



Recovery.

Discussion.

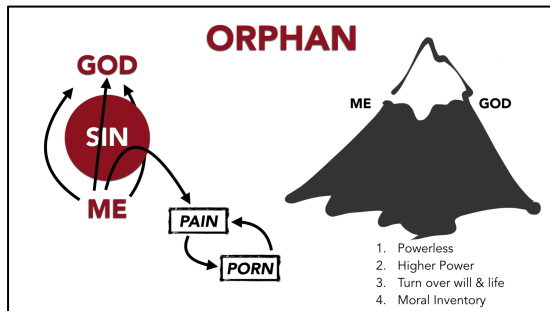


## Notes:

1. For new groups, discuss weeks 1-13 first; after week 13, these are in no particular order.
2. Movie clips and songs should be spread out over the course of the year. It may be wise after a "heavy" discussion week to take a week to reflect on a song or movie clip.
3. The daily devotional from the National Association for Christian Recovery (NACR) can give you great additional topics to discuss. **Link:** <http://www.nacr.org/rooted-in-gods-love>

## Week 1: The Two Paradigms: Orphan

Using a white board or display pad, draw and discuss the orphan paradigm.



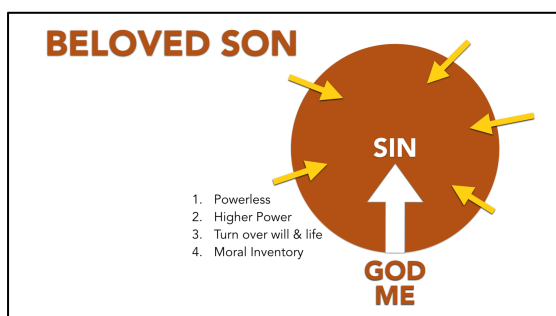
Have the men in the group share about how their orphan thinking and beliefs have manifested.

Some possible items to discuss:

- Orphan thinking makes 12-step recovery virtually impossible, since this paradigm centers on performance rather than powerlessness.
- It's easy to feel distant from God when this paradigm paints Him as a distant, disappointed father.
- Feelings of helplessness when all our best efforts only last so long.
- The amount of self-deception required to maintain the illusion that we can conquer our addiction through some power of our own.

## Week 2: The Two Paradigms: Beloved Son

Using a white board or display pad, draw and discuss the beloved son paradigm.



Discuss the difference between thinking like an orphan and thinking like a beloved son.

Some possible items to discuss:

- How this shift in our thinking can affect not only what we do in recovery, but also our motivation.
- Feeling free to acknowledge how vast our sin problem is without hopelessness.
- The consistency between 12-step recovery and this means of thinking.
- The role of community in continuing to believe we are beloved sons.

### **Week 3: Two Roads, Two Rooms** (from True-Faced by Bill Thrall, Bruce McNicol, and John Lynch)

Two options for presenting content:

1. Using a white board or display pad, draw the signpost and two doors.
2. If you have access to show YouTube video, show "Truefaced Two Roads Message." (This is a 43 minute video, so if you opt to do this, you may need to break it into two parts and make this a two week discussion.)

Having described or listened to the two roads & rooms, discuss how we relate to each.

Some possible items to discuss:

- At first glance, both options seem right.
- What's wrong with wanting to please God?
- Where does desire to please God drift into unhealthy efforts to do work that's not ours to do?
- Does the description of working together on my sin with God feel like not taking sin seriously? If so, why?

### **Week 4: Recovery Readings: How It Works**

At beginning of group discussion time, ask whoever read "How It Works" to read it again. If you have a white board or display pad, consider writing it out for the men to see. Lead a discussion of various phrases & concepts within this reading.

Some possible items to discuss:

- What does it look like to "want what we have and be willing to go to any length to get it?"
- What does it look like to "try to hold onto our old ideas" while we're in recovery?
- What are some of the "half-measures" you have experienced since beginning your journey?
- What does the concept of "progress, not perfection" make you feel?

### **Week 5: Recovery Readings: The Twelve Steps**

At beginning of group discussion time, ask whoever read "The Twelve Steps" to read them again. If you have a white board or display pad, consider writing them for the men to see. Lead a discussion of the steps and their progression.

Some possible items to discuss:

- The steps should be worked in order; there is a progression.
- Steps 1-3: how we relate to God
- Steps 4-7: how we relate to our sin
- Steps 8-9: how we relate to people we've harmed
- Steps 10-12: how we continue to grow as we walk recovery
- Showing grace to yourself. It takes awhile to work through the steps. Don't try to go too fast.

