeting. However, tell them not to use this as an excuse to skip a meeting. Tell them that if they struggle in this way, such as trying to sabotage healing, to talk to you about it.

A sample agreement containing these ground rules is attached as Appendix E. However, feel free to modify the ground rules to meet your particular group. It is not necessary for a person to return a signed form. Leave the copy with them so they can refer to it later.

C. Dealing With Difficulties in Meetings

Dealing with difficult people will be one of your responsibilities. In gentle and loving ways, you can direct the group and even train others to respond maturely. It is possible to allow others to participate in the process of redirecting the group when distractions or disruptions occur. For instance, you might ask others to comment on what a person in the group said. However, if you use this technique only when you want others to correct another, it will likely be misused. You must make sure that you do not teach others to use shaming techniques or permit men to attack each other. The group is to be a safe environment where

openness is permitted and encouraged. However, it also provides a training ground for godly communication and intimacy, especially when poor forms of communications are used by some. Rather than being defeated when difficulties in the group arise, you won't be worn out if you keep the proper perspective that the men need godly training and will only experience more and more of the nature of the Lord through trials and the refiner's fire.

A few common types of situations, which you must address are: (1) time hogs, (2) Biblically incorrect statements and/or totally irrelevant discussions, and (3) silent participants.

1. Time Hogs

Expect that at least one man will want to do most of the talking or get the group to focus on his circumstances. After all, the same pride which fuels this self-centered behavior ignited his flames of lust. Consider it a great opportunity to expose a root issue and for the man to grow. One polite way of controlling an excessive talker is to periodically say, "Let's hear from someone else" or "How about a view from someone who has not spoken." At some point, you may need to talk to this person privately about the issue. This is one reason why you should have established ground rules at the first meeting. You will remind him of the group's purpose and the ground rules in place. Ask him to be mindful of how much time he is using and the need for shy men to participate more. Tell him that some men won't talk until there is silence for a set amount of time and ask him to give them time to participate. Remind him of the verse that says to be quick to listen and slow to speak (James 1:19). The key is not to confront, but to "care-front." Always affirm while you give guidance. Tell him of the positive changes that you are seeing in his life. If done lovingly and gently, you may win over a lifetime friend. However, if after repeated encouragement, an excessive talker continues to disrupt the group, you will have to set limits in greater ways. If it gets to the point that others no longer want to attend, you may even have to ask the time hog to either remain silent during the meetings or to stop attending.

You will save yourself many headaches and heartaches if you take time to properly screen the group. Chances are that an incurable time hog is a man who would have been too proud to really want to do whatever it takes to live in God's victory, and this would have come out in the initial meeting. Perhaps this time hog is a person you told needed to be in

your group or otherwise was “encouraged” to join, instead of allowing the Holy Spirit to convict his heart and prompt him to join at God’s timing. This man remains so puffed up that he either thinks his needs are the greatest or he has the best advice for others, and therefore, he incorrectly thinks the group gladly wants him to pontificate. In short, when screening the group members, never force men to join. If they are not ready, they will not respond in the group (except to act in self-efforts and human thinking). One of the most common mistakes of a new group leader is to try to rescue a fallen brother. Again, it must be the Lord’s timing, the Lord’s leading, and the Lord’s healing. Yet, as the leader, the other group members count on you in properly selecting members and leading in such a way that all will flourish. Do not overlook this area.

2. Biblically Incorrect Statements & Irrelevant Discussions

It is important that you develop a game plan for each meeting and guard against irrelevant topics, because time will be a factor. A two-hour meeting will fly fast. In fact, it is doubtful that you could cover all of the topics in the proposed schedules for weekly meetings attached at Appendix D. Each meeting is designed to be a time of opening up to God and to His healing. It requires participation by each group member. Yet, it is far more than a group of men meeting to talk about spiritual matters. The lessons are preselected to foster growth in certain areas that are sorely lacking in most men – those who are running away from vulnerable intimacy.

At times, someone will say something that is irrelevant, simply incorrect or unscriptural. For instance, a man might suggest that it is okay to look at a woman’s body shape for up to three seconds without sinning, because he is merely admiring God’s creation. (Certainly this incorrect statement would be relevant and must be addressed.) At other times, a person might contradict a clear Biblical doctrine essential to the faith, such as whether Jesus is God. When dealing with bunny trails or unscriptural statements, the key is not to spend too much time on such items but to refocus the group.

A bunny trail may include questions such as predestination, speaking in tongues, or any disputable doctrine. If you attempt to answer these topics, you likely will needlessly offend some and certainly take time away from the real issues at hand: how to become *PROVEN*

Men. It is appropriate for you to stop the discussion by saying, “Let’s refocus” or “Let’s leave that topic for another day.” If you find that you started or contributed to the conversation, admit that you opened the door to a bunny trail, but need to get back to the lesson for today. If it is an issue that someone says they really need to address, ask them to contact the church leadership or another mature Christian man outside of the group. If it is a matter that you believe must be addressed, such as whether they truly have become a Christian, you might tell them that you will talk to them yourself. However, leave all disputable doctrines for another time and place. The point is that it is not necessary to dismiss the topic, but rather, simply show that there is not time to address it in this group.

With regard to wrong doctrine, not every incorrect statement must be corrected. Yet, if it is relevant to the content of your lesson plan or if you think others will be led astray, then briefly address the point during the meeting. When doing so, bring in other relevant Biblical principles and ask the men how they apply to the situation. For instance, ask others if they can think of other Scripture which relates to the point being discussed. Cause the men to think with their spiritual eyes to see why God has another way. It should be rare that you must take a hard line. Again, if the doctrinal statement is not really applicable, you can deflect it by stating, “We don’t have time to flesh that doctrine out or to address other pertinent Scriptures,” and then move the meeting along.

3. Silent Participants

There are two types of silence you must address: (1) the quiet person that rarely participates, and (2) the one who talks, but does not openly share personal or vulnerable matters. You will need to gently prod the quiet man. He likely will be easily steam-rolled by others who are quick to speak or who act more forcefully. Therefore, you may need to say, “John, what do you think?” or “How about we hear from someone who has not spoken yet.” Allow there to be silence for a time. Remind the men that it is important for everyone to participate.

With respect to those who do not share vulnerable details, begin by modeling it yourself. For example, tell the men you want to confess a lustful thought or an angry moment that you had this week. If you fail to show vulnerability and openness in discussing these

topics or make it seem that you cannot identify with their struggles, some will be reluctant to openly share. Provide many opportunities for the men to share difficult things, and affirm them when they do. Regularly thank them for being open, and tell them that you love and are proud of them. At appropriate times, arise to give a hug or place a gentle hand on their back. Yet, don't use these gestures to stop or inhibit a good flowing discussion. In addition, to help stimulate discussions regarding feelings, it is appropriate to ask the men personal questions, such as "Jim, how do you feel" or "Tony, how did that make you feel?"

There are many other types of communication problems that you will face when attitudes of pride or judgment surface. Watch out for them and consider them to be opportunities for training.

VII. The Meetings

The goal of each meeting is to put into practice the *PROVEN* elements for a life devoted to the Lord and for developing healthy relationships. The first meeting should set the tone for the next 12 weeks. You will want to set the ground rules as well as alleviate any fears. Make it clear what is expected of them during the week, both while on their own and in the group meetings. Explain that it is important that the group not become a pity party and there are particular points that need to be covered each week based upon the Daily *Heartwork* assignments in the *Striving for Absolute Purity* workbook. Therefore, you may need to cut off discussions or redirect others. Discuss how you expect each man to participate, but not to hog all of the time. Tell them that you will ask some to speak more often and others to speak less often, depending upon the way each man communicates. Let them know that it is not personal and you consider each person to be a vital member of the team. Ask the men to accept, for now, that you will be the coach, having everyone's best interest in mind. Also, ask them to give you grace as you lead.

It is very important that you thoroughly prepare for each meeting. Begin by completing the Daily *Heartwork* assignments each day during the week. You'll better relate to the men if you are working through the Daily *Heartwork* assignments right along with the men. Even if this means that you repeat the study multiple times, it will reveal your view of the importance of the materials and reinforce that they too should redo the materials later.

Besides, the Lord will meet with you in new and fresh ways each time you go through the study.

Review the suggested outline for that week several times until you have in your mind the framework with which you want to base the meeting. Jot down an outline or write comments in the margins of the *Leader's Guide*, but be prepared. Again, it is unlikely that you would be able to cover each point in the outline, unless you became a time hog and act as you are merely teaching a class. Yet, some items will simply need to be stated in order for the men to receive certain training, while other items are designed to foster open communications with the men. They need to start practicing vulnerability in a safe environment or they may not openly communicate with a spouse or others outside of group. Therefore, make sure each weekly group contains opportunities to share in open and vulnerable ways. This is different than discussing a point of doctrine. You want the men to share deep personal matters that they otherwise would keep hidden behind thick walls. That is why it is a good idea to ask the men each week how they are feeling or what sexual struggles they faced.

The 12 weeks will go fast. It will not be enough time for full healing to occur. In fact, healing occurs during an entire lifetime. Yet, group time is a great starting point, and it can be the doorway to a life committed to open relationships with God and others. A changed heart will continue to grow forever. That is why it is so important to foster a new and *PROVEN* lifestyle, complete with godly networking with other men now and forever.

It can be a good idea to use the last night of the group to bring some sense of closure. Even though the last meeting will take place when there are still two weeks of Daily *Heartwork* from the *Striving for Absolute Purity* workbook, you might consider having a pizza party with a time of reflection and a look ahead on the final time together. An outline for each meeting is attached at Appendix D. However, you have total freedom to alter and adapt the contents of the meetings. Yet, include each of the elements needed for a *PROVEN* life in order to train men to center upon making getting to know God on an intimate basis and developing real relationships with others the top goals in life. In other words, don't cut out any of the six *PROVEN* elements, and guard against digressing into chitchat or overly focusing upon one man's particular circumstances. Keep the Lord and a healthy pursuit of

Him as the primary mission of the men, because only when they meet with God will real change occur.

VIII. Helping Non-Group Members

Because groups are closed meetings, once you start (or at least after the first or second meeting) you will not be able to add others. Yet, you should expect men to approach you at various times during the year when they cannot join a group. Even though they will not be able to attend your current group, there are several things you can do to help these men outside of the group. First, be encouraging and demonstrate a longingness for them to experience healing. Second, initially meet with them as you would those asking for more information about the group, explaining the nature of sexual sin, the roots feeding it, and the cure. (See Sample Meetings at Appendix B.) Ask them to read the web site www.ProvenMen.org. After meeting with them and discussing the healing path, if they are willing to do whatever it takes to experience God's healing, then help them to work out a plan. For instance, help them develop a daily quiet time, which includes each of the elements of a *PROVEN* life, such as accountability. More specifically, ask them to read the book *False Intimacy* and encourage them to begin a daily life of prayer and study. Help them to draw up an outline of a daily quiet time, which consists: (1) praying for five minutes, (2) reading the New Testament and Psalms for five to ten minutes, (3) using a Biblical workbook for fifteen minutes, and (4) regularly reading and applying into their lives the *Relational Exercises*, located at Appendix A to the *Striving for Absolute Purity* study. You can have them begin working through the 12-week study on their own with weekly contact by you or another *PROVEN* Man. Alternatively, if there is a regular men's Bible study at your church, encourage them to attend it and to incorporate that study into their quiet times.

One of the most important things you should do is to encourage them to develop and regularly meet with an accountability partner. Without that kind of weekly contact, in which they share their struggles and engage in open communications, they will likely become spiritually lazy. In addition, they may be so discouraged after trying the "religious route" you suggested and still failed, that they may even give up on the hope of experiencing God's healing and decide not to join your next group. To ensure that they link up with an

accountability partner, you have several options to suggest, which includes having you talk to them once a week for 30 minutes (by telephone) or having you ask another sensitive and mature Christian man to meet with them weekly. After holding a few *PROVEN Men* groups, you may notice that one or more men are particularly well suited to be accountability partners for these “in between” men. In fact, if you have men that can never attend group because of conflicts, you could have someone who went through the *PROVEN Men* group redo the *Daily Heartwork* with the new man. He would act as an accountability partner and even meet weekly to discuss the study. You could give this leader a copy of the *Leader’s Guide* to aid him in ministering to the other man, while allowing him the freedom to alter the suggested outline to conform to a one-on-one meeting. You should regularly follow-up with these men to strengthen and encourage them, as well as to find out if they are growing or having problems that you can help address.

IX. Life After Group

Because the goal of the group is to pursue an intimate relationship with God and walk in His purity and holiness, the transition to another Bible study at the end of one (or more) *PROVEN Men* small groups should not be too difficult for most men. For instance, the men should have developed disciplines, such as quiet times filled with prayer, Bible reading and study. In addition, they have begun putting into practice being open and vulnerable. These things will make it easier for them to get connected with men in other studies and men’s activities centered upon fellowship and strengthening one another. The key is to encourage the men to start their next study immediately. If they relax or take a break from the pursuit of the Lord, then their hard fought disciplines will evaporate. From the onset, you must foster the notion that healing is not a one time event or a 12-week program, but consists of developing and maintaining a *PROVEN* lifestyle built upon real intimacy and relationships. If they understand and accept from the onset that this group is step one, and not a final solution, they will likely be more open to beginning the next study immediately. In addition, before the group ends, make sure each man has his next study planned. Ask them to consider following the suggestion in *Your Next Studies*, located in the Appendix to the *Striving for Absolute Purity* study, especially if they do not have another study already mapped.

Because you developed a closeness with the men in the group, you should plan on staying connected with each man at some level of a relationship. Periodically, contact them and ask about their walk with the Lord. Be a friend and encourager, not merely someone who wants to check up on them. Yet, you have earned the right to ask difficult questions and to be as a blade of iron sharpening another blade of iron (Proverbs 27:17). Suggest that they also keep in contact with each other. Consider hosting a monthly or regular praise night where the men reunite to sing praise songs and connect. Perhaps you would include a short time of sharing and a time of prayer. Over time, it can even be broadened to include all of the former group members gathering for regular times of worship and prayer. Be creative in organizing events to stay connected, such as regular prayer walks or other activities.

