

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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## 1 HOW DO I START A GROUP IF THERE IS NOTHING AT MY CHURCH?

If you haven't already, take some time to read the "Developing a Pure Desire Ministry" document at [puredesire.org/tools](http://puredesire.org/tools).

If your pastor or church staff is already on board, most churches have found the *Conquer Series* to be the most effective way to introduce the concept of Pure Desire groups.

If your pastor or church staff is not yet on board, set up a meeting where you can share your passion, your story, and why Pure Desire groups will help the church. Pastors may also call Pure Desire and speak with our Executive Director about specific questions they may have.

You can also contact the Regional Group Advisor (RGA) for your area. This person can share with you, or with the pastoral staff, the experience of running groups in their own church. They will be a main point of contact moving forward. Find your RGA at [puredesire.org/rgas](http://puredesire.org/rgas).

Allowing someone who has experienced healing in their life and marriage to share their testimony is an effective way to get others to consider joining a group.

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## 2 WHAT DO WE DO IF WE DON'T HAVE ENOUGH LEADERS?

Once Pure Desire groups are up and running, most churches find that the groups reproduce more leaders for future groups. An essential element of freedom is learning to "pay it forward" and taking sweet revenge on our enemy. The materials challenge group members to become group leaders as a way to do this, but you may find a shortage of leaders at the beginning of launching the ministry or when attempting to make the ministry public to the whole church.

If you are looking to start several groups at once, the best approach is to first have a "turbo group." This group is formed through invitation, and every person in the group is a potential leader of future groups. The turbo group will go through the *Conquer Series* (quick start) or one of the other workbooks (slower start) with a staff member or ministry leader. Upon completion of the turbo groups, multiple new groups can begin.

Another method is to look for other churches in your area who are running Pure Desire groups. At times, you may be able to train up new leaders by sending them to these groups or direct people from your church to attend group there until you have leaders ready. (In all Pure Desire groups, participants are encouraged to take Pure Desire back to their home church.)

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## 3 WHEN IS A GOOD TIME TO MULTIPLY THE GROUP?

When a group consistently has more than eight members showing up, the group should divide into multiple groups, to make sure that everyone has time to share.

The most common method is for everyone to begin together, sharing their Group Check-in. Then, for discussion time, the group will divide up into two or three smaller groups to share the homework. Toward the end of group, the Commitment to Change can be done together in the larger group.

If two or three people are ready to start together, another option is to explore launching a brand-new group.

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#### 4 WHAT DO WE DO IF SOMEONE IN THE GROUP IS ON PAROLE OR PROBATION?

Individuals on parole or probation CAN still participate in group with the following elements in place:

- Get them to sign the group Memo of Understanding. NO EXCEPTIONS.
  - Get the parole/probation officer's (PO) name and phone number.
  - Contact the PO and inquire about the conditions of the individual's release.
  - Find out if they can be on church property or around minors, with or without supervision.
  - Find out if they have any contact issues or living situation of which you should be aware.
  - Make sure the church has a Reducing the Risk policy.
  - Make sure someone on staff is fully aware of their situation and participation.
  - Make sure the individual knows that if the conditions of their parole or probation are broken and shared in group, that information will be given to their PO.
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#### 5 WHAT DO WE DO WITH INDIVIDUALS WHO DO NOT DO THEIR HOMEWORK OR MAKE CALLS AND HAVE ATTENDANCE ISSUES?

Homework completion and attendance are part of the Group Guidelines for every group and phone calls are part of the Group Guidelines for every addiction recovery group. If someone is not honoring these commitments, they are violating the ground rules for a healthy group and it needs to be addressed.

- Group leaders must also enforce a practice that if homework is not completed, the individual cannot share for that portion of the meeting.

When one of these issues first begins to surface, it is good to take the whole group back to the Group Guidelines and remind them about why each one is a necessity.

If the situation occurs again with the same person, the group leader needs to pull them aside privately and find out what is happening in their life that is preventing them from following the Group Guidelines. They should ask the individual to follow the Group Guidelines, expressing that if the Group Guidelines continue to be ignored, he or she will need to take a break from the group.

If this conversation doesn't lead to change, the group leader needs to ask the individual to step out of the group for a minimum of one month. After this time, the group leader can meet with the individual and find out if they are ready to commit to the Group Guidelines.