### **Week 6: Recovery Readings: The Promises**

At beginning of group discussion time, ask whoever read "The Promises" to read them again. If you have a white board or display pad, consider writing them for the men to see. Lead a discussion of the promises and how they can manifest in our new life of recovery.

Some possible items to discuss:

- Which of these promises do you feel like you most needed to hear?
- What role does/should regret play as we recover? Does saying "we will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it" mean we don't care about the harm we did?
- Is it hard for you to imagine your experiences benefitting other people? Why or why not?

### **Week 7: Recovery Readings: Heidelberg Catechism: Question 1**

At beginning of group discussion time, ask whoever read "Question 1 of Heidelberg Catechism" to read it again. If you have a white board or display pad, consider writing the Q&A for the men to see. Lead a discussion of the implications of this Q&A if it is indeed true.

Some possible items to discuss:

- Historically, where have you sought to find comfort?
- How does acknowledging that you don't belong to yourself make you feel?
- If He "has set me free from the tyranny of the devil," why do I still feel so embattled?
- If "not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father in heaven," why do you think God allowed your addiction to reach the point it did?

### **Week 8: Recovery Readings: Heidelberg Catechism: Question 2**

At beginning of group discussion time, ask whoever read "Question 2 of Heidelberg Catechism" to read it again. If you have a white board or display pad, consider writing the Q&A for the men to see. Lead a discussion of the implications of this Q&A if it is indeed true.

Some possible items to discuss:

- Why are these three things important for me to be able to appreciate the truths of Q&A #1?
- This is the shortest of all our readings, but it has a lot to say. What does it look like to know "how great my sin and misery are?" (relate back to the "Beloved Son" paradigm)
- What are appropriate ways to "thank God for such deliverance?" How do I obey out of a sense of thankfulness without it turning into payback?

### **Week 9: Recovery Readings: Heidelberg Catechism: Question 21**

At beginning of group discussion time, ask whoever read "Question 21 of Heidelberg Catechism" to read it again. If you have a white board or display pad, consider writing the Q&A for the men to see. Lead a discussion of the implications of this Q&A if it is indeed true.

Some possible items to discuss:

- Talk about the difference between knowledge that something is true and trust in it.
- Describe feelings of the gospel being for others but not for me.

### **Week 10: Recovery Readings: Heidelberg Catechism: Question 60**

At beginning of group discussion time, ask whoever read "Question 60 of Heidelberg Catechism" to read it again. If you have a white board or display pad, consider writing the Q&A for the men to see. Lead a discussion of the implications of this Q&A if it is indeed true.

Some possible items to discuss:

- How can the accusations of our conscience work in a positive way in my recovery? (Discuss difference between guilt and shame)
- Discuss the fact that His grace is given despite our tendencies to continue to return to our sin.
- How does "as if I had never sinned nor been a sinner, as if I had been as perfectly obedient as Christ was obedient for me" make you feel? Do you believe it's true now? What about while you're acting out?
- Does it make you uncomfortable that your role here is to believe that this is true?

### **Week 11: Recovery Readings: Titus 2:11-15**

At beginning of group discussion time, ask whoever read "Titus 2:11-15" to read it again. If you have a white board or display pad, consider writing the verses out for the men to see. Lead a discussion of the implications of this Q&A if it is indeed true.

Some possible items to discuss:

- What roles does grace play in our recovery?
- Discuss how grace teaches us what to say "no" to, what to say "yes" to, and how to live the lives we're created for.

### **Week 12: Recovery Readings: The Serenity Prayer**

At beginning of group discussion time, have someone read "The Serenity Prayer." If you have a white board or display pad, consider writing the Q&A for the men to see. Lead a discussion about the statements made in the prayer.

Some possible items to discuss:

- What are some of the things we can't change, and what does it look like to experience serenity in the midst of them?
- How do we courageously change what we can without becoming controlling, and how does this relate to our powerlessness?
- What do you think about when you hear "Taking, as Jesus did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it?"
- Do we sometimes expect supreme happiness in this life? How could this unrealistic expectation play into our addiction?

### **Week 13: I'm Not OK, You're Not OK**

Using a white board or display pad, draw and discuss the four quadrants concept.

I'm OK You're OK	I'm OK You're not OK
I'm not OK You're OK	I'm not OK You're not OK

"I'm OK, You're OK" was a popular book in the 1970's, discussing transactional analysis (how we relate to one another). The book showed four possible dynamics, and posited that the fourth quadrant, "I'm not OK, you're not OK" was the worst possible relationship scenario. But the gospel tells us a different story. Discuss what each quadrant represents and what our goal in recovery should be.

Some possible items to discuss:

- What quadrant represents the prodigal mindset?
- What quadrant represents the elder brother mindset?
- How does "I'm not OK, you're not OK" correlate with Step 1 (powerlessness)?