X. Training Future Group Leaders

Although Christ loved all men the same, He selected some to personally mentor and train to be leaders. You too should seek out men who would make good leaders. When looking for someone to train to lead small groups, do not select someone based upon their oral skills or what people might think makes a good leader. Rather, pray for God to give you a man after His own heart. The Lord wants men who's hearts are soft and devoted to Him. It is God's unconditional love that draws us to Him. Similarly, a gentle and kind man with a large heart of mercy and compassion will be very useful to the Lord in being His instrument of healing in the lives of others.

The training process is quite simple. Spend lots of time with the man you intend to train, such as inviting him (and his family) over for lunch, going hiking, playing tennis, or establishing a regular time of talking. Include him in discussions about your goals and dreams. Talk to him about how to minister to others who struggle. Allow the spark to become a roaring fire as you both long to be servants of the Lord. Each week, as you talk to him, discuss personal matters, as well as hobbies, struggles and victories. One of the best ways to solidify a bond is to establish a weekly time of prayer together. For instance, you could meet at 6:30 in the morning to walk in the park together to pray for 30 minutes or pray on the telephone together. You could also meet with him at other scheduled prayer events or meetings at church. If your church does not have one, then start one. The church would

likely allow you to use a room each week to begin a prayer meeting. It is okay to open the prayer meeting to other men or everyone at church.

At some point, ask the person you are mentoring to lead a small group. Depending upon the person, he could co-lead with you or begin right away, leading on his own. If you ask him to co-lead, decide who will be the primary leader so that there are no misunderstandings or anxiety over the uncertainty of his role. If you provide sufficient guidance, he could lead a group with or without you being present. For some, it might be best if you do not attend the group. They would do better not worrying about each thing they say. For instance, if you are at the meeting, they might constantly turn to you and ask if what they just explained was correct. His attention may be more focused on pleasing you or performing for you than upon the task at hand.

XI. Using These Materials for Regular Men's Groups

It is not necessary to create a formal recovery group to host a study based upon these materials or to help men break free and be stamped *PROVEN*. The twelve week workbook makes a great group Bible study for men's groups. Actually, it can be less intimidating for some to use these materials during an ongoing men's group. Simply use *Striving for Absolute Purity* as the next study aid.

Here is an example of how it works. One church had been holding small recovery groups for three years. Each Fall and Spring a new group would form, with approximately six men signing up each session. The church also had an active men's ministry, which hosted regular men's Bible studies throughout the year. The men's leader realized that many of the men attending his Bible studies would benefit from a purity focus and so he selected *Striving for Absolute Purity* as the next topic and set of materials. Normally about fifteen men attended his weekly Bible studies, but the number swelled to over twenty when the topic was chosen.

Although the Leader's Guide suggested questions for smaller groups focused on overcoming sexual sin, the men's leader was able to pull from the suggested outlines questions and teachings suited for a larger group. The leader openly shared his personal struggles and challenged the men to walk with him into a deeper level of vulnerability,

openness and honesty. As each man shared his own story and struggles with purity, the atmosphere loosened up and walls began tumbling. Each week the men worked through the study and arrived ready to discuss the topic of purity, as well as personal victories and failings.

The leader of the men's group has informed us that the men never worked so diligently in a Bible study as they did while using this workbook. He has told the ministry repeatedly that he was so blessed by using these materials in his men's group. Even those who did not have a significant struggle with purity remarked how much they were growing deeper with the Lord as a result of the study, that they were more genuinely concerned for other men and struggles they face, more willing to engage in accountability, and more desiring holiness across the board in their own lives.

There is no reason why any men's ministry at any church could not use *Striving for Absolute Purity* as a Bible study, regardless of the size of the group. The leader merely needs to generate a few probing questions and facilitate discussion, and, most importantly, allow open sharing. The questions can be as simple as asking what trucked the men from the materials, what principles they learned, and to openly share struggles, hope or victory they experienced during the week. You can even pair off the men and have them call each other once during the week to pray and ask them if they have any struggles or need any encouragement.

XII. Conclusion

You are capable of forming and leading small groups, because the Holy Spirit is your guide. However, never lose focus that your goal is to meet with the Lord daily and to seek Him with all of your heart. Even though we all are to minister to others, you are not responsible for anyone's healing. Above all, don't lose your personal relationship with the Lord in attempts to serve Him. Keep putting into daily practice the elements of a *PROVEN* life, and the Lord will guide your path. If God wants you to run a group, there is no power on earth that will prevent it from happening in His timing. Conversely, if you act outside of His will and timing (allowing pride to be a driving force), no amount of good leadership skills will make "your" group flourish. Always remember that an intimate prayer life will move

God into action and open the hearts of the men He wants you to use to reach for Himself.

Final Remarks of the Founder

I am so excited that you are considering leading a small group, and I anticipate hearing from you. Please contact us (staying connected) and give us reports so that we can share in your joy as a single team of godly men *striving for absolute purity* and reaching for divine union with our dear Lord and Creator. Send me an email (Joel@ProvenMen.org).

Appendix A

Sample Announcements of Formation of Groups

Looking for a New Year's Resolution That Will Last Your Whole Life?

Join our Monday night discipleship group beginning February 5, 20--. The topic is "Absolute Purity."

We are bombarded daily with sexual messages and temptations, such as the TV show [Fill in recent show such as "Temptation Island."] However, the Lord instructs us to flee temptation and to renew our minds. We all can improve in the area of sexual purity, because God's standard is so much higher than society's or even our own. Whether you find yourself tempted by Internet pornography or taking second looks at women, you can become equipped with God's armor and power. Link up with other men who seek holiness and are striving to honor God with their bodies and minds. Together, we will work through a 12-week daily devotional study centered upon becoming **P**assionate for God, **R**epentant in spirit, **O**pen and honest in all our relationships, **V**ictorious in living, **E**ternal in perspective, and **N**etworked (connected) with other godly men. As you do these things in increasing measure, impure things will begin to lose their luster and no longer hold you in bondage. In short, you will become a **PROVEN** Man.

To find out more about living a pure life, check out the web site: www.ProvenMen.org, and then contact John Doe (202) 555-1212 during the day or at (301) 555-1212 between 7 and 9 p.m. Several men have already signed up. Once the new session begins, you will have to wait until the Fall for the next one. So, don't delay!

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Attention Men

Holiness and Purity Group Forming

Join our Monday night discipleship group beginning January 28, 20--. Learn how to flee from temptations the moment they strike and to deepen your desire for holiness and purity.

Whether you have a burden to help others live out purity or just want to link up with other men who are striving to honor God with their bodies and minds, this group is for you. Together we will work through a 12-week daily devotional study centered upon becoming **P**assionate for God, **R**epentant in spirit, **O**pen and honest in all our relationships, **V**ictorious in living, **E**ternal in perspective, and **N**etworked (connected) with other godly men. As you do these things in increasing measure, impure things lose their luster and no longer hold people in bondage. In short, you will be stamped a **PROVEN** Man.

To find out more about striving for absolute purity, check out the web site:

www.ProvenMen.org

and then contact John Doe (202) 555-1212.

Because this is a small group, space is limited, and once the new session begins, you will have to wait until the Fall for the next one. So, don't delay!

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[Note: Feel free to be creative in developing your own written announcements.]

Sample Announcements

If you are allowed to place inserts in the Sunday bulletin and make announcements during church service, one useful technique is to say something like this as your announcement:

“Hello, my name is John Doe. Included in your bulletin is an orange insert which says, “Attention Men” on the top. Each man please remove the insert right now. Don’t read it now, but fold it up and put it in your pocket. That’s right, I am asking each man to please do this now. This announces the formation of a small group for men to meet weekly to conduct a study named, *Striving for Absolute Purity*. Part of the reason I ask all men to take it is because we all face daily temptations, and therefore, we all can benefit from this. Another really good reason is that if all men put it in their pockets right now, you all will have it later. That way no one will be looking around to see who takes it. By each man taking it home, it will benefit those who want it but might feel reluctant to take it out of the bulletin. Another point, is that this group is for all men, including those who have a desire to be a mentor to others as well as for those who want more accountability in living a pure life. My name is listed, so please give me a call to discuss it more. There is also a good web site listed on the sheet that all men in church should read. Thanks.”

Other sample announcements include, “Hello. My name is John Doe. I have been attending church for x years. In the past, I have struggled with various forms of impurity, but praise the Lord, I am now free from bondage. The men of this church are forming a small group where we become accountability partners and work through a 12-week study named *Striving for Absolute Purity*. It is based upon a *PROVEN* model for living out a holy and pure life. Regardless of the type of struggle you may face, this group will be of great help. If you want to either learn more about how to help those who want accountability or how to live holy and pure, read the web site www.ProvenMen.org and give me a call. I will be around after church to talk or you can give me a call at home. My telephone number is [tell them where to find it, i.e. in an announcement, in the directory or call the church and ask them to give you my telephone number].”

If you are unable to make announcements from the church podium, consider handing out flyers to each man as they leave church. (Of course, you will need to obtain church permission before handing out flyers or making announcements.) As you hand each man a flyer, simply tell them, “This is an announcement for men only, put it in you pocket and read it later. Feel free to give me a call. Thanks.” You might need help if there are several exits to church. Also, it is fine to keep a fast pace going as you smile and simply say, “This is for men, read it later.” (You won't want to hold up the exit to church.)

Sample Group Emails

You may also decide to send regular emails to the men in your church or circle of influence both as a way of encouragement and to include announcements regarding the formation of groups. A few samples, which we coined *Proven Men Moments* (and you can use your own creative wording) and sent out monthly are attached below. However, be aware that it generally requires “face time” to get a response, *i.e.* where the person sees your face at the same time as they are learning about your group, such as making a short announcement at church or at a men’s group. In addition, it may take three times of making this type of an announcement, with slight variations each time, to get a response. Therefore, make every effort to make personal announcements at church or meetings.

Sample Emails:

[Note: the first email you send might be something like this:]

[In the re: line you might say, *To the men of our church* or some other personal notation, which indicates that it is not unsolicited junk email.]

I was going through the church directory and praying for each of the men in our church, including you. I would like to share something from my heart that is important to me. As you may or may not know, I am leading a discipleship group for men (modeled after *PROVEN Men*), and I send to various men words of encouragement during the month. It struck me that I could send similar words of encouragement to you too! From time to time, I will send each of you things from my heart that encompass a broad appeal for godly living in general. (Please do not take it as a reflection that I think any of you are not living a holy life. Instead, know that I want to be a source of strength and encouragement to you (1 Thes. 3:2, 5:10 and Proverbs 27:17).) I would like to suggest that each of you consider taking the time to visit a web site written for men. It talks candidly about the struggles we all face and how we can get our feet planted on the right path. Let me know how I can pray for you. Feel free to contact me to talk or to find out more about the small group, which I am forming.

Sample Emails Continued:

It has been said that a person can "fake" being a Christian, but that their check book will give them away. For sexual purity, a similar saying can be made: "You can 'fake' overcoming sexual immorality, but what your mind dwells on will give you away."

The prescription for healing (and overcoming) in the area of sexual purity is:

1. Accept that I am not capable of doing anything of eternal value (including saving myself or living holy);
2. Understand that self-sufficiency blocks out God (and that it makes me get in the way of God);
3. Recognize the need to depend upon God to: give me the desire for change, equip me, and bear fruits through me;
4. Ask God to give me what is needed (cry out for help and be persistent in prayer);
5. Live solely for God and live to glorify Him; and
6. Be in a continual pursuit of an **intimate relationship** with God.

In short, it is not enough to mimic behavior of others or to do a religious program; I must be compelled by the love of God planted in my heart through an **intimate relationship** with Jesus.

Link up with other men striving for absolute purity, based upon the PROVEN Men model (see www.ProvenMen.org) We are forming new small groups. Please contact me for more information.

Sample:

The Holidays (Stress Leads to Sin)

As much as we look forward to Christmas, it is generally a time of great stress. Our ideals can become shattered or our hopes disappointed. In addition, the hustle and bustle distracts us from the Lord, and our quiet times are not so quiet or consistent.

Where does this all lead? For many men, stress triggers temptation to turn to pornography or fantasy as an escape (a little reward we give ourselves), but the Lord does not leave us as orphans without hope in times of great temptation. Yet, we must look to God and rely upon His strength. Consider developing a battle plan now so that when you do face stress as the holidays approach, you will be found wearing your daily armor of God. Some ideas include: (1) remain **Passionate** for the Lord as a person (not as a season or an ideal); (2) recognize and turn from (**Repent**) all sins right away, especially greed and self-centered thinking, which is

fostered at this time of the year; (3) be **Open** and honest in your communications with your family and with God (don't stuff the feelings); (4) commit to being **Victorious** over selfishness and sin by committing your ways to the Lord; (5) keep an **Eternal** perspective (which is well beyond Dec. 25); and (6) stay **Networked** with other believers as iron sharpens iron. Don't go it alone. Invest your life in the life of another believer. There are many men, such as myself, that would be pleased to pray with you and encourage you.

The next *PROVEN Men* "purity" small group begins on September 23, 20-- and lasts 12 Monday nights. Contact John Doe at (202) 555-1212 right away if you want to be included in this group.

Sample:

A Noble Task; A Humble Beginning

Living a *PROVEN*TM life is a noble task. Yet, rather than learning how to live to do service for God, it produces a life that longs to **be with** the Lord. You become emptied of yourself in order to be filled by Him. No longer relying upon your own strength, but yielding to the Highest power. Consider the elements of a *PROVEN* way of life, being:

Passionate for God,
Repentant in spirit,
Open and honest,
Victorious in living,
Eternal in perspective, and
Networked with other godly men.

Each of these elements uniquely, and yet collectively, act to renew and transform you more into the very image of Christ; they free you from the grip of sin and despair. The more you experience the Lord on a deep level, you will be drawn to your knees in utter dependence on Him – a place where your life becomes marked with victory and where prayers are finally effective. Oh, what a wonderful journey: no longer dependent upon willpower, strength or ability, but rather, traveling together with the Lord in true intimacy. This calling is not for the proud and strong; only the humble need apply since selfishness and pride are the barriers to the dependency needed to allow (and even request) God to truly act and live in, through and together with us. It is an all out devotion to the Lord, which brings lasting victory, peace and joy. Anything else is vanity, leading only to some form of idolatry.

Dear friend, regardless of where you stand, purpose to take the focus off of yourself, your

rights, and your circumstance, and fix them upon the One who not only saves a soul from damnation but breathes true intimacy into your daily life – freeing you to live out a *PROVEN* life. Won't you commit to linking up with others who are striving for absolute purity and make knowing the Lord the highest priority in your life? Join together with us!

