

PRINCIPLE TWO

We believe in God, accept the grace offered through His Son, Jesus Christ, and surrender our lives and our wills to Him on a daily basis.

Finding the Solution: I Have Only One Option

In the book of John, chapter 5, there is a great story of one of Jesus' healing miracles. As the account records, outside of Jerusalem is a pool called Bethesda, which was known as a place of healing. Occasionally an angel would come down and stir the water, and whoever got into the pool first was healed. One paralyzed man had been lying there for 38 years.

When Jesus came on the scene and saw this paralyzed, despairing man, the Great Physician asked an unusual question. Now think for a moment. If you were the one who encountered this paralyzed man, what would you say? Perhaps you would say something like, "That must be tough," or "How can I help you get into the pool?" You might be wondering about this man's condition.

Instead of one of those expected responses, Jesus asks a different question: "*Do you want to get well?*" To us, that sounds rather stupid. Why wouldn't a man who has been lying by a healing pool for 38 years want to get well?

But Jesus is the master psychologist. He knows what to ask to probe into the heart of our paralysis:

"Do you want to get well?"

Assignment One – Exploring Our Reluctance

“Do you want to get well?”

It’s a crucial question for recovering men today. Let’s be honest. The Principles we’re teaching you in this L.I.F.E. Recovery Guide aren’t rocket science. The exercises and tasks aren’t the least bit difficult to understand. Achieving sobriety and living in freedom everyday is a pretty simple concept. So why is it so difficult to do?

Answering that question requires that you examine your heart. Sure, a part of you wants to be free of your sin. In some ways you want to live in fidelity and purity. At least you’d like to be released from your shame. But do you *really* want to get well?

Journaling Exercise: Do You Want to Get Well?

Write any reasons you can think of why you shouldn’t give up your addiction. (Don’t be pious and say you can’t think of any.) What factors have kept you from embracing recovery? What excuses have you made about how hard it is to find help?

James, the brother of Christ, says that we can be guilty of being “double-minded.” He writes, “Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded” (James 4:8). There is a part of you that has wanted to get well, and a part of you that has not. Sex has been your most important need, and, as such, it’s been an important “friend.” It’s been what you thought about in your loneliest and most stressful times. You wonder who and how you will be without your addiction. Your sexual fantasies brought you “comfort,” or so you thought. It’s hard to think about being without them.

Understand that you may have to grieve the loss of your addiction in order to get well.

Yes, your addictive thoughts and behavior are sinful. That’s true. But it’s also true that you’ll probably go through a grieving process as you take the journey of healing. It’s a normal part of recovery. It’s even necessary as you wrestle with surrender. God understands.

Luke 14: 25-33 talks about “*counting the cost.*” That’s an important exercise if you intend to be transformed. It’s vital that you examine the depths of your heart – the reluctance as well as the willingness

Journaling Exercise: Counting the Cost

1. *Make a list of what it will cost you to get well. Which behaviors will you have to give up? (Review your work in Assignment One of Principle One if you need to.) Which friends must you avoid because they encourage your sinfulness instead of your purity? Will you have to change jobs or clubs or activities or residences? How you dress or where you go for recreation? The way you interact with the opposite (or same) sex? What on-going consequences are you going to have to face without acting out more? Be specific in counting the cost.*
2. *Next, examine your feelings. Write the emotions you experience when you think about what it would be like to be free from your sexual sin. Sure, you probably feel some gladness, but probe deeper. You also may feel some fear or sadness or even anger. After all, your addiction has been your friend for a long time. Confess to God all your feelings, the “bad” ones as well as the “acceptable” ones. Admit honestly to Him the parts of your spirit that may resist surrendering your addiction and your control over your life.*
3. *Write a goodbye letter to your addicted side. This task may be difficult and challenging. Our addictive nature has been dependable and predictable in providing us our way to escape feelings. For many of us, this addict has been with us for a long time. Saying goodbye forever may become emotional. In many ways, the lines that defined our true selves or our God- given identity, and that of our addictive side, have become tragically blurred. When you are finished, read the letter out loud to yourself. Read it to your sponsor and maybe your group.*

Perhaps you're feeling ashamed or even hopeless after examining your acting out behaviors, the consequences you've experienced, and the part of your spirit that doesn't want to give up your addiction. You've remembered your earlier attempts to achieve sexual purity, and you wonder how this time can be different. What's going to make this effort succeed?