#### **Week 14: Trying to Get Better (from *A Scandalous Freedom* by Steve Brown)**

At beginning of group discussion time, read from chapter three in *A Scandalous Freedom* by Steve Brown. Start on page 71 with the paragraph that begins, "There really is something neurotic about Christians who spend most of their time trying desperately to please a God who is already very pleased." Read until the end of the last full paragraph on that page which ends with "So I have decided to get as close as I can to Jesus, who will always love me even if I don't get any better."

Some possible items to discuss:

- How does this way of thinking line up with how you've always been taught (especially if you grew up in the church)?
- Do you agree with or disagree with this statement from Brown: "The only people who get better are people who know that, if they never get better, God will love them anyway."
- How does this connect with powerlessness?

#### **Week 15: The Broken Promises of Porn #1 (from *Surfing For God* by Michael John Cusick)**

Discuss the way pornography draws us in by making promises that connect to our areas of disbelief and woundedness. The first broken promise is "porn promises validation of our manhood without requiring strength." Have *Surfing For God* handy and open to this section. Be prepared to read excerpts to help prompt discussion.

Some possible items to discuss:

- What in life makes you feel the strongest?
- What about sex makes you feel like a man?
- Do you feel stronger or weaker after you masturbate or look at porn? Why?

#### **Week 16: The Broken Promises of Porn #2 (from *Surfing For God* by Michael John Cusick)**

Continue the discussion on the broken promises pornography makes to us. The second broken promise is "porn promises sexual fulfillment without relationship." Have *Surfing For God* handy and open to this section. Be prepared to read excerpts to help prompt discussion.

Some possible items to discuss:

- What is it about sex that feels the most fulfilling?
- What effect has porn had on your relationship with your wife/fiancée? On other relationships?

#### **Week 17: The Broken Promises of Porn #3 (from *Surfing For God* by Michael John Cusick)**

Continue the discussion on the broken promises pornography makes to us. The second broken promise is "porn promises intimacy without requiring risk and suffering." Have *Surfing For God* handy and open to this section. Be prepared to read excerpts to help prompt discussion.

Some possible items to discuss:

- What have you always thought of when you hear the word "intimacy?" Is it primarily sexual?
- When we talk about "being intimate" with someone, why is the interpretation usually sexual?
- Discuss the breakdown of the word "intimacy," making it "into me see." Discuss how intimacy requires us to open ourselves up to be completely known, which cannot happen without risk. Whenever we risk intimacy, we risk the other person's rejection; it's easier to go to porn.

**Week 18: The Broken Promises of Porn #4 (from *Surfing For God* by Michael John Cusick)**

Continue the discussion on the broken promises pornography makes to us. The second broken promise is "porn promises passion and life without connection to your soul." Have *Surfing For God* handy and open to this section. Be prepared to read excerpts to help prompt discussion.

Some possible items to discuss:

- What in your life makes you feel most passionate and alive?
- Have you ever finished acting out and felt happy and alive? How does it usually feel?
- How does healthy sexual expression connect with your soul?

**Week 19: The Broken Promises of Porn #5 (from *Surfing For God* by Michael John Cusick)**

Continue the discussion on the broken promises pornography makes to us. The second broken promise is "porn promises power over women without responsibility and humility." Have *Surfing For God* handy and open to this section. Be prepared to read excerpts to help prompt discussion.

Some possible items to discuss:

- Have you tried to control your wife/fiancée/girlfriend? Why do you think we do this?
- What is it about how you relate to women that makes you want dominance?
- What void in a man's life is porn's portrayal of dominant/violent sex trying to connect with?

**Week 20: The Broken Promises of Porn #6 (from *Surfing For God* by Michael John Cusick)**

Continue the discussion on the broken promises pornography makes to us. The second broken promise is "porn promises comfort and care without depending on others." Have *Surfing For God* handy and open to this section. Be prepared to read excerpts to help prompt discussion.

Some possible items to discuss:

- What have you found comforting about porn? Is it a long-term comfort?
- What does having to depend on other people make you feel? Do you tend to avoid it? Why?

**Week 21: What Are You Thirsty For? (from *Surfing For God* by Michael John Cusick)**

Discuss the premise that every sinful behavior is rooted in a legitimate God-given appetite. In other words, when we settle for porn & sexual sin we're really pursuing something pure and better; so what is the thing we're really after? Cusick names several legitimate desires: Attention, Affection, Affirmation, Acceptance, Satisfaction, Significance, and Security. Have *Surfing For God* handy and open to this section. Be prepared to read excerpts to help prompt discussion.