Visit the web site www.ProvenMen.org and give me a call.

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Appendix B

Sample Detailed Sample Initial Meeting

Leader: “Before we begin, I would like to say a prayer and ask God to guide our conversation, okay?” (Say a short prayer.)

Leader: “I am so glad you could meet with me. How are you feeling right now?”

Man: [explains a bit nervous or curious]

Leader: “I understand and I am very interested in learning more about you and your circumstances. I also hope that our discussion today will greatly encourage you and lead you to the hope and freedom that Christ offers.”

Leader: “The outline for our discussion tonight will look like this: I will share my story, then you will share yours. Afterwards we will talk about the reasons why many men struggle with sexual purity and the cure.”

1. Sharing Your Story

Leader: “Let me begin by sharing a little about my own. The funny thing about my story is that I once made an oath to myself never to tell another person that I masturbated. I was going to go to the grave with that secret. But God changed my heart and freed me from guilt and shame. Here is how it all started for me. I had been exposed to pornography as a child and I began a life of masturbation. This led me to shy away from intimate relationships, even with my wife after I got married and even with God.” (Note: Include your condensed version of your story, so that there is plenty of time for them to share theirs and for you to explain the path of victory. Be sure to include enough details about your struggles that they can identify and will feel comfortable sharing similar details. Also, let them know you are now walking in victory. The goal is not to brag, but to show hope.)

2. Listening To His Story

Leader: “I would like to hear your story now, how you got to where you are at and where you want to be. Let me assure you that I won’t judge your actions. I am so broken over my own sin that I have no room to judge others no matter what it is.”

(Note: Expect that some people will want to tell you of the many ministries or good deeds they have done or otherwise get off track. Gently steer the conversation back to how they got started in the sexual practices and where they are now.)

(After they are done, stand up and give them a hug. Tell them that you are so grateful for their honesty and desire to allow God to heal their wounds. Some men will weep and want you to hug for awhile. Others may be stiff and uncomfortable.)

Leader: “Can I ask some short questions to allow me to understand better where you are at right now?” [Ask those that are pertinent, giving time for a response.]

-When was the last time you masturbated? How many times a week?

-When did you last looked at pornography in magazines? on the Internet? How often?

-When did you last have sex with someone other than your wife? How often?

-What sexual thing is the biggest struggle that you now face?

(Note: Be very sensitive and affirming.)

Leader: “There is freedom in confession of sins. I hope you experience that. For me, I have no more secrets, and therefore, Satan has no hold on me. If any unconfessed sins now come to your mind, feel free to share them now. God wants to give you freedom. God is faithful to forgive each sin that we confess, so be sure to confess each one to Him. It may be impossible to recount every sexual sin, but if anything else comes to mind now or later you have the freedom to share it, okay?”

3. Why Did God Create Men? (Two Reasons)

Leader: “Let’s shift gears right now. Why do you think God create people in the first place? Why did He create you?”

(Note: Allow them time to respond. Very few will state the response in the precise way that is most helpful to understanding our proper relationship with God and the root problem for the division of that relationship. In fact, many say they do not know. Do not make them feel ignorant or bad for not knowing the answer. You might say something affirming, such as “that’s part of it,” and then use the transition below.)

Leader: “I have found that it helps for me to start at the beginning and to explain it in the following way so that we are on the same page and because it will help us understand why we lust.”

Leader: “God created us for two purposes, first to worship Him. Some people state it another way, to mean bring Him glory. But I like to use the term to ‘worship’ Him. Now, God could have made us robots that recited worship phrases, but He wanted us to love Him freely. Thus, God gave us the ability to choose to love Him or to reject Him. This brings us to the second reason God created us. The second reason is to have a relationship with Him.” (Note: While discussing these two points, use your fingers, lifting one then two as you mention the two reasons. Adding visual things when we speak helps in our communication.)

A. Two Aspects Of The Relationship Reason

Leader: “With respect to our relationship with God, there are two aspects. First, to be called a son of God (John 1:12; 1 John 3:1), which occurs when we trust Jesus as Lord. Second, God calls us to be His friend (James 2:23, John 15:15). Yes, we are to have two special kinds of relationships, first as adopted sons of God and second as a close friend. As incredible as it sounds, God desires that you have intimate friendship with Him.”

4. Two Greatest Commands

Leader: “To see this another way, let me ask you another question, ‘What is the greatest commandment in the law?’”

(Note: Let them answer.)

Leader: “When asked this very same question, Jesus said, ‘Love the Lord your God with all of your heart and with all of your soul and with all of your mind. This is the first and

greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matthew 22:36-39). (Note: Demonstrate using two fingers, this time on the other hand.)

Leader: “Don’t you see the similarity to the two purposes for which we were created? Loving the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul and mind is worshiping Him, and loving God and loving our neighbor both involves relationships.” (Note: Hold two pointed fingers from each hand, and then bring them together as you explain how these two principles dove tail together. Lock your fingers from each hand together in a snug fit and indicate how tight the connection is.) “The whole reason we exist is for a relationship with God. That is pretty incredible; the Lord wants a close friendship with you!”

5. Newspaper Word Picture

Leader: “Consider this example. Suppose you had an adult son, and he developed a cure for the disease AIDS. He is even going to win the Nobel Peace Prize. Although he lives right across town, he is so busy at work that he never visits, he never writes you a letter, and he never picks up the telephone to call you. Instead, all you know about him anymore is what you read in the newspaper. I know you would be proud of him, but wouldn’t you rather he talk to you, give you a hug, and tell you that he loves you?” (Pause and let them nod or say yes.) “Well, that is the same for God. He is not satisfied sitting in heaven reading a newspaper about your life. He does not say, ‘Oh good, Joel does not masturbate anymore,’ or ‘Ah yes, he did not look with lust at that woman on the train.’ God wants to have a relationship with you. He wants you to talk to Him about everything. He wants you to tell Him of your struggles with lust, to tell Him of your worries, to ask Him for help, to talk about your desires and needs, and to tell Him you love Him.”

Leader: “Do you see this? Does this help you understand how God wants you to act towards Him?” (Allow a response.)

Leader: “These descriptions of God’s desire for intimacy with you help show why it is not enough that we have a goal to stop masturbating or other sexual sin. God created you for a relationship with Him, not just to do good works. It is not enough just to stop sexual sinning.

God wants you to have an intimate daily relationship with Him. Until you do, you will always have something missing in your life that you will try to fill with something, such as sex, work, hobbies, etc.”

6. Be Holy, As I Am Holy

Leader: “In the Bible, God tells us to ‘*Be holy because I am holy* (1 Peter 1:16).’ Why do you think God says this and wants you to be holy?”

(Let them answer, and affirm their response.)

Leader: “Some incorrectly think God is challenging us to compete with Him or that He is just waiting to smack us if we fail. Others think God wants to look down from heaven in order to see you doing good works. However, none of these reasons capture the meaning of this beautiful invitation to join with Him as one. Let me explain.”

7. Best Friends (Time Spent)

Leader: “Did you ever have a best friend, one that you sometimes knew what they were thinking without asking? Even by looking into their eyes, you could tell what they were going to do next.”

(If they indicate “no,” then say, “Can you imagine what it would be like?”)

Leader: “What does it take to have that kind of a relationship?” (Affirm their response by stating, “That’s right, to have that kind of a friendship, you need to spend a lot of time together.”)

Leader: “The good news is that this is the precise kind of a relationship God wants with you. He is holy, and He cannot stop being holy. That is why you must be holy, so that you can be together. In fact, nothing impure can enter heaven (Revelations 21:27). It is out of love that He wants you to be just like Him: holy. Therefore, God asking you to be holy is a divine invitation to unite with Him. How precious! How wonderful His ways are when we see them as He intends!”

Leader: “Consider also what happens when you are the opposite of being holy. You turn away from Him. You hide from Him. This has been true in my life, has it been true for you too?”

Leader: “God wants to forgive you. He loves you dearly. He’s calling out to you to be holy and to be His friend. It is time for you to see that God is calling you.”

Leader: “Do you want to have an intimate relationship with God?” (Let them answer, but don’t judge if they are not sure.)

8. Stretching For God (Hand On The Wall – Word Picture)

Leader: “Here is another word picture to help you understand why and how to become holy. Look at the church wall.” (Note: You can use any tall building nearby that you can see or mention the Washington Monument, if you rather.)

Leader: “Can you touch the top when you stand next to it? Of course not. Well, the top of that wall represents God’s standard for holiness. Will you ever reach it?”

(Note: Pause a moment.)

Leader: “None of us will. However, it is how hard are you stretching that matters to God. Most people are content leaning against the wall like this?” (Note: Demonstrating by holding your hand against the wall at shoulder height.) “It is a comfortable way to stand. Most men are content to lean this way.”

Leader: “Some people, perhaps most men in church, will go a bit further and lift their hand over their heads like this.” (Note: Demonstrating by reaching a few feet higher, but not straining or stretching much.)

Leader: “However, some want to get every millimeter closer that they can to God and they stretch as high as they can.” (Note: Demonstrating by reaching as high as you can.)

Leader: “How about getting on your tippy toes too? Can you feel the pain as you stretch hard? You feel it all along your side, your arms, and your calves. It is hard work.”

Leader: While stretching against the wall again, ask “Did you notice where my eyes were fixed as I tried getting every last inch?” (Allow a response, such as, “You looked up.”)

“That’s right. My eyes are looking up to heaven. When you want to draw near to the Lord, your focus is upon Him. However, those who were leaning probably were also looking around to see where everyone else was at on the wall.” (Demonstrating by putting your hand lower and looking back and forth.) When we are more interested in ourselves, we end up comparing to others. However, that is not what God says that we are to do.” (Return to your seat.)

“No, we are not to judge our relationship with the Lord based upon others. Instead, we are to keep seeking Him with all of our heart, mind and soul.”

Leader: “Think of this as your relationship with God and your pursuit of holiness because He is holy. You must keep stretching and reaching out to God. The same is true for being free from bondage to sexual sins. Many just want to stand leaning against the wall, doing just enough to feel good about themselves. Maybe it means they won’t masturbate as much, and that is enough.”

Leader: “What about you? Do you want to stretch until it hurts just so you can be a bit closer to God? Or do you want to just get by and remain focused upon your circumstances?”

(Allow a response.)

Leader: “If you truly want to make pursuing God your number one priority in your life, you will begin to mean that you have to stretch and strain. But the neat thing is that when you are stretching upwards to gain the extra inch, you are focused upon Him and not yourself. You are looking upwards, no longer controlled by the ways of the world. God will transform you into His image as you are in this posture. You won’t be stuck in the muck of the world anymore. Pornography, masturbation and fantasy will no longer be a noose around your neck.”

Leader: “How about it? Be honest with yourself. Where do you want to be on the wall in terms of reaching for God and His standard of holiness?”

(Let them answer. If someone says “no” or that they are not sure, tell them that you are glad that they are honest. It means that when they are ready to go for it, they won’t pretend. In a gentle manner, ask them what is holding them back. Some might say that this means that they would have to give up materialism or other things. Acknowledge that they are right in

understanding the costs. Yet, remind them, without sounding like you are preaching or judging, that what God offers is always worth the price. In fact, He is offering Himself to you. He will give you new desires and abilities to experience eternal pleasures, which actually are better than the things we give up.)

9. The Nature of Sexual Sins (Hand Word Picture)

Leader: “Now, let me tell you a bit about why people commit sexual sins. Look at your hand right now. Do you see the five fingers. They all are connected to the hand. Imagine that your index finger is lust, the next finger is masturbation, the next is greed, the next judgmental attitudes, and the final one is jealousy. Some people can out of sheer determination bend over a finger and stop masturbating for a long time. Maybe some can even bend over two fingers. But what do you see remaining?” (Let them answer.)

Leader: “Yes, there are still other fingers of sin in your life. Chances are pretty good that something like anger will pop up where the bent over finger was. We still have a problem because the root source of these sins is still there. (Pointing to the palm.) There is a root cause of lust, pornography, masturbation, and even greed and anger. (Pause.) Yes, there is a root that keeps these sins alive. They all stem from **selfishness and the pride** that goes along with it. That’s right, the root sin is selfishness and pride. As long as you have selfishness and pride, you will always be a slave to some form of sexual sin and other things like greed and anger, because these are all fed by selfishness.”

Leader: “Today, you have been told what is the root problem. As you examine your life, it will become more and more obvious just how much selfishness and pride exists in your life. That is, if you allow God to open your eyes to it.”

Leader: “So, the real question is ‘how do you stop being selfish and prideful?’”
(Pause for a moment.)

Leader: “You cannot just do this on your own. It takes the power of Christ. Consider His hands. When He was nailed to the cross, what happened to His hands?”

(Allow an answer.)

Leader: “Yes, there was a nail pierced right through His hand. This is an excellent example of how we can be set free from selfishness and pride. If we die to self and replace God’s hands for ours, we have a big hole right where selfishness and pride were on our hands. (Indicating by drawing a circle in the middle of your palm.) The root source has been killed. Each moment you allow Jesus to live through you, you won’t lust. You’ll have new desires and experience freedom and joy.”

Leader: “God gave of Himself so that you could live forever in heaven with Him. However, He wants you to live free from bondage now too. Have you heard the saying that we must die to self? How about that we must pick up our cross?”

Leader: “How do you do this?” (Allow a response.)

Leader: “Here are some ways to help explain what these teachings mean: To let Jesus live for you. To yield your life completely to God. To stop living for self pleasures. To become one with God, and take on His hands.”

Leader: “The only way you can hope to stop living for yourself and to yield to and rely upon God is to decide from this day on that I will live for Christ. It is a real and permanent commitment. You need to have an attitude like ‘I want to stretch as high against the wall as I can and I will do whatever it takes to be with God and experience His healing.’”

Leader: “How about it; are you willing to do whatever it takes to live in freedom and to be holy because God is holy?” (Allow a response.)

Leader: “When you focus on God and make Him the center of your life, you won’t be selfish and prideful. Only then will you stop pursuing after lust or greed. The hole in your hand will be there the same as it is for Christ. In fact, the by-product of this relationship with God is that you won’t keep turning to sexual sins. Again, if your goal is to be with God (and not merely stopping a certain sin), you will be set free from sin. Holiness is an end result of living for Him.”

Leader: “Do you now see the big picture that by living out the purpose for why God created you and choosing to live for Him is the cure for selfishness and pride, which are the roots to sexual sins?”