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## 6 WHAT DO WE DO IF WE HAVE A MAN OR WOMAN IN CRISIS?

It is okay to take extra group time to help someone going through a crisis. Here are some helpful points to keep in mind:

- Discern their readiness to share; if they are shut down, don't force them into the open. If they need to talk and want to process with the group, allow additional group time.
- Make sure everyone gets to share their Group Check-in. It is appropriate to say, "Michael, you've had quite a week. Why don't we finish the Group Check-ins and come back to your specific situation?"
- Remind the group that our role is to listen, ask exploratory questions, and, on occasion, share how it relates to our story. The group does NOT give advice or try to fix each other.
- Be sure to direct the individual to additional resources. In most cases of crisis, the group is not equipped to provide all the support needed. Recommending counselors, pastors, or other support structures is vital. Check out Pure Desire's "Group Referral Criteria" document for guidelines on when a counselor may be needed at [puredesire.org/tools](http://puredesire.org/tools).
- As a leader, be sure to keep their sharing, and the conversation, focused. Don't allow rabbit trails or unnecessary details. Keep the focus on the current crisis and what needs to be done in the immediate context for their growth or safety.
- Consider if someone else in the group has walked through a similar situation and then try to connect those two for a meeting outside the normal group time.
- The individual may choose to unload this information right at the end of the meeting, having spent the whole time working up the courage to share it. It is important to show empathy for what is happening and to respect the time for the rest of the group. A leader might say, "What you have just shared is so important and the few minutes we have left would not begin to address this crisis. We will pray for you right now as a group and I (the leader) will meet with you right after group, or at a time that is convenient for you, to think through how we can help you further."

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## 7 WHAT DO I DO IF MY WIFE WILL NOT GET IN A GROUP AND SHE IS ALWAYS QUESTIONING ME?

A wife will often need to talk to someone else about the group, such as a woman who has experienced the same thoughts and feelings. She may not believe her husband. She may not truly feel she needs to be in a group. She may be an enabler, codependent, or struggling with her own addiction issues. All of these issues could make her hesitant to join a group.

Often, a wife's trauma profile is all about pain avoidance.

One idea is to send her a letter written by another wife—to the wives of all the new guys in a group—telling a bit of her story and explaining what the group did for her. Often, a wife says she doesn't want to join a group because this is "his problem." But she misses out on how his problem interfaces with her needs and hurts as a woman. If she will step into the group process, it will change her life, too, and make the marriage better. Having this vision cast by another woman is crucial.

*Pure Desire Stories for Women*, *Peace Beyond the Tears*, and the *Conquer Series* may help her see and believe that it would be beneficial to the entire family if she participated in the healing process too.

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## 8 WHAT DO WE DO WHEN THE LEADER RELAPSES?

A relapse is not the end of the change or growth process. It is important to consider whether the relapse was a one-time event that was responded to in a healthy way or if the relapse represents the return to previous unhealthy behaviors, thus re-engaging in the addiction.

- **Example 1:** The leader strays too far on his computer late at work one night, views pornography, and masturbates. That same night, he calls a group member and confesses. He shares with his wife within 24 hours and begins implementing her Safety Plan. He re-evaluates his list of guardrails and makes appropriate changes. He approaches his pastor and shares about what happened and confesses to the group at their next meeting.
  - In this example, the leader who has relapsed shows a number of positive signs of health—honesty, acceptance of consequences, and repentance. In this case, a week or two away from leading will help him address his own story, and then he could continue leading the group.
- **Example 2:** A leader strays too far on his computer late at work one night, views pornography, and masturbates. He feels ashamed, deletes his computer history, and heads home. He avoids any deep conversation with his wife that night. At group, he lies about his FASTER Scale and avoids sharing about the issue. He has another relapse that weekend. He doesn't make any phone calls that week and misses the next leadership training at his church. After two weeks, he opens up to his wife after she hints that something has come up on his accountability report.
  - In this example, the leader responded in the familiar, addictive way of covering up, hiding, and ignoring. Even though he eventually confessed, this pattern shows a lack of maturity and growth. In this case, the group leader needs to step down from leading a group—but should still participate—for at least six months, until he has re-established consistent sobriety.
  - In this case, a polygraph would be recommended before he returns to group leadership.
- A relapse involving more in-depth behavior, such as an affair, visiting a club, or a massage parlor, even if it is just one time, will also necessitate the group leader stepping out of leadership for a minimum of six months and typically requires additional clinical counseling.
- Around  $\frac{1}{3}$  of addicts in group—leader or not—need clinical counseling to break free from addiction. Continued relapse is an indicator that further help is needed to address trauma or attachment issues.
- The same general principles can be applied with female group leaders who are recovering from addiction. Their response to the relapse is the most important factor in whether they need a brief break for self-examination (Example 1) or a six-month break to re-establish sobriety (Example 2).

