

Tips for Leading a Recovery Group

All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer.

ACTS 2:42

Pornography addiction has become an epidemic, yet there are few places where those who are struggling feel safe enough to reach out for help—especially within the church. I may be biased due to my line of work, but this is why I believe *every* church should be offering a pornography-specific recovery group where men can step into the light and seek freedom and healing through Christ.

You may be sensing that God is calling you to start your own recovery group, and I think that's awesome. Who better to come beside other wounded warriors than someone who has been in the battle himself? Remember, you don't need to wait until you are perfect, have all the answers, or reach some mythical "expert" status in order to come beside other men on their journey to freedom. If God has called you to lead a group, He will equip you with everything you need to do it effectively.

Getting Started

You really don't *need* anything to lead a group. If you've got a few guys

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who are willing to be open and honest with each other, you've got a small group. Just get together whenever it's convenient and share your lives with one another. That being said, it may be useful to have some set structure and resources to help you get even more out of the experience. I have found the following suggestions to be helpful.

- **Find a private room.** Coffee shops are fine if you're meeting one-on-one, but any gathering larger than that will require a private space where no one will interrupt or overhear your conversation. It's also a good idea to find a spot where the guys won't have to worry about anyone watching them come and go. If your group meets on Sunday mornings in a classroom at church, guys aren't likely to show up for fear that people will see them enter the room and find out about their struggle. For this reason, it may be best to schedule the meetings at a time and place separate from other events if possible.
- **Set a consistent meeting time.** Once you figure out *where* you are going to meet, you will need to establish *when*. The groups I lead are all on weekday mornings before work, but you may find a different time works best for your group. The key is to make it consistent so guys can plan for it.

I would suggest scheduling an hour and a half for each meeting. This should give you ample time to discuss any materials you are working through as a group, as well as any other life issues the men are dealing with.

- **Order materials if applicable.** If you are planning to go through a workbook or study guide such as this one, you will want to order copies ahead of time so you can distribute them yourself. I have found that asking each participant to order his own materials rarely works out. Guys are busy and tend to forget such details. Furthermore, most books designed for group studies can be purchased directly from the author at a bulk discount. For example, I offer substantial discounts on my own books if you purchase five or more copies from belfotruth.com.

- **Get the word out.** Once everything is in place, you need to let guys know about the group. If you already have a close relationship with someone who may be interested, a personal invitation is hands-down the best method. Apart from that, get the word out any way you can. In our church we list the group on the church calendar, run an ad in the men’s ministry newsletter, and even display posters directly above the urinals in the men’s room. In addition, our pastors and elders will refer a man to the group if he shares his struggle with pornography during a counseling session.*

Besides these internal methods of promotion, you can submit your group to be listed on our “Find a Recovery Group” page at beltofruth.com.

Structure of the Group Meeting

Your group will develop its own personality due to the individual needs of those who are attending. That being said, I would suggest the following structure based on what we have found creates the most effective meetings.

PLEASE NOTE

The following structure is based on the assumption you will be reading *Ten Lies Men Believe about Porn* and working through this study guide as your curriculum. However, the majority of these suggestions will still apply even if you are using different materials.

- **Before you begin.** Arrive early to get everything set up ahead of time. Make sure any new visitors will be able to find the group easily without having to hunt around or ask someone for directions. You may want to put up signs directing men to the meeting room if it isn’t obvious.

* We have a page set up at beltofruth.com/resources where you can download free posters, bulletin inserts, announcement slides, and even a promotional video to help you promote your group.

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- **Talk about sports.** (10 minutes) Guys may be uncomfortable when they first show up to the group. By allowing time for small talk before asking guys to share their lives with each other, it can create an easier transition for them. In addition, some guys will inevitably be late, and it's better for them to miss out on the latest sports gossip than any relevant material.
- **Open with prayer.** (1 Minute) Any life change that happens in the group will be done by the Holy Spirit. Ask Him to bless your time, speak to the hearts of all who are there, and lead the meeting where He wants it to go.
- **Remind the guys what they can expect, and what is expected.** (4 minutes)
 - **Confirm confidentiality.** It's vitally important that everyone trust the group to be a "safe" place, which will require confidentiality among the members. Remind the group that anything said in the room stays in the room.
 - **Refrain from offering advice or suggestions when others are sharing unless you are asked.** The primary purpose of sharing is to bring your struggles into the light and no longer remain hidden. That being said, some men may have questions about a life issue they are dealing with and would like some advice. The key is to leave it up to whoever is sharing to open the door for others to speak to them as well. Some guys may just want to share without receiving feedback, and that's okay.
 - **Sharing is about what's going on in your own life, not others.** Some guys may be tempted to use the sharing portion of the meeting to complain about others. This is where you will need to have discernment as a leader. If a guy is sharing about his response to someone's sin against him, it may be appropriate for him to mention what happened. If, however,

his sharing becomes a complaining session listing the faults of his offender, he may need to be guided gently back on track.