(Allow an answer. Note: At this point, many men have said that it has been like scales falling from their eyes when the nature of sexual sins and the cure are explained in this way.)

Leader: “Is this something you now want? Will you agree to give God total and complete control of you life, including your hands, heart and mind?”

(Note: If they say “no ” or that they are not sure, ask them and then discuss what is holding them back. Do not pressure an answer. God’s timing is perfect and it must be a work of the Holy Spirit in order to be lasting.)

Leader: “If you are willing to do whatever it takes to be free from sin and to pursue the Lord, then you will experience freedom. God promises to give you His power to overcome.”

10. *PROVEN Men* Small Groups

Leader: “Let me tell you how the *PROVEN Men* small group fits into this picture. The goal and purpose of the weekly groups is not to cure you of a sickness and it is not a program for stopping lust. Instead, it is to position you to meet with God and to receive His power by learning how to turn the focus off of yourself and onto God. You will practice living to love God. It is sometimes called Daily *Heartwork*, because it is designed to make your heart change as it meets with God each day. The study requires a lot of effort, just like stretching on a wall. But, in the end, you will be renewed and know God. Your actions will be holy as He is holy.”

Leader: “Let me remind you what the *PROVEN* acronym stands for: P is for Passionate for God, R is for Repentant in spirit, O is for Open and honest, V is for Victorious in living, E is for Eternal in perspective, and N is for Networking with other *PROVEN Men*. In your daily study and during group, you will learn how to live out a *PROVEN* life, one in which your focus and desires shift. In short, it is not a “how to stop sexual temptations” group, but a place to grow in newness of life and experience lasting healing in all areas of your life as you turn to and yield your life to the One who created and loves you. Sure, you’ll still face temptations

and trials in life, but you will rest in God's power to overcome and you'll enjoy real relationships, instead of the false intimacy that produces guilt and shame and never satisfies."

Leader: "The small group lasts 12 weeks, and we meet on [Monday nights from 7:15 to 9:15]. We will use a study book named, *Striving for Absolute Purity*. It is pretty intense, requiring about 50 minutes a day of *Heartwork*. However, remember, in order to get to know God we must spend time with Him. Besides, we have a lot to learn in order to live out a *PROVEN* life. Do you want to join with me and other men for the next 12 week as we each pursue holiness and intimacy with God?"

(Note: If they say no, don't push them. Affirm them and let them know that you will be holding the group again, and they should contact you if they are ready. If they say yes, and you want to use written applications, this would be the time to give it to them. Tell them when it must be returned, either before or at the first meeting. Tell them where the first meeting will be held, and ask them to be ready to share their story that night in about five minutes. Tell them that everyone will share and encourage them to be vulnerable. Provide them with a *Striving for Absolute Purity* workbook study, telling them to begin it the first Monday before the group begins. For instance, if you begin the group on a Monday, they would only do that first day before the group starts. If there are several days before the group begins, ask them to begin praying for 5 minutes each morning and to read the Bible for ten minutes. Suggest that they start reading either Psalms 51 and 119, or another place in the Bible.)

Near the end of the meeting, affirm them, even stating that although it is scary, God won't ask them to give up something if He doesn't have something better for them. Ask them if they have any questions.

End the meeting in prayer. Ask them to pray and then you pray. Remind them that it is not about fancy words, but tell God something from your heart. Give them a big hug. (Special notes: Expect that some additional discussions will take place when you go over these things, so be a bit flexible. In addition, it is recommended that you use the same word pictures with each man. That way, you will be able to use them again during group without full

explanation. Go over this outline before the meeting to be comfortable with the approach. In addition, attached at the next page is a bullet outline for you to use in the meeting. Plan on having it on the table next to you while talking to them. It will help you to stay on track and ensure you to include the same word pictures with each of the men in your group.)

Outline of Initial Meeting

- 1. Sharing Your Story**
- 2. Listening To His Story**
- 3. Why Did God Create Men? (two reasons - worship/relationship)**
 - A. Two Aspects Of The Relationship Reason (son/friend)**
- 4. Two Greatest Commands (love God/love others)**
- 5. Newspaper Word Picture**
- 6. Be Holy, As I Am Holy**
- 7. Best Friends (time spent)**
- 8. Stretching For God (hand stretching on the wall word picture)**
- 9. The Nature of Sexual Sins (fingers of sin word picture/selfishness and pride)**
- 10. *PROVEN Men* Small Groups**

Appendix C (optional)

Small Group Questionnaire

Name: _____
Address: _____
Telephone: (h) _____ (w) _____
Email: _____

Explain why you want to attend the small group.

What are your goals over the next four months, and how does the group fit in?

Describe your current relationship with the Lord (i.e. quality of prayer, amount of time spent reading the Bible, condition of your heart towards God).

Describe where you want it to be.

List any areas of concern or prayer requests.

Commitments:

I will abide by the group ground rules.

I will devote daily time to daily study and make attending each meeting a top priority.

I will do whatever it takes to overcome sexual bondage and will turn to and rely upon God.

Appendix D

Detailed Leader's Guides for all Twelve Group Meetings

The First Meeting (Week One)

- 1. Opening Prayer:** Leader prays, mentioning each man by name.
- 2. Discussion/Teaching:** Your twin goals are: (1) make group a place of security, where they can be open and honest, and (2) provide training in meeting with God and receiving His healing. The group will only be as vulnerable in sharing and devoted to prayer as you. Your role as a leader is to lead by example. Indeed, if you are proud and puffed up, they will model that as well!

A. Discussing the ground rules. Copy the ground rules attached as Appendix F and give a copy to each man. Read through each point and ask if there are any questions. Ask each man to sign his copy and hold onto it. You might refer to the picture on the cover of the study and point out that group is like men hiking a tall mountain, each of them are tied to the same rope. If one falls, it affects the others. In the same way, if one of you does not show up for group, the dynamics are affected. Therefore, please make attending group a top priority. Also, plan on doing your study each day. Just like you do not starve for a week and then eat one big meal, plan to do the study each day. However, don't be discouraged if you cannot complete every item. The key point is to commit to meeting with the Lord to get to know Him. These materials won't change you, only God can do that. So, plan on meeting with God daily.

B. Sharing stories. This is the time for each man to share their struggles. (Before the meeting, you should have told each man to plan to discuss the areas of sexual sins with which he struggles.) Tell them that each man will share. Also, tell them to plan on keeping it to about five minutes to allow everyone time to share. Break the ice by going first. Even though each man already should know your story because you met with him privately, admit that you gave over to pornography, masturbation and lust. Be the first to use these words. You want to model the vulnerability and tone of the story that they will share. Keep it to five minutes,

including the victory you now experience. Then, ask who will go next, reminding the men that what is shared in here, stays in here. After each man shares, affirm him. Thank him for being open and tell him you are proud of him for sharing.

C. Sharing goals. After each has shared their struggles and why they are in this group, consider going around again, asking each person to share his goals for the next 12 weeks and beyond.

D. Reinforcing what the letters *PROVEN* represent. Remind the men of the meaning behind the letters *PROVEN* and how important it is for each and every element to be incorporated into their daily lives:

P is for passionate for God,

R is for repentant in spirit,

O is for open and honest,

V is for victorious in living,

E is for eternal in perspective, and

N is for Networking with other *PROVEN Men*.

In your daily study and during group, you will learn how to live out a *PROVEN* life: one in which your focus and desires shift. In short, it is not a how to stop sexual temptations group, but a place to grow in newness of life and experience lasting healing in all areas of your life as you turn to and yield your life to the One who created and loves you. Sure, you'll still face temptations and trials in life, but you will rest in God's power to overcome and you'll enjoy real relationships instead of the false intimacy which produces guilt and shame and never satisfies."

Ask the men if they have any questions.

3. Singing/Worship: Always reserve three to five minutes for singing songs and another ten to fifteen for prayer. In other words, you need to end discussions 15-20 minutes before the scheduled end time. Even if you must cut off a topic in midstream, end the discussion at that time. You simply must protect and include these last two elements into each group. With

respect to songs, plan to bring a portable music box, the CD or tape of one or two praise or worship songs, **and the words to those songs**. Begin the first night with songs you think fit the mood you are establishing, namely the hope we have in Christ through yielding entirely to Him and living out a *PROVEN* life.

4. Closing Prayer: Always reserve the last 10-15 minutes for prayer. Be a role model. God does not delight in fine sounding words, but rather, a heart that is open to Him and longing to meet with Him. Passion and repentance are hallmarks of humility, which pleases the Lord's ears and leads to transformation. Give each man an opportunity to pray by taking turns going around the room. You should begin with a short prayer (one minute or less), pouring out your heart and seeking absolute purity in your life. Give each man about two minutes (depending upon the size of your group) to pour out his heart in prayer. Tell them that God is not interested in fancy words, but wants their hearts: so, talk to Him from your heart. After each man has prayed, pray for each man by name and anything else the Holy Spirit leads you to pray. Give each man a hug as you say good-bye. Encourage each man to hug when they greet one another and when parting. If you keep this consistent, you won't have to remind them anymore.

Tell the men to bring their study and a Bible to each group.

(Leader's Note: Establish some form of contact with the men each week. Consider asking each man to write down their telephone and email addresses so that you can contact them. Expect that the other men might want to exchange these things as well. Even the thought that you will contact them during the week can add strength. Never forget that the battles will be fierce for the men and your loving, caring contact can mean a lot. You need not ask them each time if they stumble. Rather, be encouraging. Tell them that you just wanted to call and see how they are doing and if there is anything you can pray about for them. Conversely, if you don't have regular contact, Satan will bring thoughts in their heads that you don't care or otherwise seek to tempt them into reverting back to coping mechanisms.)

Week Two (based upon Week One study materials)

(Leader's Note: Be fully prepared for the meetings. Review your notes from the week.

Write out an outline or make notes in the margins to this guide.)

1. Opening Prayer: Leader prays.

2. Discussion/Teaching: During the week, the men read "The Nature of Sexual Immorality" and "Freedom from Bondage." Both present new ways of thinking about the cause and cure, based upon God's standards. Ask the men to share any insights or if they have any questions.

A. Additional potential questions to ask include:

"Describe some ways which you stimulated your sex drive through sources other than a spouse, and explain how this feeds incorrect thinking that you need sex daily."

"Have you purposed in your heart to hate evil and cling to good? Why is this important?"

"What is the root that feeds and keeps sexual immorality alive in a person's life?"
(Allow a discussion about pride and how it deceives us and leaves no room for God.)

"In what areas are you selfish or proud?"

"What is the cure for selfishness and pride?" (This should lead to a discussion regarding how humility is the opposite of pride, and how only the humble pleases the Lord. Be sure to mention that viewing others as more important than yourself is true humility.)

B. Ask the men: "Do you want to be humble and repentant?" (After each man responds, spend a moment right now in prayer. Allow each person an opportunity to pray and confess sin. Be a model in prayer. In 15 to 30 seconds, confess any pride or selfishness in your life, as well as any specific sins of lust, greed, or anger. Be open, honest and vulnerable. It is okay to tell the men that this is a short time of confession and repentance. Let them know that as the Lord leads, they should pour out their hearts in prayer and confession.)

C. Ask the men: Briefly state how the week went, including any areas you stumbled or any sexual sins.

(Leader's Note: At least every other meeting, you should ask the men if they stumbled. Sometimes use follow up questions, such as, “What led up to that?” and “What did you do afterwards?” Remind the men: Each time we sin, we need to turn right away to the Lord. God forgives us when we ask. We cannot wait until we feel like we deserve forgiveness. It is by God’s perfect grace that we receive it. Encourage them to turn to, not away from, God when they sin. Tell them that when they take a second look or commit another sin, that they must tell God right away that they sinned, repent, ask God to forgive them, and immediately accept His forgiveness – turning to praise or other godly activities.)

D. Two important Bible verses included in Week One’s Daily *Heartwork* include: Colossians 2:20-23 and Matthew 12:43-45. The first is a great statement demonstrating why neither programs nor the setting of boundaries stop temptation or bring lasting healing. The second is a wonderful analogy of why merely sweeping away access to bad inputs will not transform a heart and lead to permanent freedom. These verses drive home the point that the one way out of bondage to sin is in an intimate relationship with the One true Lord – relying upon His strength. Have someone read each passage aloud and briefly explain these points.

E. If there is time remaining (leaving five minutes for singing and 10-15 for prayer), consider asking the men to read aloud the following verses, assigning each man a verse or two:

-Romans 2:8,

-Psalm 119:36,

-James 3:14, 16,

-Matthew 23:25, and

-Philippians 2:3.

(If you do not have time tonight, be sure to include this exercise on another night.) After all of the verses are read, ask the men to describe what they felt during the readings. The point you should make is that there are two ways to approach the Bible: (1) obtaining knowledge (i.e. acting in your own strength), or (2) experiencing God. When a person yields to God and allows the Holy Spirit to quicken his heart, conviction of sin follows. When we are open to

God and desire to be humble and repentant. Tell them that our hearts should *melt as wax* when passages like these are read. (A word of caution: avoid sounding self-righteous or pious as you explain these points. Rather, be truly excited about how they can participate with and experience God. The Lord will meet with the men deep in their souls when they are pursuing Him with all of their hearts and asking Him to transform them into needy, dependant servants.) Remind them that the goal of reading Scripture is to meet with God and to become transformed into the image of Christ. It is better to read and meditate on one verse with passion and repentance than to race through 100 pages or read merely to checking off homework.

3. Singing/Worship: Each night, be prepared to sing one or several songs. Bring the words to the songs and a tape or CD machine to play the song. Unless you play the music loud enough **and have the words** to the songs, some men will be too concerned about the words or the way they sound instead of lifting their voices to the Lord. Because praise and worship of God are key components to living a *PROVEN* life and receiving God's healing, be sure to include this every week.

4. Closing Prayer: Always reserve the last 10-15 minutes for prayer. Give each man an opportunity to confess and pour out his heart to the Lord. Introduce a popcorn style of praying. Tell the men that there is 15 minutes for prayer, and each person should pray a few times. Therefore, keep the prayers to one topic and shorter. But make sure you are pouring your heart out in prayer, confession, and adoration. Let the Lord lead you. Also, it is okay for there to be times of silence. Set the example with short prayers, and with heartfelt confession.