Some possible items to discuss:

- Have the men try to identify which desire(s) they most connect with and share why. Encourage them to draw upon stories/experiences.
- How does a good desire work itself into an addiction to pornography?

## **Week 22: Disordered Desire (from *Surfing For God* by Michael John Cusick)**

Sex addicts typically struggle with how to process their desires. God-given sexual desire has been distorted by our sin and addiction, and we can respond in a number of unhealthy ways. Some will try disown their desires (minimizing or trying to eliminate them, usually coming out of shame or pain), while others will demand that their desires be fulfilled (deals with the same shame/pain feelings but tries to make them go away through indulgence/medicating)

Some possible items to discuss:

- Have the men share which of these expressions (disowned desire or demanded desire) of disordered desire is their tendency. It is possible that both have manifested at times.
- If they tend toward disowned desire, why? If their desire is eliminated, will they be better off?
- If they tend toward demanded desire, what is difference between longing for something vs. demanding it?

## **Week 23: Our Brokenness (from *Surfing For God* by Michael John Cusick)**

"It doesn't take much to realize that a person can appear morally obedient, spiritually mature, and emotionally whole, yet below the waterline remain self-centered and immature. It is below the waterline, however, in the place of our inmost being, where the gospel is meant to transform us." If our behavior is the tip of the iceberg and the reasons/motivations for our behavior are the part of the iceberg below the surface, it behooves us to discover what is feeding our brokenness. \*Note: It is possible, depending on men's responses, that this discussion could take more than one week.

Some possible items to discuss:

- Our brokenness begins with our wickedness (the self-centered defiance we are all born with). How do we address our depravity and its manifestations without sinking into shame?
- Our brokenness accentuates our weakness (our feelings of being helpless, powerless, impotent). How can we begin to see weakness as a positive rather than a negative thing in our lives?
- Our brokenness encompasses our woundedness (often the part of us we are least willing to admit). Until we admit the ways we've been wounded, we can never sufficiently heal.
- Our brokenness attracts the enemy's warfare (Satan hates our getting healthy). It is important to remember that future temptations could be as much about attacks of the enemy as they are about our own habits.

## **Week 24: Exposing the Counterfeits (from *Surfing For God* by Michael John Cusick)**

When Satan tempts us with pornography, it often begins with some subtlety. Eventually this is no longer necessary, once we have become ensnared. However, many Christian men delve into what becomes an addiction with no intention of it becoming one. How does our enemy do this? By presenting something that has the appearance of being good, true, and worthy of our worship.

Some possible items to discuss:

- Our desire for sex is a good desire. God created us to be sexual beings. How does our enemy present us with a counterfeit version of what is good?
- Cusick writes, "If I'm feeling sad, rejected, lonely, or irritable, porn or lust will initially help me avoid dealing with those unpleasant feelings." Porn's counterfeit truth is that porn actually helps me deal. Discuss the difference between actual truth and perceived (counterfeit) truth.
- Counterfeit worship happens when sex becomes an idol. This generally doesn't happen with a Christian because we don't believe in God; but rather because we don't trust that He has our best at heart.

### **Week 25: Shame vs. Guilt: exposing the core beliefs of an addict**

So often we talk about our sin and failures in terms of what we're ashamed of. It is important to distinguish between shame and guilt. Guilt is about what we've done; shame is about who we are. When we equate what we've done with who we are, shame keeps us in hiding and accentuates the beliefs that are generally held by an addict. These beliefs (originated by Dr. Patrick Carnes) are...

1. I am basically a bad/unworthy person.
2. Nobody would love me as I am.
3. I can't get my needs met by depending on others.
4. Sex is my most important need.

Some possible items to discuss:

- Do the beliefs expressed here connect with what you believe/have believed about yourself?
- What parts of my story have led me to function as if sex is my greatest need? (i.e. why not alcohol, drugs, gambling; or possibly there are multiple addictions)

### **Week 26: The Deep Cry of the Heart**

John Donne was a 16th-century poet, philosopher, and priest. At some point in his life, he was renowned for spending large sums of money on womanizing, hobbies, and travel. Knowing that God alone was the source of salvation from his compulsions, he penned the words of his Holy Sonnet 14. Read the sonnet (it would probably be a good idea to have them printed to hand out as well) and take time to reflect as a group.

Some possible items to discuss:

- What phrases or concepts did you most connect with? Why?
- What do you feel when you read "for I, except you enthrall me, never shall be free, nor ever chaste, except you ravish me?"

