

5 WEEK READING GUIDE

FIGHT FOR LOVE

BY ROSIE MAKINNEY

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This reading guide helps women reflect on what they have read and apply it to their own situations.

When used to facilitate discussion in a group, either online or in person, women should be encouraged to fill in their answers at home before coming to the meeting, on the understanding that there is no pressure or obligation to share their answers in the group discussion.

During the group discussion, facilitators need to be sensitive to the fact that women are in different places on their journey and might be afraid or uncomfortable about sharing their true feelings or particulars of their situation. This is why during any discussion, the following questions can be offered in place of (or addition to) the chapter questions as a way to encourage women to participate in a more general way without revealing personal information.

1. What parts of the chapter did you find most interesting and why?
2. Did anything surprise or shock you?
3. What feelings did this chapter bring up for you?

Do not be discouraged if women do not readily participate in the discussion, especially at first. They are listening hard, and it takes time to build up trust and safety in a group. In the meanwhile, have a general discussion on what you have learned, keep emphasizing that we are building up a baseline of knowledge among our Christian sisters so that we know best how to help each other, and let them express how they think a wife would react in this situation and what she would need.

WEEK 1

WHY YOU NEED TO FIGHT FOR LOVE CHAPTERS 1-2

INTRODUCTION & CHAPTER 1: THE PROBLEM WITH PORN, PAGES 1-17

Using findings from the latest studies, this chapter sets out to prove how porn negatively affects relationships, destroying authenticity and intimacy, and creating dissatisfaction in and out of the bedroom.

'Your desire for deep intimacy is holy and good. You were made in the image of God, and He is all about relationships. God the Trinity is three persons in one. You can't get more intimate or relational than that! The anxiety you feel at being disconnected from your husband is a bittersweet reminder of how you were made to love and be loved. In that way, your discontentment in the way things are is actually a holy unrest, an impulse from God Himself.' Page 2

How does your husband's porn use make you feel?

To what extent have messages in the media and popular culture about porn being harmless and even healthy for relationships confused, silenced, or discouraged you?

What strategies have you already tried to get the porn out of your marriage? (things like competing sexually, turning a blind eye, dieting, changing your appearance, obsessive exercising, trying to become the perfect wife, ignoring it, or accommodating it.)

GO DEEPER

Listen to *Fight for Love Podcast* – A Christian podcast made by women for women. A weekly, lively panel-discussion show where we talk about dealing with a porn-addicted spouse. Real Stories. Real Women. Real Hope.

<https://www.podcastics.com/podcast/246/link/>

For further information on how pornography affects relationships, watch episode 2 of Fight The New Drug's short documentary series, Brain, Heart, World. <https://brainheartworld.org/>

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

(These are especially helpful for spouses of addicts.)

Carnes, Stefanie

Mending a Shattered Heart: A Guide for Partners of Sex Addicts.

Carnes, Patrick, M. Laaser and D. Laaser

Open Hearts: Renewing Relations with Recovery, Romance and Reality.

Conquest, Wendy

Letters to a Sex Addict: The Journey through Grief and Betrayal.

Corcoran, Maurita

A House Interrupted: A Wife's Story of Recovering from Her Husband's Sex Addiction.

Laaser, Debra

Shattered Vows: Hope and Healing for Women Who Have Been Sexually Betrayed.

Palmer, Vicki Tidwell

Moving Beyond Betrayal: The 5-Step Boundary Solution for Partners of Sex Addicts.

Schaef, Anne Wilson

Escape from Intimacy: Untangling the "Love" Addictions: Sex, Romance, Relationships.

Steffens, Barbara and Marsha Means

Your Sexually Addicted Spouse: How Partners Can Cope and Heal.

WEEK 1

WHY YOU NEED TO FIGHT FOR LOVE CHAPTERS 1-2

CHAPTER 2: HOW PORN HIJACKS THE BRAIN (PAGES 19-32)

Using the latest findings in neuroscience, this chapter reveals the real reasons why people use porn and also why they can't stop. Despite what the media tells us, porn is not a harmless, idealized version of sex. Porn is an artificial, supernormal stimulus that hijacks and rewires the brain.