(Leader's Note: At page 48 to this guide, it suggested a discussion during the initial meeting prior to group. That was an illustration stretching your hand upon the wall as a way of explaining a desire for spiritual growth and holiness. Consider explaining briefly that a humble, yet striving position is stretching your hand upwards on the wall, with eyes fixed upwards. Close the group in prayer, asking each man to stretch on the wall with eyes lifted upwards as the leader prays. This is the *PROVEN Men* prayer stance. Included it often.)

(Leader's Note: After each weekly session, you should conduct a self-evaluation of the

meeting. If you have a co-leader, plan to spend ten minutes talking after the group or the next day. Some questions to ponder are,

- Overall, how would I rate the meeting?
- Was there anything I would change or do different next time?
- Was I open and honest, being vulnerable and caring?
- Did I spend too much time talking or teaching?
- Did I ask questions that drew the men out and allow them to respond?
- Did each man have enough opportunity to share?
- Was there anyone who was closed off or only talked at a surface level?
- Is there a man I need to call to check on this week?
- How well did I manage the time?
- Did we have enough time at the end to pray and sing a song?

Be honest in your appraisal. It is important that you create an environment that not only is safe, but a place for men to openly share. It is very important to assess each meeting so that your preparation for the next is even better. For instance, if you find that you are talking too much, write out some questions that invite others to share. If, on the other hand, the meetings tend to be more chit-chat about what activities each man did or how work went, then prepare an more detailed outline that reduces the time spent talking about the events of the day.)

Week Three (based upon Week Two study materials)

1. **Opening Prayer:** Leader prays, mentioning each man by name.
2. **Discussion/Teaching:** Check in with the men by asking how they feel, referring them to the *Feelings Chart* at Appendix F. Frequently use the *Feelings Chart* in meetings.
 - A. Ask the men if they had any setbacks this week. Allow a discussion.
 - B. Ask the men if they have been sharing exciting truths about what they are learning during the *Heartwork* with their wives, if married, and others. (Leader's Note: Expect them to avoid this assignment. It is risky openly talking to a spouse about spiritual matters. At one meeting, one man stated that he was too busy to share it and that his wife was asleep during the times he wanted to discuss what he was learning. Each man is much busier now, but that cannot prevent us from having this kind of sharing with others. In fact, one of the things my wife told me as to why she began trusting me again was that I was excited about my Bible study and was sharing with her things I was learning.)
 1. Ask them what holds them back from these kinds of discussions with their wives. Tell them to anticipate it being hard to raise spiritual issues at home or to begin open discussions. Emphasize the importance of men being spiritual leaders in the home. Encourage the men to start small, with just sharing how a verse impacted or touched them. It need not be a long conversation, but rather, a regular practice of raising spiritual issues. Remind the men that their wives need to see them growing to feel secure in a relationship. This will help rebuild trust as it demonstrates that they are committed to the Lord and to them.
 - C. Ask someone to read aloud John 5:5-9. Discuss why Jesus asked the man if he wanted to get well. Be sure to point out that the man was there for 38 years. He was making up an excuse about not being able to get to the water each day for 38 years.
 - Ask if his excuse holds water.
 - Tell the men that Jesus did not publicly criticize the "excuse." Instead, the Lord asked a probing question and lit a path to healing through Himself. God wanted the man to finally

address the root issues and to be willing to do whatever it took to receive healing from the Lord. Picking up a mat may not have seem much like a healing path, but it required conviction, faith and action. Healing resulted when he followed God.

-Ask the men if they really want to get well. As part of the discussion, remind the men that the Lord wants them to turn to Him and end self-effort. Yet, Christ does require that we pick up our mats and follow Him.

D. Tell the men that all fantasies, not just sexual fantasies, are sinful. This includes dreaming about being a hero, saving the life of the President, winning the lottery, getting promoted, or any other fantasy not based upon your real life. Expect that many men will not initially understand or agree with this principle. It is so opposite to the world that it will cause a reaction in most people. In addition, for many, it seems hard enough stopping sexual fantasies without concentrating upon all other fantasies. Yet, teach them that they must guard their minds at all times about all things, including day dreaming. Freedom requires an across-the-board battle and commitment. Remind the men that the Bible says to take captive **all** thoughts, not just sexual fantasies, and conform them to Christ (2 Cor. 10:5). In future meetings, you may wish to reiterate this point and discuss it further. For instance, you could ask the men if they are taking captive all thoughts, including being a hero.

1. Ask the men to describe what things they tend to dwell on?

E. Oswald Chambers once said, “The core of all sin is the belief that God is not good.” Ask the men if they understand and accept this principle.

F. Ask: What’s holding you back from yielding all areas of your life to the Lord?

G. Read Ephesians 4:19-24. Ask the men to discuss ways in which they lost sensitivity to certain sins. Tell them that the Lord will transform and renew their sensitivity to sin, if they are striving for absolute purity.

3. Singing/Worship: Be prepared to sing one or two songs. (Have the words for the men.)

4. Closing Prayer: Reserve the last 10-15 minutes for prayer, allowing each to pray twice. (Consider using the *PROVEN Men* prayer stance as you end the meeting, from Week Two.)

Week Four (based upon Week Three study materials)

(Leader's Note: Show real love and concern for the men as you lead. For instance, one leader mentioned how happy he was that each man was in the group. He noted that many men needed to be here, but chose not to. He likened their presence as answering God's call. He said, "Wow, you've been called by God. That is a big step already!")

1. Opening Prayer: Leader prays.

2. Discussion/Teaching: Review your notes from the week and write out an outline for the evening – knowing likely that you will not be able to get through all of the suggested items listed below. Therefore, plan ahead and select the items that are best suited for your particular group members and dynamics. You will want to balance including some important teaching topics with providing time for the men to openly share their lives and discuss what they are learning. Make sure you leave time at the end for praise and prayer.

A. Discuss with the men the word picture of the "shovel" from Week Three – Day Four of the study. Tell it briefly in your own words, keeping in mind that some may not have read it from this week's assignment in the workbook. Be sure to include this particular word picture, because it will be referred to several more times in the weeks ahead. Raise other word pictures in your discussions, because they are helpful ways of learning and remembering points. After describing the word picture, ask the men:

-“How do you try to control your life?”

-“What prevents you from putting the shovel down?”

Next, Share with the men a form of a word picture to help them understand the shovel picture better. Tell them, it can take a long time and effort to see what areas of your life you have been hiding from God and not given over to Him. For instance, you might be saying, “God can have all areas of my life, except this little one.” Use your hands to draw this point by next making a large circle with both hands, and placing it over your heart. Say, “When I talk to the Lord, I end up saying here is my heart, it is yours. But I know deep inside there is a small area that I hold back.” [Point with a finger in the area you don't give up.] What is it? It may be I don't

give him my thought life, or my finances, or my career, or the TV, or entertainment in general. I often don't even want to know what area I am holding onto.

Now ask the men:

“What area of your life are you holding onto or not opening up to God?” (Allow a discussion.)

B. Ask the men to open their Bible to this week's memory verse, Galatians 2:20 (or turn to it in the study). While turning there, ask if anyone can recite it. Remind them that it is important to be memorizing the weekly verses. Be prepared to recite it yourself. Ask the men what this verse means. Consider asking follow-up questions, such as:

-“How were you impacted by this verse?” and

-“How do you live it out?”

C. Ask the men to turn to Day Three in the *Striving for Absolute Purity* workbook, where they were asked if they truly believe that God is good and where they were asked to put two big stars there if they could not. Ask them to describe whether they see God as good. Afterwards, highlight that this question is really important and for them to keep going to God for mercy and grace to see and believe that He is good. (If they do not see God as good, they won't put the shovel of self-effort down, because they won't trust that God will do the right things in their lives.)

D. Think through ways in which you can help them see the absolute goodness of God. Perhaps ask them where they will spend eternity. Focus upon the great love that God has for us sinners, such that Jesus left heaven to endure the punishment we deserved so that we could spend eternity in heaven and have freedom now from slavery to sin. This will help show that God does have our best interests in mind!

E. Discuss ways that each man can position himself to experience and acceptance that God is good. Consider this word picture:

“If someone wants the best for you, but you do not know them very well, you might not trust them or believe it. You likely have some preconceived ideas

about them and may even have some walls built around your heart to prevent them from getting close. Well, the same is true about our view of God. You have some preconceived notions of God. In addition, if you do not know Him really well, you won't trust Him. However, the good news is that because God is absolutely good and perfect in every way, when you spend more time with Him, you will see Him as He really is: perfect. There is nothing ugly or repugnant about God to make you turn away. This is why the antidote for lust, which is fed by living a life apart from God in selfishness and pride, is spending copious hours in worship and praise of God. As you meet with the Lord in this way, you see more and more of His divine nature and perfection. In short, you will fall in love with God, trust Him completely, and want to yield your life to Him! That is the basis for the *Daily Heartwork*. It is designed to position you to meet with God. Yet, merely checking off homework won't change you. You must seek Him with all of your heart in a passionate pursuit of knowing Him intimately."

F. Tell the men: "You are a **gift** from God the Father to Jesus." Pause and repeat it. Tell them it is true. That is how Christ sees each of them. He treasures you personally. He loves you. It is time to believe God over Satan. It is time to put God's promises in our hearts and into action! God's grace will change you if you yield to Him. (Leader's Note: Many will be uncomfortable with this notion, because they do not view themselves as worthy to be a gift. Therefore, keep reminding them of God's promises and His truth.)

G. Ask them to read out loud two verses, which identify how we can receive God's grace:

-Hebrews 4:16, and

-James 4:6.

Ask the men to state the two ways we get grace. [(1) By faith and believing God's promise, and (2) by being humble and yielding to God.]

H. Other potential topics and questions include:

-“What is one of Satan’s biggest lies?” (Let the men answer, then summarize that Satan wants you to feel condemned, guilt and shame, so that you incorrectly think you must earn God’s love. This creates a false impression of God. It keeps you from seeing Him as good and turning to Him in times of sin or struggle. Nothing is further from the truth. God’s love for you is unconditional, period! You cannot earn heaven and you cannot earn His love. Be glad!)

-“Did anyone stumble or have a setback this week, such as second looks, pornography, masturbation, anger, greed?” (Give the men time to confess.) [Leader’s Note: You must demonstrate being vulnerable and confessing setbacks or sins. For instance, if you had a second look at a woman, confess it. Otherwise, when you ask this question, most men will say they are doing good or had no setbacks. But, when you show that second looks are included and that you had a struggle, they will be more open in sharing their sins.]

-Have the men read aloud the following verses on forgiveness:
Ephesians 1:7,
Colossians 1:13-14, and
1 John 1:9.

After they read the verses, ask them if they believe it (that God freely forgives)?

[If it fits in and it looks like you have time, you might summarily describe performance-based thinking and legalism from the study, and ask if they struggle with these things? Remind the men that these two things are part of Satan’s big lie.]

I. Keep giving the men hope. Tell them that by turning to God to “know ” Him intimately and by seeking Him with all of their hearts, they will be healed and transformed from the inside out. It will be real and lasting. Stay the course, and keep meeting with God each day.

J. Have the men pray read Psalm 119:1-20 and Colossians 1:9-12. Teach them how by beginning the prayer and replacing their names for any nouns such as I, us, or we. For instance, “Blessed are Tim, Don, and Joe, because they walk according to the law of the Lord. Oh Father, please have mercy on my brothers and cause Tim, Don, and Joe to walk according

to you law. Blessed are Tim, Don, and Joe, because they keep your statutes and Tim, Don, and Joe as they seek you with all of their heart.” (Use Scripture as a way of expanding prayer. Have each man do a verse or two. Take time and do not worry if they don’t do it the same as you. Encourage them to pray this way once or more each week.) [Leader’s Note: If you do not pray read today, work it into a future group meeting. It is a great way of teaching the men how to take the focus off of themselves and begin praying for others.]

K. If time permits, ask them if they wrote a psalm to the Lord. Explain that our psalms are really sharing from our heart to God. They are new ways of becoming open and honest and vulnerable, and meeting personally with God. At the Lord’s feet is where healing begins. Begin a practice of writing your own love letters to God. You want to keep opening the men to a wide variety of ways to worship and praise the Lord. Feel free to ask the men to read a portion of a psalm they wrote.

3. Singing/Worship: Have pre-selected one or two songs. Be sure to have the words and music with you.

4. Closing Prayer: Always reserve the last 10-15 minutes for prayer. Give each man an opportunity to pray. Consider using the popcorn style mentioned in week two. [Leader’s Note: Next week, you need to bring a mirror to group as a prop. Also, don’t forget to spend ten minutes critiquing the meeting, as outlined in Week One.]

Week Five (based upon Week Four study materials)

1. **Opening Prayer:** Leader prays, mentioning each man by name.
2. **Discussion/Teaching:** Pass a mirror around. Ask each man to look at it, and then hand it to the next man. After each has looked, take the mirror back. Ask someone to state what he saw. Don't give any more instructions, even if he asks "What do you mean?" Tell him to state what he saw. Give each man an opportunity to say what they saw. (During the discussion that follows, you might want to let them know that there is no right or wrong answer. It is okay to even comment that it was a bit of a trick question in order to relieve anyone from any uncomfortable feelings that might be lingering by not knowing how to answer the question.) Consider asking each to state how they felt during the experience. (It is good to always look for ways to ask the men how they feel. Ask them to open to the *Feelings Chart* at Appendix F to the study for help in identifying their feelings.)

1. Follow up with asking them: "How do others see you?" Let each speak. Allow a discussion to take place, including that we are not suppose to be concerned with how others view us or compare our lives to others.

-An optional question could include: "How does God see you?" (The discussion could include a lesson on how we cannot hide sins or character flaws from God. He knows when we are acting in our own strength and according to our own plans. You might also tell the men not to beat themselves up or allow guilt or shame to weigh them down over God knowing their sins. Remember, God wants you to grow. This exercise is designed to help the men see their sin, and especially their self-focus, so they can do business with it.)

2. There are several learning principles or teaching points that you should cover after the discussion of the mirror. **First**, have someone read aloud James 1:23-25, and ask the men to state what it means that a man goes away and forgets what he looks like. Be prepared to share how, when you take your eyes off of God, you forget who you are in Christ. You forget what you look like in that you do not even see Christ in you. **Second**, ask someone to read Galatians 2:20 (or recite it from memory). Now, ask the men to look in the mirror again.