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## 9 IS IT OKAY TO HAVE FAMILY MEMBERS IN THE SAME GROUP (E.G. A FATHER AND SON, IF THE SON IS OVER 18)?

If it is at all possible to have them in separate groups, that would be best. Even when family members have a positive relationship, they often fail to realize how deep and honest the sharing will be in group. In almost all family relationships, one or the other will feel pressure to not share certain things or to perform well for the other. Either situation is dangerous and can inhibit healing.

If no other groups are available and both family members fully understand the challenges they will face in being in the same group, it may be considered. In this case, it is good for the leader to check in with each individual to see how the arrangement is working.

If both family members have already been through a Pure Desire group, thus knowing what to expect, and are still okay with being in the same group, this situation is more acceptable.

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## 10 WHAT DO WE DO AFTER THE CONQUER SERIES?

The *Conquer Series* is meant to be an introduction to sexual addiction groups and recovery. The best next step is to connect people to the appropriate group for long-term change and freedom. Most churches will have an extra week at the end of group for everyone to celebrate what they have learned and to hear about the next groups offered.

- *Seven Pillars of Freedom*: For men with sex/pornography addiction issues
- *Living Free*: For college-aged single men with sex/pornography addiction issues
- *Top Gun*: For teenage boys who struggle or want to learn how to resist sexual temptation
- *Betrayal & Beyond*: For women who have been hurt by a husband's addiction
- *Hope for Men*: For men who have been hurt by a wife's addiction
- *Unraveled*: For women who struggle with love/sex addiction
- *Behind the Mask*: For young women (14-25) who struggle with self-worth or addiction issues
- *The Genesis Process*: For men or women who want to work on changing any other troubling behavior. Groups should be for men only and for women only.

If this is the first time using the *Conquer Series*, waiting a few months and then running the *Conquer Series* again for those who missed it can be effective. As a way to encourage participation, have someone from the first showing share about their experience.

At this point, if you haven't already, connect your group leaders to the Pure Desire Regional Group Advisor (RGA) who can provide coaching and support for new groups. Find your local RGA at [puredesire.org/rgas](http://puredesire.org/rgas).

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## 11 WHAT DO WE DO WHEN WE ARE FINISHED WITH SEVEN PILLARS OF FREEDOM OR ANOTHER PURE DESIRE GROUP?

Many group members will find that they need to go through the group experience at least twice. The first time through, many group members are in the midst of crisis and damage control. The second time through, the material will help them learn and grow more. Until someone is at the one-year mark of maintaining sobriety (no relapses), they need to continue with a weekly group.

For those who are experiencing a track record of sobriety, they can and should consider leading or co-leading a group in order to help others. "Paying it forward" in this way not only helps replicate groups, but also provides a new level of learning and understanding for the leader.

Many churches will use *The Genesis Process* as a secondary group for those who have completed the *Seven Pillars of Freedom* or other Pure Desire group. *The Genesis Process* builds on many of the same principles, but approaches change from a different angle that supplements and strengthens what group participants are learning and putting into practice.

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## 12 WHAT DO WE DO IF WE HAVE A PASTOR IN THE GROUP?

Most pastors will find that being in a group at their own church for their first group experience is very challenging. Attending a group in another city, or online, can give the pastor the anonymity they need to be completely honest and stay out of performance mode. After the pastor has walked through a group and begins to experience freedom, they can be the one to launch groups at their church.

If the culture of your church is transparent enough for a staff member to join the group, he or she must follow the Group Guidelines and participate like everyone else. Pure Desire groups cannot be audited; everyone does the work.

If the pastor is not the leader, he or she needs to make sure they allow the group leader to lead. For the purposes of the group, the pastor is under the authority of the group leader and the church, no matter what role they have in the church.