### **Week 27: Your Good Heart (from *Surfing For God* by Michael John Cusick)**

Unless we are in Christ, our heart is not good. It is bent toward evil. But those who have responded to the gospel have a new heart and now are bent toward God. This is one of the main reasons why porn never satisfies. We are attempting to deal with a real need using an old identity; it's no longer who we are. It is difficult for us to accept positive truths about ourselves when we continue to struggle. But God says... You are pure and clean (1 John 1:5-9); you are without stain or blemish (Eph. 5:27); you are the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5:21); Christ lives in you (Gal. 2:20); your heart is alive to God (Rom. 6:11); you are a new man (2 Cor. 5:17); and you have a good & noble heart (Luke 8:15).

Some possible items to discuss:

- Do you believe that these things are true about you? Does it depend upon your effort/sobriety?
- If you don't believe them about yourself, why don't these apply to you?
- If you do believe them about yourself, why is it so hard to live consistently with this truth?

### **Week 28: Breaking Spiritual Strongholds, part 1 (from *Surfing For God* by Michael John Cusick)**

Spiritual forces are at work every day in our hearts and minds in the midst of our sexual struggle. Our enemy hates us, and wants us to stop growing in our relationship with Christ. Since sexuality is one of the best pictures we have of how God relates to His people, Satan wants to create strongholds within your belief system. Some of the lies he wants us to believe are [read list of lies from p.117 of *Surfing for God*]. We must learn to announce the lie, renounce the lie, and then pronounce the truth.

Some possible items to discuss:

- Which stronghold lies do you struggle with the most? What has led you to believe them?
- What do you want to see God change in you regarding what you believe about sex?

### **Week 29: Breaking Spiritual Strongholds, part 2 (from *Surfing For God* by Michael John Cusick)**

Continue the discussion from last week. Review the strongholds, then hand out the guided prayer for breaking strongholds from p. 119 of *Surfing For God*. Encourage the men to take some time to read through the prayer, and to do it by themselves; then gather everyone to talk about it.

Some possible items to discuss:

- How does it feel to present your sexuality and your sexual nature to God? Does it feel natural? Awkward? Why?
- Do you believe that Satan's claims on your life and sexuality have been broken?
- What are some of the "agreements" you've made with the enemy regarding your sexuality? What do you think it will look like to stop functioning in agreement with those lies?

### **Week 30: The 4 Ways Porn Over-Stimulates the Brain (from *Surfing For God* by Michael John Cusick)**

Despite the fact that addiction is definitely a spiritual struggle, it should not be ignored that there are strong chemical forces in play as well. Discuss the four ways porn over-stimulates the brain.

1. Porn's stimulation results in an over-release of dopamine, the "gotta have it" chemical.
2. Porn provides no limits on the amounts that we can consume. With food or alcohol we either run out of money or our bodies can't take any more. Not the case with porn.
3. Porn increases our tolerance through escalating the amount and intensity of what we view.
4. Porn is available on demand. It requires no pre-planning to arrange for a fix.

Some possible items to discuss:

- How does hearing about what porn does to your brain make you feel? Better or worse? Why?
- How have these principles shown themselves in your experience? How did it feel?

### **Week 31: Rewiring and Rebooting the Brain (from *Surfing For God* by Michael John Cusick)**

Pornography use and abuse actually changes things inside your brain. Every thought, feeling, habit, skill, or behavior in your life has a corresponding neuropathway that fires in your brain. As the brain's reward circuitry gets entangled in a tug-of-war, the brain rewires itself for addiction and new neuropathways are created. When a man views porn, or even thinks about porn, the burst of dopamine strengthens the connections between cells. But this damage can be undone through a "rebooting" process that consists of defining your objective; a period of abstinence from all sexual activity; acknowledging and dealing with cravings; and preparing to use possible relapses as opportunities to learn and grow.

Some possible items to discuss:

- When you hear about the process of rebooting your brain, what does it make you feel?
- What does the concept of an abstinence period bring up in you emotionally?
- Is this rebooting process something that you would be willing to do?

### Week 32: The Discipline of Solitude (from *Surfing For God* by Michael John Cusick)

Blaise Pascal once wrote that all human troubles can be distilled down to the single idea that we can't spend an hour alone with ourselves in a room. But solitude (different from isolation) can be a process through which we learn to face the "restlessness and turmoil" in our souls. What is broken can't be yielded to God until we pay attention to it, and often we don't pay careful attention to it because of all the distractions we place around us. Encourage the men to consider how little time they spend not engaged in some form of stimulation or connectedness that are not necessarily negative (phone, music, conversations, etc.). Then encourage them to "imagine what it might be like to sit in God's presence, with no other goal except to be delighted in."

Some possible items to discuss:

- What do you think it would be like to sit in silence by yourself for an hour? What feeling does that stir up inside you?
- Would you be willing to plan and spend some purposeful time alone in silence with only God and whatever thoughts you have?