Ask them if they see Jesus. *Remind them that the biggest battle that they will face in overcoming sin is “turning the focus off of themselves and onto God.”* Pride is usually an underlying root that causes us to focus on our needs, our circumstances, and anything else about ourselves. We cannot see past ourselves. Perhaps tell the men to tilt the mirror slightly upwards so they see God and not just themselves.

Ask someone to read Galatians 5:22-23. Remind the men that since Christ is in them, all of these fruits are there too – just waiting to grow. Encourage them to put the shovel of self-effort down, to yield every area of their lives to Christ, and to gaze upon the Lord.

A. Ask the men if they had any setbacks this week? After permitting each man to share, remind them that victory is not the absence of sin in a life, but the process of transforming their hearts and a deepening of a desire to be intimate with the Lord.

1. If it fits into your teaching and there is time, consider going over how a downward spiral works:

temptation,

fall,

guilt,

shame,

condemnation,

hopelessness,

temptation,

fall,

Share the hope we all have in the victory in Christ to stop the cycle. God leads us through temptation when we turn to and rely upon His strength. So, stop turning away from Him! Run to Him and accept His healing and power!

2. Ask the men to describe their triggers (things which generally precede the acting out of sexual sin). Be ready to share your triggers (being alone, a fight with someone, TV shows, etc.).

3. Discuss what to do when they have a lustful thought in their minds. Make sure you summarize as: (1) immediately stopping the thought in its tracks (not allowing it to finish), (2) acknowledging it as selfish and wrong, (3) confessing it to God as sin, (4) telling the Lord of your sorrow for turning away from Him, (5) expressing to God your desire to be forgiven, and (6) turning back to God right away by accepting His forgiveness and restoration.

4. Ask someone to read the memory verse: James 1:21-22.

Without discussion, tell the men that if they do not establish a battle plan for addressing tempting circumstances, they will always remain hearers and not doers. *PROVEN Men* are men of action! (For instance, tell them that before they go to a mall, to have a battle plan in place.)

B. Ask the men if the pace is going too slow for them. Ask them if they are tempted to pick up the shovel to help out God. (Leader's Note: It is hard to be patient and to accept that healing is a slow process. Even a person going through the 12-week study a second time will struggle with this principle. One man confessed during his second time through that he had this self-deception: I can do it. He allowed pride to creep into his thinking that sexual sins should be behind him now. Yet, he allowed the eternal perspective to take root and repented over His pride. He remains willing to do whatever it takes and is excited about his dependency upon the Lord because he truly wants to experience the Lord daily.)

Tell the men: "The perceived slowness of the pace or the need to act is Satan's lie and an attempt to thwart the healing that is beginning to occur in your lives. Don't be impatient or judge progress as man does. There are no shortcuts. Besides, God wants you to realize that you are needy and dependant upon Him in order that you will want to meet with Him. So, keep an eternal perspective. Trust completely in God to do the healing in your life as He knows best. Some additional points to remember are to stop comparing yourself to others and to be mindful that God will not act outside your will. He can only work in a willing heart, one that is not proud or stubborn. He will wait until you are ready. Cooperate with Him."

1. Remind the men: Sexual healing is a lifelong process. Be real and open in discussing how this is true for you. Be excited about the process, because it is a process of God

with a divine purpose to prepare us for deep intimacy with Him and to conform our desires and lives to the perfect will of the Father.

C. Without seeking discussion, remind the men that the Daily *Heartwork* material is hard and not everyone will be able to finish it all. Tell the men: “Healing will not result from completing all of the homework. Instead, the Daily *Heartwork* is designed to get you to meet with God and experience Him. True and lasting healing flows from the *active pursuit* of God in an ever deepening relationship. Therefore, use the study merely as a platform. Don’t focus upon checking off homework and don’t beat yourself up if you do not finish every item. Again, it is a lifestyle of praise and worship of God that frees us. So, adopt that eternal perspective today. Set out to enjoy meeting with the Lord each day.” Also, remind them to repeat this study later and they will pick up new points each time they work through it.

3. Singing/Worship: Be sure to include at least one praise song each week. If you reserve slightly more time, you can also include reading the names or attributes of God as part of your worship or prayer time.

4. Closing Prayer: Pray for 15 minutes. You set the tempo. For instance, you decide whether to: (1) go around the room in popcorn prayer style (i.e. each person stating a very short prayer of 15 seconds or less and repeating the process for 5-10 minutes), (2) read or state the names or attributes of God, (3) pray silently for a few minutes and then give the men a time to confess any sins, or (4) give each man two minutes to individually pray out loud. Regardless of the style, be a leader by example. Confess your sins, whether it is hardness of heart, prideful spirit, greed, or second looks.

(Leader’s Note: Guard against praying long prayers and mixing in teaching. Keep your prayers simple, focused, yet heartfelt communications with the Lord. Also, consider using the *PROVEN Men* prayer stance as you end the meeting, having each man stand against a wall stretching high towards the Lord as they make a commitment to the Lord. You may find that some men feel a deeper bond with others by including this special form of prayer.)

Week Six (based upon Week Five study materials)

- 1. Opening Prayer:** Leader prays, mentioning each man by name.
- 2. Discussion/Teaching:** Check in. Have the men turn to the *Feelings Chart* at Appendix F to the study. Ask each how they are feeling.

-Next, ask each how the week went. Ask if there were any setbacks or sexual sins this week. Be sure the atmosphere encourages confession. Be the first to admit your failures.

A. Explain: When we do not feel close to God, it is not God who left us. Sin creates a wall between us and God, and it grieves God. In fact, we were created and designed to unite with God. Yet, when we have a divided heart (one which seeks after worldly things), we drag ourselves away from God and build up a wall to block Him out. Marriage was also designed by God for unity. When we turn to pornography or fantasy, we build walls that keep us from experiencing real intimacy.

1. Ask the men to explain in their own words why sexual activity (in thought or deed), which does not conform to God's design for a married couple, grieves the Lord.
2. Have them describe the side effects of a divided heart (i.e. broken trust, insecurity, lack of peace, or non-contentment).

-Try to help them see that even if a person (even a spouse) consents to an immoral activity, it really will not result in fulfillment. For example, if an unmarried couple consents to premarital sex, there will be underlying guilt and shame. The fact that two people agree to sin does not remove the stain of sin or stop walls from being built around their hearts that blocks out God and real intimacy with others. Similarly, if a married couple agrees to masochism or the use of pornography, it will not produce lasting pleasure. We cannot consent to sin and remain unaffected.

B. Ask the men to describe what things they identified in Week Five - Day Two of the Daily Reading, which hinders them from going to God (allowing them to turn to it).

C. Have the men turn to and read aloud John 17:3 ("Now this is eternal life: that they man know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.") Repeat it,

stressing, “This is life, **to know God.**” Tell the men that this passage is quite profound and to let it sink in their hearts.

Discuss the awesome privilege we have to be able to know God. Remind them that true life is not found in serving, but in knowing God. It is from this kind of a heart that seeks to intimately know God, which brings healing and fulfillment in life. End the charade. Stop trying to win God’s love. Stop performing, and go to Him as a needy dependant servant that thirsts for real life. We each need to spend much time in praise and worship in order to know Him and receive true life. The need to control life or retreat to a fantasy world will dry up in the presence of God. Tell them to plan on increasing their daily prayer time each day, but doing so with a deep desire to know and be with the Lord.

D. Ask each man to briefly describe how they view God. Have them verbally describe what they see when they close their eyes and picture God the Father in heaven.

1. Next, ask each man to describe his dad. Ask them to what extent their view of God the Father is linked to their view of their dad. Many men find it hard to see God the Father as good, loving and forgiving, because their own dad was not these things. Ask the men if it is true for them. Use this discussion to help them move past the pain of the relationship with their dad or others and to turn to and trust God.

E. Ask the men to describe how God views us. Then, have someone read Colossians 3:12, which states: “Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.”

Let it sink in – we are God’s chosen and we are holy and pleasing to Him. The Lord sees past our sins, because He paid the penalty for them, and He longs for us to be *PROVEN* (Passionate, Repentant, Open, Victorious, Eternal and Networked). The Lord has proven His love for us by dying on the cross, and He supplies us with His righteousness so that we are stamped *PROVEN*. Allow the unconditional love of Christ break you so that you live such a life He designed for you.

F. Ask the men to describe how a person can get to know and understand the will of another (i.e. to spend so much time together that you almost know what the other person is thinking, you really know their likes and dislikes and want to please them, etc.).

Discuss how God wants us to know His will. Ask the men how God says we can learn to see and understand His will for our lives. Discuss what each part of this passage means and how we can do it. Make sure they leave knowing that they must give up their rights and yield their hearts to God in order to know and do the will of God. Remind them to keep seeking to **know** God and seek Him with all their hearts and strength. God longs to heal, but He cannot force Himself on us, and words alone do not give Him the permission He needs to pick up the shovel for us.

3. Singing/Worship: Sing one or several songs. (Leader's Note: Make sure you select songs which are singable and you have the words and music with you.)

4. Closing Prayer: Spend the last 15 minutes in prayer. Allow the Holy Spirit to work in the lives of the men during prayer. It is alright to allow long pauses of silence. Consider asking each man to kneel with their heads bowed as they pray. (Leader's Note: Make sure you are ending on time. It is a great sign of respect and teaches them how much you value them. It may also keep them from arriving home late, which can prevent fights at home because they are late. Therefore, start on time and be willing to cut out some discussion. Remember, the suggested outlines in this guide likely will take longer than 2 hours, so you must make choices. Also, anytime you deem it appropriate, include the *PROVEN Men* prayer stance, having each man stand against a wall stretching high towards the Lord while praying. Depending upon your group, it can be a special bonding time or it may seem a bit silly. You'll need to gauge this. It will be your responsibility to ensure it remains a time of humility and true worship of the Lord. Finally, remember to spend ten minutes conducting a self-evaluation of the meeting.)

Week Seven (based upon Week Six study materials)

- 1. Opening Prayer:** Leader prays, mentioning each man by name.
- 2. Discussion/Teaching:** Check in time: Ask the men to turn to the *Feelings Chart* at Appendix F to the study. Ask them to describe their feelings.

A. Ask the men if they had any setbacks this week. Follow up with questions such as, “What led up to it and how did you respond?” Keep the point before the men that repentance needs to take place *immediately* and that each and every sin needs to be confessed. Ask the men to describe any faltering in their thought lives, such as lust, greed, fantasy, dreams of being a hero, or dwelling on anger or retribution.

B. Remind the men that sharing exciting truths with others is an important part of the healing process. For married men, regularly sharing what they are learning with their wives will greatly encourage and strengthen them and help rebuild trust. She will see that this time is different from all the other times he said that he would stop or change. Ask the men if they are becoming more open and vulnerable in discussions with others. Remind them that creating special times of meeting with the Lord is equally important, such as prayer walks, meditating on the attributes of God, and writing notes to God.

C. If you did not address this in Week 5 or should you want to readdress this issue, ask the men if God’s timing for their healing is going too slowly or if they are frustrated? During the discussion, make it clear that although most want to be instantly healed, God does not normally work that way. Healing is a process with a purpose for us not only to be changed from a former way of life, but to put on the things of God developed through a growing and intimate relationship with Him. The goal needs to be to become God’s friend, and not merely to seek freedom from sexual sins.

D. Ask the men to state whether they have a casual attitude towards sin or, instead, if they are choosing to hate pornography, lust, greed, or other forms of idolatry? Have them explain their answers.

E. Teach that we each were created to believe things we cannot see. That is why faith is not “blind.” We are designed by God to have and rely upon faith. Yet, sin veils our soul such that we stop seeing with the spiritual eyes of our hearts. Instead, we turn to our senses and trust in ourselves. A consequence is that we allow negative self-judgments, bitterness and anger. We also look to idols and self-pleasure when our spiritual eyes are covered.

F. Have the men turn to 2 Peter 1:5-10 and read it aloud.

Point out that if a person does all eight things, they will not fall! Show excitement, such as proclaiming, “Wow, a road map by God for keeping us from turning to sexual sins!”

Then, switch tones and ask them to think about what it would take to perfectly live by each of these things. Ask them if it would be easy to keep all eight things? (An honest answer would be no, and in fact, with man, it is impossible). To keep them from dwelling on the despair over the obvious impossibility for them to live perfectly, draw their attention to verse 1:3-4 and ask them to consider how this relates to the list of eight things we are to keep. Make it clear that it is God who gives us what we need to live these things out, and that it is by and through His power. For instance, we obtain the Lord’s godliness in our lives, and it is His revealing of healing knowledge that takes place in the quiet times of prayer and study. Therefore, when we rely upon God, giving Him the shovel, we will be able to experience these eight things in our lives and live in freedom.

G. If you did not address this last week and there is time, have the men turn to Romans 12:1-2 and read it aloud.

Ask the men: Why do you think our spiritual act of worship includes purity with our bodies? Ask them: Why we must not conform to the norms of society, and why we must stop doing what others are doing (such as watching prime time TV or wanting to have the latest car, tools, clothes, etc.)?

H. Turn to Week Six – Day Two in the study and point out the backwards word “***PROVEN***.” (Alternatively, you can write out the word *PROVEN* on a sheet of paper in dark felt pen. On the reverse side, trace over it so that the backwards word “***PROVEN***” (i.e.

NEVORP) can be seen by all in the group.) Hold the backward word and tell the men that their thinking is just as backwards as the stamp. There is only one cure, and that cure is to have the blood of Christ transform their heart and renew their minds. Then, flip the page and show the correct word or turn to the cover of the study. Highlight the point by talking about how Jesus stamps us *PROVEN* (indicating on the cover of the study where the red ink covers the word Men). The blood of Christ stamps us *PROVEN* and corrects our worldly thinking as we yield to the Lord, asking Him to control our lives. *PROVEN Men* desire to live out each of the letters in this word. The same principles are expressed in 1 Peter 1:5-10 and Romans 12:1-2, when we live by the Spirit, we don't fall into sin.

I. Only if there is time remaining, without cutting out prayer or singing, teach the men that healing is based upon God's unconditional love for us, proven by the cross. We cannot earn God's love by good works and we do not live out the eight characteristics of 1 Peter 1:5-10 by our own efforts. Therefore, pursue the Lord with all of your heart, mind and strength. Desire to get to know and love God. The by-product of a right relationship with God is the victory in living out the promise in the verses of Scripture regarding our victorious lives won through the power of God.