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## 13 WHAT DO WE DO WITH A GROUP MEMBER WHO ATTENDS GROUP CONSISTENTLY, DOES THEIR HOMEWORK, AND MAKES PHONE CALLS, BUT IS IN CONSTANT RELAPSE?

In this case, determine if these three essential tools are in place:

- **Relapse Prevention Tool:** The three circles define relapse behaviors, what guardrails are, and their commitments to healthy behaviors. This plan should be in writing and shared with the individual's spouse (if applicable) or group.
- **Safety Plan** (or Relapse Response Tool): This tool defines what specific steps will be taken after a relapse. This involves both logical consequences and predetermined action steps. If the individual is married, the spouse will also have some steps they may need to take. Couples have found that when they have a complete and consistent Safety Plan in place, the less likely they are to actually need it.
- **Escape Plan:** This tool gives specific, concrete steps that need to be taken when the individual is triggered and senses a relapse might be imminent. These action steps help the individual break out of their addictive cycle.

If any of these three tools are not in place, and in writing, help the individual identify what is lacking. These three "legs" become the foundation of a winning plan.

Two other tools that should be used are available at [puredesire.org/tools](https://puredesire.org/tools): "Addictive Hot Spots" and "Crash Site Analysis."

If all three of these tools are in place and proving ineffective, the group member needs to be directed to a Pure Desire Clinician, or another sex addiction therapist (CSAT or PSAP) for additional support and trauma recovery. Trauma, especially early childhood trauma, is most often the culprit, keeping them trapped. A professional therapist can walk them through these areas. (The majority of Pure Desire clients are online; location is not an issue.)

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## 14 HOW DO I GO ABOUT FINDING A GROUP?

Your first stop is the Pure Desire groups map on our website at [puredesire.org/find-group](https://puredesire.org/find-group).

If this doesn't reveal a group in your area, look for the Regional Group Advisor (RGA) for your state. The RGA is often working with churches who have groups, but have not yet put them on our website. (Find your RGA at [puredesire.org/rgas](https://puredesire.org/rgas).)

If the RGA for your area doesn't have any recommendations, you can reach out to the RGA for online groups and get connected to a group that uses video calls.

After this, contact our Women's Group Coordinator or Men's Group Coordinator by calling 503.489.0230, option 5. They may be able to help you locate a group or to work with you to start a group in your church.

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## 15 HOW DO WE WORK WITH SOMEONE IN A GROUP WHO IS DEALING WITH SAME-SEX ATTRACTION?

It is key to remind the whole group up front that sexual addiction has the same root issues, but leads to different expressions. Only 2 to 3 percent of individuals struggling with same-sex attraction are battling with a gender identity disorder. The vast majority are wrestling with past trauma, which is reflected in their arousal template. Encourage everyone to focus on the root and causes, not on the sexual behaviors. Someone struggling with same-sex attraction doesn't need to announce his or her struggle up front. Give them time to develop trust in the group, and the issue will reveal itself as part of sharing the homework.

The group leader and co-leader (or the groups ministry leader) should meet with the individual to determine if anything or anyone in the group is a trigger for them. Then, create circumstances, if possible, that make the group a safe place for all group members.

Professional counseling may also be necessary to supplement their journey and help them face issues of woundedness or shame.

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## 16 WHAT IS A DOUBLE BIND?

A double bind occurs anywhere a person is trapped between two difficult choices—the pain of changing and the pain of not changing. With a double bind, we recognize that the reason we stay stuck in addiction is because we have chosen the easier pain. If we can see the double bind, we can choose to face the pain that leads to health.

- **Example 1:** Joe has been procrastinating on a really big project at work. As he avoids the project, he finds himself surfing the Internet too much and eventually acts out with pornography. In this example, Joe's double bind is that facing the hard work of the project was painful, but going back to relapse is also painful. He chose the easier path.
  - **Example 2:** Judy has been yelling at her kids all day. Last night, she and her husband had another fight about finances that was unresolved. Today, her frustration continues to boil over toward her kids. Judy's double bind is that facing the pain of last night's argument requires her to be honest with herself about her weaknesses and choose to forgive. To avoid that pain means taking out the anger on her kids. Either way is hard, but facing her anger toward her husband would lead to a healthier outcome.
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## 17 WHAT IF AN INDIVIDUAL FEELS READY TO LEAD A GROUP, BUT THEIR SPOUSE DISAGREES?