### Week 33: Centering Prayer (from *Surfing For God* by Michael John Cusick)

An important component of solitude for a Christian is the time we can spend in prayer with the Father. There is an exercise called "centering prayer," which "helps us find our spiritual and emotional center and increases our faith. As we experience His loving presence, our walk with God becomes less and less dependent upon what we intellectually believe, and more dependent upon what we have tasted, seen, and heard. Centering prayer has four components...

1. Choose a sacred word to be a symbol of your desire to be present to God. It could be Father, Lord, Abba, Daddy, whatever helps you feel connected with God in this prayer time.
2. Sit comfortably in a quiet place. Block out as many distractions as possible.
3. When interrupted by thoughts, sounds, or other distractions, acknowledge them and gently return your attention to God via the sacred word.
4. At the end of the prayer period, remain in silence with your eyes closed for several minutes.

Some possible items to discuss:

- Does this weird you out? Is it like any prayer experience you've ever attempted before?
- Are you willing to incorporate centering prayer into a discipline of solitude? Why or why not?

### Week 34: The Addictive System/Cycle

As we've tried to function in life in the midst of our addiction, we spend a lot of time mentally "checked out." We tend to drift through our actions without realizing exactly what's going on. It is important to be aware of the process that is in place as we're struggling. There is an addictive system in place that connects with our feelings of unmanageability, our core beliefs, and our orphan thinking (the latter two we've discussed before). Functioning within this system takes us into the addictive cycle of behavior (fantasy, ritual, acting out, despair), which takes us back to unmanageability and right back into the system. Identifying the system and cycle is a necessary step toward breaking it.

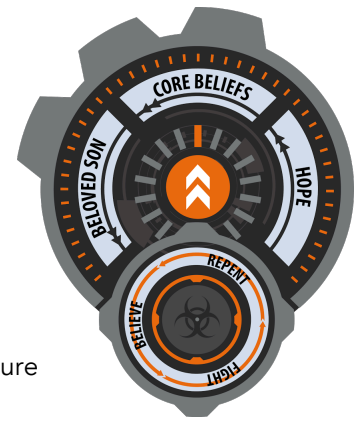


Some possible items to discuss:

- What makes you feel life is unmanageable? Is it mostly your behavior, or other factors as well?
- Do you sense when the core beliefs of an addict and your orphan thinking begin to control your thoughts/beliefs and lead you toward the cycle? How can you identify when this is happening?

### Week 35: The Recovery System/Cycle

As we embrace a new way of believing and living, we still experience a system of belief and a cycle of behavior that accompanies it. As we enter and walk in recovery, we experience less hopelessness as a result of our lives' unmanageability and begin to experience hope. This helps to change our core beliefs about ourselves, bringing them in line with our identity as a beloved son. This system of belief drives a healthier cycle in which we face our sin and struggles (repent, believe the gospel, fight).



Some possible items to discuss:

- What helps you believe the truth about yourself according to Scripture instead of what you hear from your inner critic?
- What does the cycle of Repent, Believe, Fight look like practically? How do you apply this cycle in the regular struggles/triggers you experience?

### Week 36: The Three Types of Accountability (from *Surfing For God* by Michael John Cusick)

One of the first things we tend to seek out in recovery is accountability. It's a model we're used to. But what kind of accountability do we really need? There are three types of accountability that Cusick mentions: "Cop," "Coach," and "Cardiologist" accountability. "Cop" accountability is where I try to be the law-abiding citizen, my partner is the law-enforcement officer, and if I "turn myself in" over slips or failures, my partner issues the appropriate citation. This is sin management, not the gospel, and encourages deception to avoid shame if I fail. "Coach" accountability is better; it's where I am the athlete who wants to improve, and my partner is the coach who works with me to help me grow and continue moving forward. Here, the goal is progress. "Cardiologist" accountability goes even deeper. It is a focus on my heart. This is a relationship where I can be completely open about what I feel and believe, as well as what I do. This is perhaps better called accessibility than accountability. I give another person access to my heart because I trust them to stick with us in a safe, non-judgmental way.

Some possible items to discuss:

- How has accountability wounded you in the past?
- Would you like accountability to focus more on planning ahead instead of reporting on the past?
- What would you like a safe person/group of people to be able to get to know about you?