The following concepts are explained: how porn eventually numbs the reward circuit; how it creates addictive pathways in the brain; why it changes your sexual tastes; and why it causes a decline in executive functioning.

Readers are made aware that the longer porn use is ignored, the more entrenched the compulsion becomes and the less able addicts are to do anything about it themselves. The chapter ends with the good news that porn-induced changes to the brain are reversible.

Repeated porn use can create a build up of a chemical that functions like a set of brakes, causing a baseline change in a person's reward circuit. It dulls enjoyment of not just porn, but anything and everything. Nothing gives the same pleasure (page 25).

What changes have you noticed in your husband?

Porn use often escalates to darker, more extreme material. When what is being watched no longer satisfies as it once did, users need to find something that pushes the envelope a little bit more, and a little bit more, and a little bit more. Usually, people don't start using porn to watch overwhelmingly vulgar or violent material. They start with what society would deem 'normal' types, and then they slowly escalate to worse and worse material, as they need to keep up the dopamine rush. As a wife, what you need to know is this: the longer you stay silent, the deeper into his pit your husband will descend (page 24).

When is the right time for you to address compulsive porn use in your marriage?

If porn is an issue in your marriage, you don't need me to tell you that something feels off with your sex life. Heavy porn use typically manifests in one of two very different ways. Either a husband's sex drive goes through the roof, causing a wife to feel pressured to have sex far more frequently than she would like and/or to partake in acts commonly featured in porn. Or he consistently avoids and rejects her sexually, sometimes even turning the situation around and blaming her for his lack of interest. Either way, a wife inevitably ends up feeling like his disappointment, dissatisfaction, or disinterest is her fault(page 29).

How do you think porn is affecting your marital intimacy?

GO DEEPER

For further information on how pornography affects the brain, watch episode I of Fight The New Drug's short documentary series, Brain, Heart, World.

<https://brainheartworld.org/>

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Struthers, William M

Wired for Intimacy: How Pornography Hijacks the Male Brain.

Wilson, Gary

Your Brain on Porn: Internet Pornography and the Emerging Science of Addiction.

Your Brain on Porn: www.yourbrainonporn.com

(an incredible collection of scientific research about the effects of internet porn on the brain).

WEEK 2

WHAT FIGHTING FOR LOVE LOOKS LIKE CHAPTERS 3-4

CHAPTER 3: THE FAITHFUL RESPONSE (PAGES 33-48)

This chapter addresses the question, “What should a godly wife do when the lifestyle of her husband, her earthly authority, is in direct opposition to the Word of God?”

By remaining obedient to the Lord, a wife can aid in bringing her husband to repentance (page 38).

Do you agree with this statement? Have you seen this principle at work in other areas of your life? Or in other relationships?

In a nutshell, God is telling you to keep yourself clean and pure. In the context of a marriage where compulsive porn use is an issue, your “wifely duty” is not to make your husband feel better about his struggles, but to protect your heart, and mind, and body from being polluted. Take whatever steps you need to keep yourself emotionally, spiritually, and physically “clean.” Ask yourself the tough questions. Is becoming one with a man who has just filled his mind with pornographic images keeping yourself pure? Is watching it with him a way to keep your own mind and heart pure? Is accommodating it in your house a God-honoring, good idea (page 39)?

What would it look like in your situation to keep yourself pure from your husband’s, or your own, pornography use?

Changing your behavior and putting up boundaries is most likely going to make your husband uncomfortable, and that’s okay. Prepare yourself for the possibility of a variety of attempts to get you to relent, or soften your stance. But whatever comes your way, be it in the form of shaming accusations, angry threats, self-pitying moping, or tearful promises to change, hang on to the biblical promise that his pain and discomfort are necessary for change. Godly sorrow leads to repentance (2 Cor. 7:8-11).