J. Leave the men with a question to ponder and pose to the Lord: "God, what is holding me back from seeking deep intimacy with you and turning over all aspects of my life to you? Please reveal it to me and give me your strength to break free." (Leader's Note: Consider writing out this assignment on separate sheets of paper for each man in the group and hand it out at the end.) Ask them to set aside five minutes this week to hear from the Lord in this way.

3. Singing/Worship: Keep bringing worship songs and the words. Sing one or two songs.

4. Closing Prayer: Pray for 15 minutes. [Note: Next week, bring a light bulb as a prop.]

(Consider using the *PROVEN Men* prayer stance as you end the meeting.)

Week Eight (based upon Week Seven study materials)

1. Opening Prayer: Leader prays.

2. Discussion/Teaching: Ask the men to turn to the *Feelings Chart* at Appendix F to the study and check in with how they are feeling.

-Ask the men: Did you have any setbacks or sexual sins in your life this week?

A. Ask someone to recite the Memory Verse, James 1:19-20. Have the others follow along in the Bible. Ask the men each of the following questions:

-“What is anger?”

-“What causes anger?” (Be ready to provide your own explanations as well (i.e. it is a response to a blocked goal, a feeling we get when wronged or not getting what we want, etc.)).

-“How do you react when you are wronged?”

B. Teach the men: One major way in which many of us were wronged is some form of childhood abuse (emotional, physical and/or sexual). Sexual abuse is not limited to forced intercourse, and it can take many forms, including having been exposed to pornography or naked adults, had someone show you how to masturbate, been touched by another in an uncomfortable manner, received numerous enemas, or been teased about your body. Emotional abuse includes shame-based criticism, the withholding love, and denial of feelings to be expressed. For instance, your dad may never have hugged you or told you that he loved you.

1. When a person, and especially a child, is hurt or abused in any of these ways it can be very destructive and the effects carry over into adulthood. It contributes to: (1) why walls are still around your heart, (2) why you shy away from vulnerable and intimate relationships, (3) why you engage in unhealthy styles of interaction with people, and/or (4) why you have hidden anger. If you refuse to allow yourself feelings or you experience numbness, you are likely scarred in this way. Some of the reasons people react in one of these four ways is because abuse strips away trust. In fact, your very self-respect is torn from you. These things lead to shame, guilt, self-condemnation, and anger deep within your soul. The outward

reaction is to withdraw from close relationships – the place where you could be wounded again. The retreat from relationships also includes retreating from God. As we retreat from the Lord, we take on the character of the world, which is filled with anger and is judgmental and selfish.

C. Turn to Romans 2:8-9 and have someone read it aloud.

Ask the men: What is a self-centered life filled with? Stress that anger is what lies ahead for who is self-centered, because outside of an intimate relationship with God, he acts alone and outside the will of God. In short, the result of turning from a relationship with God is being independent.

D. Turn to Isaiah 50:10-11 and read it aloud.

Using a light bulb as a prop, ask the men if this light bulb is producing its own light? Ask them to describe what is missing.

Tell them: “We are like a light bulb. When we go our own way apart from God, we shine no light. We deceive ourselves into thinking that it is the light bulb (us) that is the source of power and light, and we have no need for outside power (God).”

1. Ask the men: “How have you been an independent torch bearer, a firelighter acting on your own apart from God?”

Give the men time to confess and repent. If the Spirit moves, go to a short time of prayer. Cry out to God for mercy. Commit to putting down the shovel and asking the Lord to provide His strength. Admit our need and dependance upon the Lord. As a light bulb is dependant upon electricity, so are we dependant upon the Lord.

E. Ask the men if any would be vulnerable and discuss that they have been abused as a child. (Be affirming as they talk and afterwards.)

1. Tell the men: “You must learn to trust again and to form real and intimate relationships, first and foremost with the Lord, or they will merely be a light bulb out of the socket.”

2. Teach the men: The healing path for abuse and other wrongs is to peer deep within you own soul and wounded heart. This time, not to become vengeful or blaming, but to

open yourself up to God. Allow His light to penetrate the furthest reaches of your soul, the places once off limits to yourself and even Him. The Lord will tear away the rotted flesh and renew and transform you from the inside out. When you look inward, do so with out any “self” rights. The goal is to be reunited with the loving and forgiving Lord. You must see that the deepest damage you have in your life is not the abuse, but your withdrawal from God and your independence. Now you must believe: (1) that God is good at all times, and (2) God can and must be trusted with every area of your life. Ask the men if they are willing to do this and to state their commitments.

F. Teach the men: You must commit to replacing the spot in your heart once occupied by anger with the fruits of the Spirit, which brings peace. One major element is to forgive others, even those who abused you. True forgiveness means that you will actually want others to be healed and to prosper.

Ask the men: Who is it that you have been unable to forgive? Without sounding judgmental, ask them on what authority are you relying upon in withholding forgiveness?

G. Teach the men: Sin incurs a dept that cannot be fully repaid. This includes your own sins. You must receive grace to be truly forgiven. You do not earn forgiveness no matter how hard you may try. If your heart will not extend grace to others, the Lord says that you cannot be forgiven. The reason God says that you won't be forgiven is not some power play or silly rule. Rather, your own refusal to forgive is merely proof that you are living by the world and not by the Spirit. Therefore, you have not repented over your sins and truly sought forgiveness. That is why forgiveness escapes you. It is not about the other person, but is all about your hard and proud heart. Only the humble can see God and experience Him. If you are hanging on to your rights and refuse to grant grace and forgiveness to others, you are not living by the Spirit, and sin will remain your companion. Yet, God is calling you to a higher place. He wants the best for you. He beseeches you to put the shovel down and at the same time lay down your rights so that you can see and experience Him.

H. Give the men an assignment to return to the study and read through some practical

things to do about anger on Week Seven – Day Four. Remind them that a changed heart is what heals and gives life. Teach them that **repentance** is the internal shift from self-protection to trusting God. It is a gift given to those who earnestly seek the Lord and long to live by the Spirit. Teach the men that **passion** is a deep response of the soul to the recognition of God as the giver of life and the true source of power. As a dependant, needy servant, you will have freedom to experience feelings, so that you can rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep (Romans 12:15). Will you get to know God intimately? Deep prayer and copious hours in praise and worship are the keys to the gates of heaven, because they are the only way God can transform and heal you.

3. Singing/Worship/Prayer: Include each of these elements in the last 20 to 30 minutes, because they are life-changing times of going to God in prayer and praise.

(Consider using the *PROVEN Men* prayer stance, having each man stand against a wall stretching high towards the Lord after time in prayer. Use this stance to make a particular plea to the Lord for purity. Conduct a self-evaluation of the meeting and be fully prepared for next week. Consider calling the men during the week to check in.)

Week Nine (based upon Week Eight study materials)

- 1. Opening Prayer:** Leader prays, mentioning each man by name.
- 2. Discussion/Teaching:** Have someone recite the weekly memory verse. Ask the men how fasting has relevance to seeking godly sorrow and repentance. Ask the men to describe any experience they had with fasting this week.

Discuss the purpose of a fast: To prepare your heart to meet with God by creating a focused time of reflection, dependence, and/or worship, as a reminder to die to the basic principles of the world, and showing that life is more than eating.

Tell the men: A fast is not a ritual that brings about God's favor. The Lord desires a humble heart devoted fully to Him with longing and anticipation of meeting with Him. God does not want sacrifice, but a merciful heart (Matthew 9:13).

Discuss what is godly repentance (an act of God, changing our hearts and leading to change), and why being sorry or crying is not the same thing. Remind them: Worldly sorrow does not heal broken relationships, it only keeps the focus inward.

A. Tell the men: The root that keeps sexual immorality alive in a person's life is pride and selfishness. When we keep looking at ourselves in the mirror and focusing upon our needs, wants, rights, or circumstances, we respond in worldly ways. Sexual addiction is a branch fed by worldly patterns. For instance, we might think we are broken or repentant, but are really only acting with human effort and worldly sorrow. In fact, two hallmarks of sexual addiction are that we are turning to lust, fantasy or pornography as either: (1) an avoidance of the pain of real relationships, or (2) as a way to control life. Both directly violate the reasons God created us, and in both, we are independent torch bearers living outside of God's strength and light. Although there may be some strong reasons for reacting to the pain of life by trying to hide from intimacy through sexual pursuits, it ultimately it leads to death. Just as a vine cut off from the tree slowly withers, so does our spirit and soul wither apart from God. By seeking to avoid pain in turning to these "substitute" relationships (i.e. false intimacy through sexual activities), we actually become more deadened and even numb.

1. Ask the men, “Are you still holding onto the shovel or have you put it down? Have you finally agreed to give up complete control of every aspect of your life?”

2. Give the men the following outside assignment to help them discern what areas of a worldly life they are still secretly holding. (Leader’s Note: Prior to the meeting, write out this assignment on separate sheets of paper for each man in the group, leaving lots of room for them to fill in responses during a moment of meeting with the Lord.) Assignment: Set aside five minutes sometime this week to hear from the Lord as to what area they are still holding onto control. The Details: (1) Still your heart and find a quiet place to meet with the Lord, asking Him to reveal what areas you are still controlling or refusing to turn over to Him. (2) With a blank sheet of paper, ask God what am I holding onto. (3) Simply jot down any rough thoughts or flashes. Do not dwell on an item at this time, just keep jotting down a word or two at a time. Keep asking the Lord if there is any other area. Simply write down anything that enters your mind. (4) After several minutes of asking and seeking the Lord, read what you wrote down. Now, ask the Lord to open your heart as you read each item. God will make it clear to you whether they were your own thoughts or Him speaking to you. (5) Act upon what God reveals to you. Don’t hold back or fight the Holy Spirit by glossing over an item.

B. Tell the men: “The underlying problem that keeps many in bondage to the harmful solutions we are turning to often results from a reluctance to enter into a passionate, dependant relationship with God. I repeat, a reason you remain in sexual bondage is that you refuse to enter into a passionate, dependant relationship with God. This is not merely a Christian slogan. It is a real problem. The good news is that there is a real solution – if you are willing to put down your shovel of self-effort and seek the Lord with all of your heart. The biggest battle that you will face, mark this down, the biggest battle that you will face in entering into the kind of relationship with God, which will heal your wounds, is to turn the focus off of yourself and put it onto God. Do you understand what I am saying? You must stop focusing on your rights, your needs, and your circumstances. Instead, make getting to know Christ the number one priority in your life. This must become your biggest pursuit.”

1. Ask the men: “Practically, what does it mean to make getting to know God the greatest pursuit in your life? What are some ways that you can stop looking at yourself in the mirror and begin to gaze upon the Lord?”

2. Ask the men: “For those of you that gave up TV or other entertainment activities, how did it go?” Follow up with: “Why should we give up TV or severely restrict what we watch?”

You might remind them that stopping watching TV will not bring healing anymore than setting any kind of a boundary. Yet, we must flee from temptation, or it will overtake us.

3. Tell them: “A person given over to a particular sin changes only when his heart towards God changes. In fact, you must leave the camp of the enemy to rejoin with God. Flee from temptation and run to the Lord.”

C. Ask the men to describe their experience in writing out their own psalm modeled after Psalm 51. Allow them to share areas where they repented. Be open and vulnerable. Allow the Holy Spirit to lead the discussion. Some may feel the need to drop on their knees in prayer and to confess sins at that precise moment. Be open to that need. Others might rejoice at the freedom, which they received as they laid down their lives for the Lord to pick them up. Praise songs might be in order.

3. Singing/Worship/Prayer: Spend the last 20-30 minutes in meaningful worship of the Lord through prayer and song.

Concluding remarks: Tell them that there was much to learn this week and not to be distressed if they did not absorb it all. A relationship with the Lord is one of constant growth. Suggest that they go back through the material with a heart desiring to know God even better. Suggest that at the end of the 12 weeks they repeat the entire study. Tell them that God wants to reveal so much of Himself to them, if they only open up their lives to Him. The second time through will be fresh and exciting. Send them on their way in the Lord’s strength as you ask God to bless each one by name. You might wish to use the prayer stance as a vehicle of reconfirming of any commitments to holiness.

Week Ten (based upon Week Nine study materials)

1. **Opening Prayer:** Leader prays, mentioning each man by name.
2. **Discussion/Teaching:** (Leader's Note: There are a lot of very important lessons in this week, which explains the long suggested guide. However, don't expect to get through it all. Instead, purpose to read through this outline and understand the key points. As you develop your outline for tonight, you will be able to capture the essence of the lessons.)

A. Ask the men: "Do you see pornography as evil? Explain your answer."

(Note: Some have the attitude that it is not really that bad or nobody gets hurt, so what's the harm. Briefly discuss why it is not innocent fun and that people are damaged, both those who pose and those who look.)

1. At some point in the discussion, ask the men if they ever tend to view women as objects?

Teach them: We often turn to pornography, fantasy, masturbation, prostitutes or affairs to obtain physical sexual pleasure without fully giving emotionally of ourselves. While it may feel good for the moment, it is not real intimacy and it is not healthy or fulfilling.

B. Have someone read 2 Corinthians 10:5, and then ask the men: "What thoughts did you have this week that you needed to take captive? Did you take them captive right away?" (Leader's Note: Remind the men that the process for attacking every impure thought is as follows: (1) immediately stopping the thought in its tracks (not allowing it to finish), (2) acknowledging it as selfish and wrong, (3) confessing it to God as sin, (4) telling the Lord of your sorrow for turning away from Him, (5) expressing to God your desire to be forgiven, and (6) turning back to God right away by accepting His forgiveness and restoration.)

C. Teach the men: Masturbation is an addictive behavior. It may feel good at the moment, but it is shrouded in guilt and shame. Many even make vows never to tell anyone. Often, masturbation is a flight from responsibility and it is certainly a flight from intimacy. We want the pleasure of sex without the effort of a relationship in which we must be open and honest, vulnerable, and giving of ourselves.

D. Here is a general model of what leads to a continual cycle of masturbation:

Input (such as negative words from someone)

Belief (“I guess I am defective ”)

Feeling (such as anxiousness or despair)

Thought (“I am no good, so what’s the use ”)

Fantasy (“In my own world, I create a safe place and receive pleasure ”)

Action (masturbation)

Consequence (shame/self-condemn/humility)

The cycle repeats itself over and over; for instance, another *input* (i.e. receiving more negative words) is followed by *belief, feeling, thought, fantasy, action* and *consequence*. Because these steps are frequently repeated, and they ultimately end in shameful feelings, it seems to get easier next time to accept the negative and false inputs, and thereby, formulate wrong beliefs. Our negative self-worth leads to the “need” to escape.