### Week 37: Gospel Accountability

Acknowledging that much of the accountability we've tried to incorporate into life has not worked, how can we do it differently? What does "cardiologist" accountability described in the previous week look like? How do we practically hold one another accountable without becoming behaviorists? In an article written for Covenant Eyes, Jonathan Dodson suggests utilizing an accountability style that points to the Gospel and what we're believing. His article: [www.covenanteyes.com/pastorhelp/chapter-5-gospel-centered-accountability/](http://www.covenanteyes.com/pastorhelp/chapter-5-gospel-centered-accountability/)

Some possible items to discuss:

- How can we pursue holiness in accountability relationships without focusing solely on behavior?
- How can we be gracious without suggesting that sin and obedience do not matter?
- What are some of your situational realities that would help you to identify times/places where you're more likely to be triggered?

**Week 38: Circumcision of the Heart (from *Surfing For God* by Michael John Cusick)**

Using the analogy of what physical circumcision represents, Cusick introduces the concept that our hearts need circumcision as well. In physical circumcision, the penis represents a man's masculine identity; cutting off the foreskin represents paring away part of our hidden self; and the act of circumcision affects the part of a man that gives life. Cusick says "Circumcision of the penis is an external act of surrender, remembrance, and new identity. Circumcision of the heart represents these same three realities internally...A circumcised heart gives God access to our hidden selves, establishes our new identities, and offers life to others." Hand out copies of the "Prayer For Circumcising Your Heart," and allow the men a few minutes to read and digest before discussing.

Some possible items to discuss:

- What do you believe about yourself that you want to surrender to God's work and healing?
- What experiences do you need to surrender to God, allowing Him to heal them?
- What habits/behaviors do you want to surrender to God, asking Him to take control and also provide what your truly heart needs - even as it has pursued porn and sex up until now?

**Week 39: Tim Keller quote**

Read the following quote from Tim Keller. If you have a white board or display pad, write it out for the men to see. "Christianity doesn't give you what you want, it is more like an explosion that destroys everything you had to make way for something new." Take time to really digest each phrase and have the men discuss what feelings or "a-ha" moments they have.

Some possible items to discuss:

- How does this idea translate into where you are in recovery?
- How does the first part reconcile with prosperity thinking that Christians often perpetuate?
- Is the explosion a good thing or a bad thing? How have you seen it? How do you see it now?
- What is the "something new" God is making way for in your life?

**Week 40: Movie clip: "Andy's Toy" (from *Toy Story*)**

Watch a clip from *Toy Story* where Woody and Buzz are trapped in Sid's room. Buzz has discovered that he is not a real space ranger and feels useless and that he has no value. Woody helps him see that he isn't special because he can fly or shoot lasers, but because he belongs to Andy and brings him joy. Show how this connects to the truth about us - we are special because we belong to God. We bring Him pleasure, not because of what we offer Him, but because He made us.

Some possible items to discuss:

- What have you felt/do you feel you have to do for God to be worthy?
- How has your addiction made you feel worthless/less-than?
- Do you believe that you have value simply because God made you and loves you?

**Week 41: Movie clip: "Lifelong Limit for Lying" (from *Flight*)**

Watch a clip from *Flight* where Whip finally confesses that he drank the morning of the flight and that he is an alcoholic. Watch through his prison speech to the other inmates where he discusses taking responsibility and making amends. \*Note: Advise the men that *Flight* is an R-rated movie whose first scene has explicit nudity, so they should consider whether or not it is safe for them to watch the movie.

Some possible items to discuss:

- Are there still areas of your life for which you have not taken responsibility?
- What consequences do you fear, if everyone knows about your struggles?

**Week 42: Movie clip: "I Have Bought Your Soul for God" (from Les Misérables)**

Watch a clip from Les Misérables (1998, with Liam Neeson) where Jean Valjean eats dinner with the bishop, then in the middle of the night steals the parish silver and assaults the bishop. Watch through when the Bishop tells the soldiers he gave him, then when the soldiers leave tells him, "Jean Valjean, my brother, you no longer belong to evil. With this silver, I have bought your soul. I've ransomed you from fear and hatred, and now I give you back to God."

Some possible items to discuss:

- Do you ever use other peoples' judgment and rejection to justify your actions (i.e. just living up to their expectations)? Are you settling for a lesser life than you've been made for?
- Who has shown you the type of grace that the Bishop showed Jean Valjean? How did it make you feel to receive it?

**Week 43: Movie clip: "My Name is Maximus" (from Gladiator)**

Watch a clip from Gladiator where Maximus has just won a fight in the coliseum and Commodus comes to congratulate him. Watch how he confidently rests in his true identity when made to remove his mask. Be prepared to discuss how we lose sight of who we really are and can tend to identify ourselves by our struggles or situations.

Some possible items to discuss:

- How does it make you feel when Maximus takes off his helmet and gives his speech?
- Do you feel confident in who God says you are, or is that hard for you? If it's difficult, why?

