

PRINCIPLE SIX

In fellowship with others we develop honest, intimate relationships, where we celebrate our progress and continue to address our weaknesses.

Living in Fellowship: I Cannot Succeed Alone

Congratulations on getting this far in your journey to maintain sexual integrity. I know it's taken courage, perseverance, and commitment. In many ways it may have been harder than you anticipated. You've experienced many feelings that may be new to you. You've had to humble yourself in admitting the full truth about your history, your thoughts, and your offenses. But with God's help, you've done it. You've told your story of sexual sin. You've decided you want to get well and have surrendered your life to Christ. You've accepted accountability from a sponsor and perhaps have begun working with a counselor. You're willing to make amends to those you have harmed. I pray you're beginning to have a deeper sense of God's power and presence in your life.

Principle Six guides you into a way of living that involves genuine connection with others, instead of the isolation you've probably known. The foundation for this work comes from one of my core teaching principles:

Fellowship is equal to freedom from lust.

It's probably hard for you to believe this promise. You may have been alone for years as you've hidden your sexual secrets from others. You've never known the joy of a supportive community. Your shame kept you from connecting with others, while it continued to fuel your lust and sexual sin. (You also probably can't imagine a life free from fantasy and lust,

which have felt like your constant companions for as long as you can remember.) Principle Six offers a path out of your isolation, which, in turn, is the road to sexual integrity.

Hopefully, you're already enjoying some of the benefits of fellowship through your L.I.F.E. Recovery Group. You're bonding with other Christian men who've faced similar struggles and seek to live in sexual freedom and purity. You're beginning to experience both the grace of God and the grace of other Christians who will love you despite your mistakes.

Assignment Two - Changing Our Cycle

By now the cycle of addiction as described by Patrick Carnes is a familiar diagram. This graphic outlines the woundedness, which is at the core of our disease, the shame, our preoccupation and fantasy, our rituals, then our acting out, and of course, our despair. (Though I doubt I need to remind you about this cycle, you can refer to Assignment Two of Principle One for more details.)

I pray you're maintaining uninterrupted sobriety. I hope you're also experiencing some core changes of life and character. The journey you're making is about so much more than sexual integrity. **It's about the transformation of someone who is surrendered to Christ.**

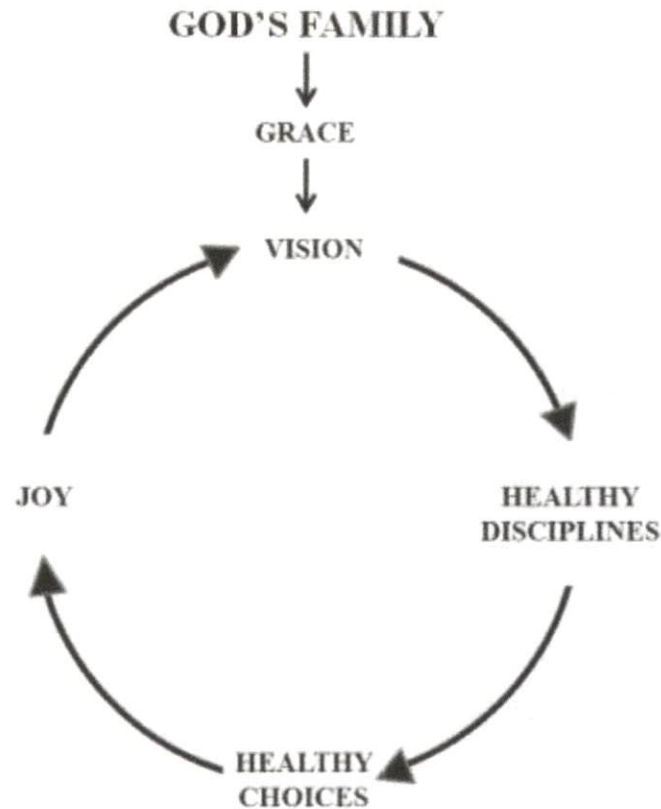
Review the commission of Romans 12:

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."
(Romans 12: 1-2)

God is after so much more than our sexual purity. He longs to transform our sinful natures into a closer likeness of His Son. He desires our heart.

To illustrate this transformation process, I've created a cycle of recovery, which is diagrammed on the next page.

Laaser Cycle of Recovery



Instead of the addictive cycle of pain and sin, the transformed life of a new creature in Christ is characterized by this cycle of recovery. (We'll talk about vision in Assignment Three of Principle Seven). Assignment Two, here, focuses on the main body of the cycle itself. It's actually just the visual representation of the behaviors I outlined in Assignment One. The checkpoints that make up the Daily Inventory are the Healthy Disciplines and Healthy Choices depicted in the cycle of recovery.

Review again the five core areas of healthy living that make up the Daily Inventory: physical, behavioral, personal, relational, and spiritual. The items listed are examples of healthy disciplines, such as attending a L.I.F.E. Recovery Group meeting, calling your sponsor, or praying. These disciplines lead to healthy choices in behavior, thought, and character. Just as there's a predictable progression into sin, there's a known path of transformation. When you allow God to be in control of your life and heart, He can guide you into the pathway of joy as you grow in Him.

Being connected with the family of God provides the fellowship of healthy community. That's why I insist no one can ever recover alone. *God made us for relationship, which we obviously can't experience in isolation. We need each other.* It's partially through intimacy with others that we come to grow in intimacy with God.

When you live out the Principles of being faithful and true, you invite brothers to be part of your journey of transformation, and you become part of theirs. You dare to admit your sins, ask for help, be accountable, accept responsibility, heal core wounds, and share the grace you've found in Christ. In healthy fellowship you find brothers and sisters in the family of God. You tell your secrets, expose your dark heart to the light, and live in freedom everyday.

Journaling Exercise: Expressing Our Gratitude

Write the names of three or four men who are part of your circle of fellowship. Write a sentence or two of gratitude for each one. Contact each person this week and share what you've written about your thankfulness for their part in your life

List the healthy disciplines you commit to focus on this week. Identify one from each core area you need to improve.

1. *Physical* _____
2. *Behavioral* _____
3. *Relational* _____
4. *Personal* _____
5. *Spiritual* _____

Journaling Exercise: Reflecting On Our Changes

Reflect on the positive changes in your life over the last several weeks. Record three or four instances of joy that evidence your healthy choices.