

PRINCIPLE THREE

We make a list of our sins and weaknesses and confess those to a person of spiritual authority.

Telling the Truth: I Must Leave the Darkness

Your earlier work in Principle One called for you to admit to yourself and your L.I.F.E. Recovery Group the truth about your sexual sin. In Principle Two you affirmed that God is trustworthy and faithful to transform your life if you surrender to Him. Principle Three confronts your sinful nature and eventually prompts you to confess your sins to others.

Working on Principle Three will be painful, just as it was painful to complete the exercises of Principle One. This kind of pain, actually, can be very helpful in the journey of transformation. Hurting reminds us of how far we are from God. The sting in our heart teaches us to turn to Him. Experiencing consequences forces us to let go of control. A tender conscience motivates us to refrain from causing more harm. Don't be afraid of the pain of these assignments, but instead, walk through it to the place of living in freedom everyday.

This third Principle challenges you to understand your dark side - your sinful nature. We are all sinners and fall short of the glory of God, according to Paul. We are inheritors of original sin: *the sin of pride*. Your addicted self – your sinful self – has pridefully (fearfully) tried to hide the truth about your life. You've believed that you are bad and worthless and that others wouldn't love you if they really knew you, especially if they knew about your sexual sins. You've feared that if people knew your secrets, they would hate you and leave you. These descriptions illustrate a principle known as "intimacy disorder," which I'll discuss more toward the end of this assignment.

Assignment One – Admitting Our Darkness

Lies: Our Way of Managing Our Fear

The result of your fear about your sins being discovered is that you've become a chronic liar. You've sought to manipulate the opinion of others, because you've feared being caught and facing the consequences. Perhaps you've arrogantly thought you could get away with your lies. Principle Three calls for you to courageously acknowledge the truth about your life.

Remember that we seek to admit our sinfulness not to increase our shame, but so that we can learn to depend more on God.

I hope you've already begun to tell the truth in your L.I.F.E. Recovery Group. I pray you've found it a safe place to share your reality and your pain. I trust you're getting some practice in exposing your darkness to the light. Allow God to illuminate the way as you work on these exercises.

Assignment One explores how you have lied to yourself and to others. Alcoholics Anonymous has many great slogans about recovery, two of which are applicable to our problem with lying. AA talks about an addict's "stinking thinking," and asserts "Your own best thinking is what got you here." Clinicians might say that we have "distorted cognitive thinking." Schools of counseling, both secular and Christian, sometimes approach our healing through attempting to change our thoughts. As Christians, we want to take every thought captive to Christ, including the stinking thinking of all the lies we have believed.

The first part of understanding the lies we've told to others is to understand the lies we have told *ourselves*. Lying is part of our original sin nature. When the serpent tempted Eve, he told the first lie, which was that she could eat the fruit of the forbidden tree and that she wouldn't die. Lying to ourselves often imitates that initial falsehood: We believe we can get away with something and that we won't get hurt by our sin.

Have you told yourself these kinds of lies? That your sexual sins wouldn't hurt anyone else or even yourself? That you were different, the rules didn't apply to you, and that you could escape the consequences? This stinking thinking is a lot like eating too much food and believing we won't get fat, drinking too much alcohol and thinking we won't harm our bodies, or avoiding healthy habits and assuming we won't get sick.

Did you ever convince yourself that you wouldn't get caught? Did you think you were being careful and discreet? What precautions have you taken to hide your secrets? What manipulations have you done to avoid exposure?

Did you assure yourself that your sins weren't so bad? Have you justified a "lesser" sexual sin because it prevented you from doing a more serious one? Did you believe that you had the power to quit acting out if you really wanted to? Did you tell yourself that your sins weren't all that deadly? For example, have you ever thought that as long as your sins were never discovered, no one would get hurt?

Journaling Exercise: Your Lying

- ❑ *What lies have you told yourself about your sins concerning your sexual and relationship behavior?*
- ❑ *Think back over your life. Do you remember the first lie you ever told to cover up sinful behavior? How old were you? Who did you lie to? Did you get away with it?*
- ❑ *Think next about the first lie you told specifically to cover up a sexual sin. Again, how old were you? Describe the situation and your lies about it. Did you get caught?*
- ❑ *If you can, trace the history of your deceitful behavior since that time. Make a list in your journal of all the major lies you've told.*
- ❑ *What was your most recent lie? When? Who did you tell it to? Are you still keeping it a secret?*

Intimacy Disorder: Our Fear of Being Known

When we experience intimacy disorder, it is hardest to tell the truth to those whom we love the most. Another way of describing this phenomenon is that the person we are *most* afraid of losing will be the *hardest* one to let in on the truth.

You may be experiencing this dynamic in your group. It may have been relatively easy to come into your L.I.F.E. meeting and get honest. After all, the other men there are in the same boat. They, too, are sexual sinners whose lives are (or were) out of control. You're reasonably certain you won't be judged too harshly, because the other group members have acted out in similar ways. And besides, the stakes aren't that high with your group. So what if they *do* think you're pretty awful? They're bound by a pledge of confidentiality and anonymity. They can't tell anyone else your secrets, and you can simply not return to the group. What have you lost?

You're finding it much more difficult; however, to tell the truth to somebody you really love. You may believe it's impossible to get totally honest with the most important people in your life. Your fear of being rejected if you're intimately known is keeping you in bondage and shame.

Journaling Exercise: Your Fear

Write the specific names of those people whom you are the most afraid of finding out the truth about your secrets, particularly your sexual sins. Obviously, if you are married, your wife will probably be the first and most important person on this list. Next to each name, write the outcome that you most fear.

Name

What You Are Most Afraid Of

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

How much have you been worrying about how others will react when they learn about your behaviors? Now, ask yourself if you're willing to go through life worrying about these kinds of consequences. Part of your process of transformation will be to build a character of honesty. You will no longer be comfortable living with your lies and deceptions. You'll long for integrity. Start thinking about the courage it will take to get honest with the people whom you love the most.

One of the great principles of becoming faithful and true is accepting the risk involved in telling the truth.

Journaling Exercise: Courage

Write a prayer asking for courage to tell the truth, even when you're afraid of the result. Ask God to help you trust Him with the outcome of this act of surrender.

Taking this kind of risk is one practical way we surrender our life to Christ. We clearly see that we can't control our own life. If we accept that God is in charge of our future, then what risks are we able to take? Other people's reactions, including our wives', are in the hands of God. Can you also surrender this outcome to Christ and dare to disclose the truth?