**Week 44: Movie clip: "I Am Second" (featuring Nate Larkin)**

Watch a clip from the "I Am Second" movement featuring Nate Larkin talking about his lifelong struggles with porn and sex addiction. Listen particularly to how low he got before seeking out community. Be prepared to discuss the role that community plays in our recovery journey.

Some possible items to discuss:

- Did you hear anything that Nate shared that sounds like your story?
- What have you historically done when you feel trapped? What would you rather do?
- What role has community played in things being different for you now than before?

**Week 45: Song: "Remind Me Who I Am" (featuring Jason Gray)**

Listen to or watch the music video for "Remind Me Who I Am" by Jason Gray. Be prepared to discuss the concept of identity; is it based on our obedience (or lack thereof) or on who God says we are? Remembering that we are beloved no matter what we have done helps us to trust in the process He is working in our lives.

Some possible items to discuss:

- Whose sign(s) in the video did you relate most to?
- What makes it hard to see yourself as God's beloved?

**Week 46: Song: "Boldly I Approach" (featuring Rend Collective)**

Listen to or watch the music video for "Boldly I Approach (The Art of Celebration)" by Rend Collective. Be prepared to discuss the concept of Christ's finished work and how it affects our standing before God.

Some possible items to discuss:

- When you think about approaching God do you feel bold or afraid? Why? (no "church" answers)
- Scripture says if we are in Christ that we are free from condemnation. Has this been the experience of your feelings?
- Does knowing you're not condemned have an effect on your obedience? If so, what is it?

**Week 47: Song: "Arrested By Grace" (featuring WorshipMob)**

Listen to or watch the music video for "Arrested By Grace" by Rend Collective. Be prepared to discuss the concept of our effort vs. Christ's work on our behalf.

Some possible items to discuss:

- When you hear the line "I finished the work, child, so fall into Me," how does that make you feel in light of your efforts to stop your destructive behavior?
- What would it look like to move "from trying to trusting?"

**Week 48: Song: "You Make Me Brave" (featuring Bethel Music)**

Listen to or watch the music video for "You Make Me Brave" by Bethel Music. Be prepared to discuss the concept of God calling us out of where we're comfortable or from where we've been hiding in order to experience authentic life with Him.

Some possible items to discuss:

- When you think about God calling you out onto the waves (like Peter) does it excite you? Terrify you? What are you feeling thinking about him beckoning you out?
- Do you often feel brave? Do you think a life of feeling brave in Christ is possible for you?

**Week 49: Song: "Not Guilty Anymore" (featuring Aaron Keyes)**

Listen to or watch the music video for "Not Guilty Anymore" by Aaron Keyes. Encourage the men to imagine Christ singing the words over them. You may want to reiterate Heidelberg question #60 and encourage them to use the song lyrics to help drive that truth home.

Some possible items to discuss:

- If you're still struggling with acting out, how does it make you feel hearing "you're not guilty anymore?"
- Do you believe that all the statements of the bridge are true - "You are spotless...holy...faultless...whole...righteous...blameless...pardoned...You are mine"?
- How can you live out this truth one day at a time?

**Week 50: Song: "Together" (featuring Ronnie Freeman)**

Listen to or watch the music video for "Together" by Ronnie Freeman. Talk about the power of authentic community. Discuss the freedom that comes from bringing secrets into the light within a safe context.

Some possible items to discuss:

- If you're new to this community, do you still fear letting other men know more about your struggles?
- What would make you feel safe within this community?
- How has what you've experienced in authentic community compared to how you thought it would be before you were willing to share?

**Week 51: Song: "Orphan" (featuring Ronnie Freeman)**

Listen to or watch the music video for "Orphan" by Ronnie Freeman. This is a great song to tie in to a reiteration of the Orphan/Beloved Son discussion. After watching the video, repeat the lines that affirm what God thinks about us; how he sees us.

Some possible items to discuss:

- When you think about all of your struggles, how does it make you feel to hear "You think so much of me?"
- How can remembering that He has given us a new name combat our tendency to define ourselves by our struggle?

**Week 52: Song: "Why You Brought Me Here" (featuring Andy Gullahorn)**

Listen to "Why You Brought Me Here" by Andy Gullahorn. Acknowledge that the situations that have brought most men into a recovery community are not things we would have asked for. Suggest that perhaps the situations we never would have chosen represent exactly the beautiful story that God is writing, to bring us exactly to the place He wants us to be.

Some possible items to discuss:

- "Secrets lose their power when they have no place to hide..." How does this line make you feel?
- How do you think God feels when we say "I hope You know what you're doing..."?
- "The very thing I always feared would be the death of me was a way to come alive..." What do you feel as you hear that line?