The spouse can often see the level of growth and freedom more accurately than the recovering addict, and their doubts or concerns need to be taken seriously. Anyone leading a group without the spouse's full support is in a very unstable position. If the spouse is also pursuing their own health, they are accurate in their perception more often than not.

If possible, meet with the couple together in order to hear the spouse's concerns and see how the individual responds. If the spouse's issues are more fear-based, help construct a plan for the new group leader that will sustain their own personal growth. If the spouse's issues are legitimate concerns about ongoing actions and behaviors in the marriage, hold off on making the individual a group leader. If the couple has not been through counseling, this would be recommended through Pure Desire or another CSAT.

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## 18 IS IT OKAY TO SHOW THE *CONQUER SERIES* TO BOTH MEN AND WOMEN AT THE SAME TIME?

We encourage caution before undertaking the video series in a mixed audience. Watching the videos in this format might cause some to not attend, others to suppress how they are responding, or some very awkward conversations at home.

We have seen this approach succeed under the following circumstances:

- The opportunity is clearly presented as informational and educational: "Come and learn about this topic."
- The issue of healthy disclosure is addressed, so that couples do not go home and pepper each other with questions, leading to unhealthy, staggered disclosure.
- When the church has a history of transparency and dealing with hard topics in a safe environment, they are more likely to succeed with this format.
- Support of the church leadership is essential.
- Discussion after the video should be separated by gender or use questions that only discuss the movie, not ask anything personal. Well-trained table leaders are a must in the second scenario.
- The series can be presented as a class to educate parents in this area.

If using the *Conquer Series* in this way, at the end, invite those who are struggling to start or join a Pure Desire group. Sign-ups should be anonymous, so people feel safe to join a group. (Do not provide sign-up sheets with a mixed crowd.)

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## 19 WHY DOES PURE DESIRE RECOMMEND SIX MONTHS OF SOBRIETY BEFORE DISCLOSURE?

When an addict first confesses, his or her motive is usually more about making themselves feel better and less about being completely honest. Most all forced or spontaneous confessions will only reveal some truth. An addict is so accustomed to deception and minimizing the facts that they aren't capable of telling the whole, honest truth. In this scenario, more truth comes out later. Staggered disclosure leads to greater pain and a prolonged recovery process.

In some cases, a full disclosure cannot wait. A forced disclosure occurs in the following circumstances:

- When a person is caught acting out by an important person in their life (e.g. their spouse, parent, child, or employer). Disclosure needs to occur around all the activities leading up to and involved in the behavior.
- When a person has been involved in illegal activity and the activity may become public. (A spouse needs to know what legal ramifications may be coming.)
- When an affair has been exposed. The spouse needs to know the truth around this circumstance in order to find safety.
- When a person is confronted with facts of his or her actions.
- When a person has contracted a sexually transmitted disease (STD).

A full disclosure happens when the addict has been in recovery for at least six months. This disclosure focuses on the full sexual history and is fact-based (not feelings or fantasy-based). The disclosure should be in writing and reviewed by a pastor, group leader, or Pure Desire clinician before being shared with a spouse. A description of full disclosure can be found in Pillar Seven of the *Seven Pillars of Freedom Workbook*.

The spouse of the addict also needs to be in a Pure Desire support group. They can get input from their group leader before disclosure. The spouse should write questions needed for healing and rebuilding trust. The spouse should have their leader, pastor, or CSAT review the questions. Spouses should ask only the questions that were written prior to the disclosure. If something unexpected is revealed during disclosure and the spouse didn't have predetermined questions regarding that circumstance, then the meeting should stop in order for the spouse to process and write out new questions. This area of disclosure should be revisited at a later time when the spouse has had time to process what he or she needs to know.

Although the full disclosure process happens after sobriety has been established, it is critical to recovery that the addict learns to be transparent while working toward sobriety. Relapse(s) that occurs during the recovery process should be disclosed to group members and the spouse. Immediately after relapse occurs, your Recovery Action Plan (Addict) should be implemented. Breaking free from an addiction requires a person to live an honest lifestyle, break isolation, relate behaviors to consequences, and give the people whom they have hurt the respect and dignity to make informed choices. Your spouse will have their own Recovery Action Plan (Spouse). If you are working on your recovery, but are still keeping secrets, then shame will keep you stuck. Being honest and using your recovery tools with your spouse will move you toward true freedom.

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