Your work in Assignment One of the first Principle highlighted your powerlessness over the sexual sin in your life, and you now see the depth of your bondage. Maybe you're more afraid than you've ever been. It's beginning to dawn on you that God, also, is aware of your sins. He knows the depravity of your thoughts and actions. How could there possibly be any hope for one like you?

This central question brings us to the heart of Principle Two. It is, indeed, a heart question, as you seek to repair (or perhaps to create for the first time) your relationship with God. Can you trust Him with your heart? Can you believe in the grace of His Son to be sufficient to cover all your sins? You're convinced your sin matters to God, but does your pain matter, too?

Despite our claim to be a Christian, when we're totally honest, most of us don't fully trust God. Many of us hardly trust Him. Some of us don't trust Him at all. You know you *believe* in God. That's not the question. The problem isn't belief; it's *faith*. **Do you trust that God will be enough?** That's the core question of Principle Two.

You may feel ashamed of this lack of faith in God. It may be one of your hidden secrets, along with the ones you admitted in your work of Principle One. You don't understand how you can distrust God, because you've been involved with religious things most (or all) of your life.

The answer probably lies in the explanation of spiritual abuse. You may want to review the section in *Healing the Wounds of Sexual Addiction* for a reminder of what it means to have been spiritually abused. Briefly, spiritual abuse occurs when someone uses the Bible more as a weapon than as a guide. It's when others attempt to motivate you into right actions by fear or shame, instead of by encouraging you into a loving relationship with God. Spiritual abuse also happens when you experience any other kind of abuse (physical, emotional, or sexual) at the hands of someone who is a spiritual figure in your life. That means that if you were abused by a pastor, youth leader, or someone in a similar role, you're automatically a victim of spiritual abuse.

Like other forms of abuse, spiritual abuse warps our view of God. We naturally form our view of God according to our experiences with our earthly parents, especially our fathers. If your dad was physically or sexually abusive, how can you believe God wants the best for you? If a spiritual authority figure was harsh and judgmental, how can you understand grace? How can you trust God to meet your needs and to love you unconditionally if you haven't known safe people who loved you, no matter what you did?

Journaling Exercise: Examining Your View of God

Write a description of your view of God. What is God like in your mind? What are some words that describe Him? (If you'd prefer, draw a picture of how you see God.) Remember, the way you write or how well you draw doesn't matter. Don't worry about grammar or artistic ability. What's important is that you clearly identify what you really believe about God.

Most people who struggle with their sexual behavior feel terribly alone. You're isolated and desperately lonely. You feel alienated from God and others. Yes, the secret of your sexual sin keeps you from real intimacy with others, but the issue likely goes far beyond your problem with addiction. Your history of feeling isolated and alone probably dates back long before you started acting out. It probably began in your family. It comes from the core wounds of abandonment.

A thorough explanation of what it means to have been abandoned is found in primary sources like *Healing the Wounds of Sexual Addiction*. I also give a brief description in this *L.I.F.E. Recovery Guide* in Assignment Three of Principle One. Review some of these materials if necessary.

For our purpose here, remember that we're abandoned when some of our fundamental needs for physical, emotional, sexual, or spiritual nurture aren't met by our caregivers. As I outlined about spiritual abuse in the last section, if a key spiritual figure in your life wasn't available in some way (physically or emotionally), then you've suffered spiritual abandonment. Again, that experience will color your view of God. You'll have difficulty believing God is really concerned about you.

Journaling Exercise: Healing Your View of God

- 1. List the people you feel abandoned you in some critical way. Describe the abandonment.***
- 2. Find five Scriptures that describe God's care and concern for you. Write down the references. Read them daily for the next week.***