E. Teach the men: Self-pity or self-condemnation are based on a sense of false humility. This type of bad feelings about yourself is not of God and does not lead to godly repentance. You are only sorrowful over your plight, not that you have turned away from God and all He wants to give you. It is rooted in pride.

The good news is that God does not judge as man judges, and He freely forgives and offers you His love and strength in order to transform and renew you such that you no longer want to return to self-gratification. Still, it is not an easy course, because you spent years focusing on your self, your rights, your circumstances, your needs, and your pleasures. You have not truly set the focus of your life on getting to *know* and love Christ. This does not mean you don’t have any love for God, but rather, you are trying to “share ” God with the things of this world. They don’t mix, and you’ll not have peace in your heart and soul as a result. It is little wonder you experience guilt and shame. Deep inside, you know you are running off to the enemies camp, so you block out your heart and distance yourself from God.

F. What is the remedy for turning to pornography? (Allow for a discussion.)

The remedy for masturbation is the same cure we have been learning in all of the *Striving for Absolute Purity* study: To passionately seek first the kingdom of God. That's right, there are no ten steps or programs to follow. Healing is produced through an intimate, daily relationship with the Lord. It is not by self-efforts. Therefore, right now, turn to and rely upon God. Make an irrevocable commitment that masturbation or sexual fantasy are no longer options. Seek after permanent transformation as you meet with God and replace Him as the center of your life and focus.

Some practical pointers to leave with the men:

-The next time you receive negative inputs, apply truth therapy and reject Satan's lies about who you are. If you have trusted Jesus alone for your salvation (see *Why Jesus* at Appendix E to the study), you are indwelt with the Holy Spirit. God calls you His son and friend. Reject condemnation, for there is no condemnation for those in Christ (Romans 8:1).

-The next time a fantasy or tempting sexual thought enters your mind, reject it right away. Call it sin and repent that you allowed even a moment of it to enter. Ruin the pleasure right away. Do not finish the thought. Consider even saying, "I reject this thought and I refuse to take any pleasure from it." Stay in God's camp and take captive every thought and conform it to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5).

G. Have the men turn to Matthew 5:6 and read it out loud.

Teach them: When you seek after worldly things, even with gusto, you are never satisfied. Yet, God is telling you that those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be filled! The remedy for escaping into fantasy or giving yourself over to worldly passions is to seek the Lord earnestly. That is why the first letter of a *PROVEN* life is being **passionate** for God. It is the only road leading to fulfillment, period! All else will leave you empty.

H. Ask the men: "Have you made an irrevocable decision in you heart that pornography and fantasy are no longer options in your life?"

1. Teach them: God will supply the ability to carry out this kind of a

commitment, but you must sincerely make a covenant not to ever return to it. Tell them that it is not enough to say “I will try” or “I will do my best.” Your best is not good enough. In fact, turn to James 1:13-15 right now. Read it out loud.

There are a few key points. First, God does not tempt you. When you give Him control of your life, you won’t turn to sin. Second, it is only when you want to turn away from God that you continue to sin. In fact, you must literally drag yourself away from God in order to commit a sexual sin. Third, when you allow pornography to be an option in your life, you ultimately will give into it.

2. Ask if anyone can explain, in their own words, why spending copious (much) time with the Lord in praise and worship is the antidote for the temptation to lust?

-Ask them: “What happens when you engage in praise and worship?” (Some responses may include: God enters and runs our lives as you replace His hands for our hands and thereby removes pride and selfishness – the roots of sexual sins; you draw near to God and experience Him drawing near to us; you feast upon the Bread of Life such that our souls are filled with the nourishment they long for and which worldly pleasures cannot meet; you renew our minds by the real truth that only comes from God; and our hearts are enlarged as they are filled with passion and praise towards God. In short, a lifestyle of worship leads us into living out our purposes in life and you are changed from the inside out.)

3. Prayer: Go to prayer before songs tonight. Ask the men to bend their knees in prayer and call upon the name of the Lord in order to make an irrevocable commitment that they will no longer allow any pornography in their lives. Tell them that if they are making this decision, then pray it to God now and ask the Lord to give His strength to stay in His camp. Pray that they will never again drag themselves away in order to view pornography. (Model the prayer yourself and make this same covenant. Give each man time to pray as the Lord leads them. Do not force anyone and do not look down upon anyone who was unable to make this decision today. Keep vigilant prayers for each man each day as you lead and guide the group.)

3. Singing/Worship: Engage in meaningful worship of the Lord through praise or song.

Week Eleven (based upon Week Ten study materials)

(Leader' Note: Assuming you will use the last night (week twelve) as a pizza party or a fellowship night as a point of closure, this will be the last night of teaching and following the normal format. Therefore, include any points you want to highlight from the last few weeks of the study that the men have not yet completed.)

- 1. Opening Prayer:** Leader prays, mentioning each man by name.
- 2. Discussion/Teaching:** Recapping some roots of bondage. Tell the men: "There are many reasons why men remain in bondage to sin. Tonight, we will review some of them and also commit to turning to and relying upon the Lord to break them."

A. *Not making an across-the-board commitment to holiness.* This means we focus only upon the big sins and neglect others, such as gossip, anger, or boasting. Another name for this is "selective living." This grieves God, not because He wants to look down from heaven and see that we are living good lives, but because the same root that selectively lives also selectively loves. Selective living means we show "love" to the Lord when He gives us what we think we deserve and when it is convenient to us, but we remain distant from God most other times. How the Lord is grieved by our part-time devotion. He longs for a daily relationship with us. To be healed, we must realize that all forms of sin keep us from going to Him. Only then, will we truly make an across-the-board commitment to absolute purity and holiness, and only then, do we live a holy and pure life.

1. Read this week's memory verse (Hebrews 13:5). How does keeping your life free from the love of money also keep your life free from turning to lust, fantasy or pornography? [We cannot serve two masters. We live by the flesh or by the Spirit. The deeds of the flesh include greed and sexual immorality. The fruits of the spirit include contentment, peace and lasting joy. We cannot compartmentalize sins or areas of our lives.]
2. Do you still have any non-sexual sins in your life, such as judging others or greed?
3. Are you finally ready to yield your whole life – across-the-board – to God?

B. *Not believing in or acting upon God's power.* Often we try to take control, to dig with the shovel, to strive against temptation in our own strength. This is pride and it will keep you in bondage to sin. With respect to belief, faith is a gift of God (Ephesians 2:8). Therefore, go to the Lord and seek His face, and ask for and expect to receive faith. Remember, apart from God, we can do nothing of eternal value (John 15:5). It is time to believe. It is also a time to act upon the faith and power God does provide. Therefore, choose to cooperate with the Lord and let Him lead.

-Are you willing to do whatever it takes to receive God's healing, no matter what the cost?

-What do you want God to do for you right now?

-How will you act upon the power He gives you to do this?

C. *Not allowing God to transform your will through accepting His unconditional love.*

When we embrace that God is good and He has our best interest in heart, we are in a position to trust Him. As you turn to God alone, He will heal your wounds and change your heart and desires. Therefore, you must constantly immerse yourself in God through copious hours of praise, worship, Bible reading and prayer in order to really know and experience God Himself.

D. *Not seeing healing as a process with a purpose.* God heals slowly on purpose. He moves us at the perfect pace for us. If you are getting frustrated over the slowness of healing, you must stop and check your motive. The eternal perspective is that God is preparing you for an eternal relationship, beginning with living for and through Christ on a daily basis. If you want to be free of a sin more than you want to be close to God, it would do no good for the Lord to free you from that particular sin, because you would only fall into bondage to a new sin, since you are not living by the Spirit.

-Right now, confess how you have paid more attention to getting free from sin than living a relationship with God. [Give time for confession.]

E. *Not developing an intimate and dependant relationship with God the Father.* The fear of intimacy has contributed to us turning to fantasy, pornography, and other forms of false

intimacy. God the Father is perfect and good. When our relationship with Him changes, so will our relationship with people. Spend time with God the Father in times of worship. Write Him regular love letters. Be open and vulnerable in prayer.

-Do you want intimacy with God? [Allow each to say yes, then remind them that time spent with God is the key.]

F. *Not humbly admitting your need for and dependancy upon God.* If you detest the thought of being a needy, dependant servant of God, then pride is blinding you. Pride holds you back from receiving God's love and healing. The opposite of pride is humility. Seek humility. Desire to be lowly. Consider others more important than yourself. Freely forgive sins against you. Give up your rights. These things are only possible when you turn to God and cry out to Him. The fruit of the Spirit will flourish in you as pride is cut away.

G. *Not practicing spiritual warfare.* Turn to Ephesians 6:12 and read it out loud. Ask the men: "Where is our battle?" (Teach them that if you refuse to accept that there is a spiritual war in your life, you won't even be engaged in the battle. Failures will continue.)

-Turn to Appendix K to the study and ask the men, "What did you learn about spiritual war?" and "How will you begin to put on and rely upon God's armor from now until eternity?"

H. Tell the men: "By living out each of the *PROVEN* elements, you will live a victorious life."

(**Note:** If you intend on having a pizza party or other form of closure next week, use the following now. Otherwise, refer to it during your next meeting:

"This is the last week of teaching. As we near the end the teaching time, I want to remind you that the 12 weeks of *Heartwork* is just the start of a growing relationship with the Lord. It will blossom and grow as you continue to live out your two purposes in life. Before we spend time in prayer and singing, consider just a few other points.

-Someone state the two reasons we were created. [To worship God and to have a relationship with Him.] (Tell the men: "Regularly refer back in your mind to these two

guiding purposes for your life as a reminder of the direction each of us will go after group ends.”)

-Do you have a battle plan for the next 12 weeks and for the rest of your life? If not, get busy preparing one. [Remind the men that worship and praise are just as vital of components to any game plan as repentance. They must incorporate all of the letters of the acronym *PROVEN*.]

-What study will you begin at the end of the 12 weeks? Suggest that they follow the suggestion in the Appendix and to make sure that they redo the *Heartwork* with another man. It was designed to be repeated.”

-Tell the men: “I leave you with one final question to ponder and to talk about with God about. It should be one of the life questions you keep asking yourself throughout the years: Is knowing God the greatest pursuit of my life?”

3. Singing/Worship: Go to the Lord in song and praise.

4. Closing Prayer: Spend the last 10-15 minutes in prayer.

(If you choose the pizza format for the last meeting, tell the men that next week is a time to reflect as we enjoy pizza and each other’s company. Keep working through the study, and come prepared to share what you learned, what your next study is, and something encouraging about each other. (Encourage them to follow the suggested studies in the Appendix to the study.) The next meeting time will be spent sharing a meal of pizza, so arrive hungry! (Note: Be sure to order enough and have it arrive on time.))

Week Twelve (fellowship)

(Leader's Note: You have a choice to either prepare your own lesson plan for the final meeting or use a pizza night as one way of bringing closure to the group. You can still include sharing in this relaxed atmosphere. Even if you have a pizza party, don't go out to eat. Keep it at the same location to enable open sharing.)

1. **Opening Prayer:** Leader prays, mentioning each man by name.
2. **Discussion/Teaching:** Some suggested discussion questions over pizza include:
 - Ask each man to share what they learned,
 - Ask each man to tell you what study they will do next, (encourage them to begin their next study right away, and propose that they follow the suggested studies in the Appendix to the study), and
 - Ask each man to say something encouraging about the other men in the group.

Spend the bulk of the meeting enjoying each other.

3. **Singing/Worship:** Plan some creative way of worshiping the Lord.
4. **Closing Prayer:** End in prayer. Use the *PROVEN Men* prayer stance as you end the meeting, having each man stand against a wall stretching high towards the Lord. Have each reconfirm that they are willing to do whatever it takes to seek the Lord and to always look to Him, not themselves or others for healing and nourishment.

As you send them off, be very positive and encouraging, telling them that you are proud of them, they are each stamped *PROVEN* and on the right track, and God will grant them victory as they continue to yield their lives to Him. Tell them to stay connected with you and other men.

Ground Rules

1. Maintaining Strict Confidentiality. What is shared in the group stays in the group. I will not disclose what others share in group and I will not reveal the names of group members. (If I ever violate this confidence, I will humbly confess it and seek forgiveness.)

2. Taking Responsibility For My Own Actions. I understand that healing is a process with a purpose and I am responsible for seeking and receiving healing from the Lord. Therefore, I will commit to making it a high priority to use the *Striving for Absolute Purity* study each day in meeting with the Lord, who alone can heal and change me. I will humbly and willingly cooperate with God and rely upon His strength to overcome.

3. Attending Group. I realize that my attendance at each group meeting is important for myself, as well as to the other group members. Therefore, I commit to making each meeting a high priority. I will rearrange my schedule to avoid conflicts and I will attend meetings, even when I am tired or do not feel like it. If I simply cannot make a meeting, I will notify the group leader in advance. In addition, I will make it a point to attend on time. (If I ever arrive late, I will slip in quietly and will not disrupt the meeting by announcing my presence or by greeting others.)

4. Participating In Meetings. I will work hard at recognizing and sharing my feelings. I will also work through difficulties and actively participate in discussions in an open, real and vulnerable manner. In addition, I will guard against bringing up side issues, arguing over disputable doctrines, or raising other matters that take away from an atmosphere where all are encouraged to share difficult personal issues and to work towards a healing path. If the leader informs me that I have gotten off topic, I will not argue with him, but will give him grace in leading the discussions.

5. Respecting Others. I will show respect to all group members. For instance, I will be mindful of any tendency I may have to dominate conversations or to monopolize sharing times in order that others have at least the same amount of time to share. When others are speaking, I will give them my undivided attention, and I will not interrupt them or try to solve their problems. In addition, I will not judge another group member or compare myself to him. Finally, I will pray for each man throughout the week.

6. Keeping Evil Out. Group is to be a safe place. Therefore, I will not bring into the meetings things that may cause my brothers to stumble. For instance, I will refrain from discussing unnecessary graphic details about sexual matters, which might be a “trigger” for another. Yet, I will not use this ground rule as a means of avoiding being open and honest in personal sharing, including making appropriate confession of sexual sins. Finally, I will abstain from viewing pornography or masturbating right before group meetings, and I will not use this rule as a reason for skipping a meeting or a way of sabotaging my healing.