- **Reinforce the purpose of the group.** The purpose of the group isn't to fix one another, it's to love and support each other. When a member thinks others are trying to fix him, he is less likely to feel safe enough to share openly.
- **Have someone read the “Key Points” for the session out loud.** (5 minutes) These serve as a quick reminder of the topics that will be discussed during the sharing time. This can be done by the leader each meeting or by a new member every week.
- **If your group is larger than six men, split into smaller groups to discuss the questions.** The larger a group becomes, the easier it is for guys to hide among the crowd. The larger size also makes it increasingly more difficult for everyone to share without running out of time. For this reason, I have found it's more productive to split into smaller subgroups for the sharing portion of the meeting. You can shuffle these smaller groups each week to allow everyone the opportunity to get to know each other, or you can keep them the same to encourage deeper relationships to form.
- **Share your answers to the “Digging Deeper” questions from the study guide.** (55 minutes) Read each question and allow anyone who is willing to share his answer. Not every guy will want to answer every question, and that's okay. Don't feel like you need to get through all the questions either. The goal in this time isn't to finish as quickly as possible; it's to give every man the opportunity to share what's going on in his heart.

Ideally, each member will have read the corresponding chapter in *10 Lies Men Believe about Porn* and completed the questions in the study guide before the meeting. If you do have guys who have not completed their questions ahead of time (and you will), that's okay. They can always share whatever comes to their

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mind instead. Just be sure to encourage them to go back and work through the questions, though, as they may be tempted to skip the session altogether.

- **Recap as a large group.** (10 minutes) If you do split up into smaller groups, you may want to set aside the final ten minutes of your meeting to come back together as a full group. Ask men to share anything that was particularly helpful they discovered about themselves (not about others) during the smaller group meetings.
- **Close in Prayer.** (1 minute) Thank the Lord for the work He is doing in everyone's life and ask Him to remind each member of His presence continually during the upcoming week.
- **Encourage guys to stay connected.** (4+ minutes) Encourage group members to exchange contact info and meet with one another during the week. Some of the best recovery happens when a couple of guys get together for coffee or talk on the phone.

Continuing On

This study guide is set up to last for 12 weeks—however, you are likely to find that your group wants to continue meeting even after you finish all 12 sessions. If that is the case, there are many options of how to continue.

1. **Start over at Session 1 and work through this study guide again.** This option makes it easy for new guys to jump in to the group at any point. For instance, if someone shows up for the first time during Session 7, they can work through Sessions 7–12, and then do Sessions 1–6 once the group starts over. This approach can also be encouraging for the veteran members when they revisit their answers from previous sessions and recognize how much they have grown since they first answered the questions.
2. **Shift to more “open discussion” based on the Ten Lies.** This is a great option if you would prefer not to revisit the study guide, yet still wish to continue meeting with one another. In Appendix B,

you will find a list of all ten “Lies” from the book, followed by their corresponding “Truth” statements. Simply begin each meeting by reading one of these lies and the truth that exposes it. Let the group know they can talk about how that particular Lie/Truth is currently at play in their own life, or they can talk about anything else that is on their hearts. By doing it this way, the entire group meeting is focused on discussion and sharing.

- 3. Chose another book to work through.** If you find you prefer a more structured approach, yet don’t want to keep going through the same study guide, you may choose to look into other book study options. Not all curriculum is created equal though, so be sure to check out whatever you are considering thoroughly before taking a group of men through it. If you want a book study that is guaranteed to be beneficial, I would suggest going through a book from the Bible.

Hopefully these tips have helped answer most of your questions on how to lead a recovery group. If you still have questions though, feel free to contact me at www.beltotruth.com. I will do my best to help you out any way I can. If nothing else, send me a message and let me know that you are leading a recovery group so I can pray for you and the men who show up. Recovery ministry is difficult work. The battle is intense. You will witness first-hand the reality of human brokenness and the pain it can cause. Which is why all of our groups *must* be covered in prayer.

But don’t lose heart, my friend. This calling is unbelievably rewarding. You will see men shed tears of joy in addition to tears of pain, you will witness their lives change in unbelievable ways, and you will watch them be set free from the chains of pornography addiction on their lives.

All this, because you answered God’s call for you to lead—and to love—men who are desperately searching for freedom.