You may also encounter resistance from unexpected quarters: your church, relatives, friends, or counselors. But, remember, any advice that has you doing anything other than putting up strong boundaries—no matter how “Christian” it is made to sound—is actually enabling the hook of addiction to sink in further. The Word of God commands women to be pure, which means standing firm against porn in their marriages, families, and homes (page 45).

Where do you anticipate resistance coming from? What are you most concerned about?

You are not merely a side note in your husband's story, you have an up-front central role to play in God's plan for his redemption and restoration (page 39).

Did this come as a surprise to you, or is this confirmation of something that has been stirring inside of you for a while?

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Make no mistake; taking a stand on pornography is an act of warfare. I highly suggest you read Priscilla Shirer's study, *Armor of God*, as part of your preparation.

WEEK 2

WHAT FIGHTING FOR LOVE LOOKS LIKE CHAPTERS 3-4

CHAPTER 4: THE TRUTH ABOUT RECOVERY (PAGES 49-62)

This chapter provides a road map for the journey ahead and introduces the foundational scripture of 1 John 1:7 upon which this recovery approach is based. By explaining that beneath porn addiction is an underlying intimacy disorder, readers are shown how “walking in the light” (telling the truth) will create the “fellowship” that will ultimately heal the intimacy disorder and the porn addiction.

Readers are given practical advice about what to look for in a recovery program and shown that without the truth there is no hope for personal sobriety or relational reconciliation.

...when your husband is deep in his addiction, someone has to act as a surrogate pre-frontal cortex and make good decisions for him. Until you find a good therapist or program or group to take on that role, it is up to you. Also, this bears saying: your job is not to cure your husband, but to get him to someone who can (page 50).

How does it make you feel to finally understand exactly what your role is?

This may or may not come as a surprise, but beneath an addict's compulsive porn use lies a deeper issue of avoiding intimacy. In simple terms, there is an unmet need for connection that is driving the need for porn, or affairs, or anonymous sex. Now, don't misunderstand me, I'm not saying that his need for connection is because you have failed in some way. No, this lack has nothing to do with you. This started way before he met you. What I'm talking about is the way that he feels permanently disconnected from other people because he is primarily disconnected from the Lord—the ultimate source of connection his soul longs for— leading him to hide part of himself from God as well as others. Somewhere along the line he decided that expressing vulnerability and weakness was a bad idea, and he has been repressing those feelings ever since. Trouble is, hiding and repressing emotions always comes out sideways. Porn is a perfect outlet for feelings such as fear, anger, and powerlessness that come with being isolated from both God and people (page 52).

Not considering his porn usage, are you currently satisfied with the level of emotional intimacy you have with your husband?

It is deception, not the truth, that destroys marriages (page 57).

Which do you feel has damaged your trust more—the betrayal with pornography use or the deception about it?

In recovery, I learned that wives of porn addicts develop many ways of coping, all of which are variations of hiding their truth: staying busy or staying aloof, being hyper-controlling, or perhaps even hyper-sexual. Though I didn't know all these things at the start, I eventually learned that recovery for me meant getting off the merry-go-round and getting in touch with how hurt and angry I really was. Yes, my husband was the one whose sin created the mess we were in, but my ways of coping weren't helping me, him, or my relationship with God (page 60).

How do you feel about getting in touch with, and also sharing, emotions that you may have repressed or avoided for years?

WEEK 3

WHAT AND WHO CAN HELP YOU FIGHT FOR LOVE CHAPTERS 5-6

CHAPTER 5: THE TOOLS OF RECOVERY (PAGES 63-92)

In this chapter readers are introduced to the four main tools they will use to take back their marriages: a full disclosure, a partner survey, a safety plan, and a period of celibacy. Case studies help readers prepare for the challenges of implementing each step.

If the thought of a full disclosure feels overwhelming to you, rest assured you are not alone. Disclosure is daunting for literally everyone. Think of it as the therapeutic equivalent of sterilizing a wound—excruciating, but utterly necessary. When you are trying to prevent infection from setting in, you have to get all the dirt out (page 65).

What are your biggest concerns about disclosure?

Real fellowship in a marriage requires you to tell the truth also. Be prepared to dig deep and get in touch with how you really feel. The Partner Response Survey helps you identify ways that your husband's compulsive porn use has affected you mentally, physically, sexually, and spiritually. In a supervised session, you read your answers aloud, and your husband is not permitted to respond or defend himself. He simply has to hear you. Without name-calling or blaming, you express your hurt, pain, frustration, anger, and disgust without fear of contradiction or reprisal (page 78).

What is your initial reaction to completing and sharing the partner assessment survey?

A period of celibacy is highly recommended at the beginning of recovery. Having more sex is not the answer, especially in the weeks following a full disclosure. Your husband's altered expectations around sex need time to reboot, as does his warped view of reality. The suggested time frame for celibacy is normally ninety days (page 81).

What fears or apprehensions do you have about the idea of ninety days of celibacy?

The time to think about what to do if your husband relapses is not after the event, but before. A safety plan is a personalized, practical plan of what to do if your husband looks at porn again. The point of the safety plan is not to punish him but to help you respond in a healthy and effective way (page 88).

How does the idea of having a safety plan in your back pocket make you feel? What are your thoughts/concerns about setting boundaries?

WEEK 3

WHAT AND WHO CAN HELP YOU FIGHT FOR LOVE CHAPTERS 5-6

CHAPTER 6: FREEDOM THROUGH FELLOWSHIP (PAGES 93-108)

This chapter highlights the miraculous healing power of group work for wives. Readers are given a window into this safe environment where women are able to process their trauma and experiment with new, authentic ways of trusting and sharpening each other before transferring their new skills to their marriages. Guidelines are provided for how to discern if a group is healthy, and tips for setting up and running a group (where none is currently available) are also included.

A healthy recovery group is a laboratory for relational intimacy, a safe space for experimenting with how to be authentic, honest, and truth-telling with others before transferring those skills back to your marriage (page 95).

What appeals to you about being part of a group of other women in the same situation?

Most women find they have to push themselves past tremendous fear to walk into the room for the first time. What are they going to think? What am I going to say? What if they've never heard this before? Was I safe? Would I know the other people? Would they recognize me from somewhere (page 97)?

What are your fears about going to a recovery group specifically for wives of porn addicts?

Amidst all the chaos and hurt and confusion, remember that God is doing something in you too. He has not forgotten you. You are not something he needs to half-heartedly deal with in the margins while he expends the majority of his energy on the real issue of your husband. You aren't ancillary, or an afterthought. He sees you, He knows you, and He wants to heal you and change you too in the middle of all this. God is working in all of this for you too (page 107).

Do you have any idea what areas of your life God might be about to bring into the light for healing?

GO DEEPER

Join our growing movement of women encouraging each other in their fight for love on Facebook:

Fight For Love Fellowship Facebook Group

OTHER ONLINE RECOVERY GROUPS OFFER INDIVIDUAL THERAPY, GROUP THERAPY, AND FURTHER RESOURCES ON HEALING FROM THE TRAUMA OF BETRAYAL

Pure Desire
Betrayal Trauma Recovery
Recover
Bloom
Addo Recovery

WEEK 4

BENEFITS OF FIGHTING FOR LOVE CHAPTERS 7-8

CHAPTER 7: YOUR HEALING JOURNEY (PAGES 109-124)

In this chapter readers are shown that in order to heal and move themselves forward, unhealthy ways of coping must be faced and addressed. Discovering their role in the dysfunctional dance is the way to stop the pattern from being repeated or passed on to children. The concept of codependency is introduced, and readers are given the hope of a new way of living.

Whenever you rely on an outside source of validation for your self-worth (outside of God), you can be said to be codependent. Everyone does this sometimes, so the reassuring news is that everyone is codependent to some extent. However, when the only way you can control how you feel on the inside is by controlling what happens on the outside, you are destined for heartache and trouble (page 114).

When you were reading about the codependent ways in which wives often attempt to control painful or confusing situations, did any of those resonate with you?

How would you like your interactions with your spouse to be different?

What fears or beliefs are holding you back from making those changes?

GO DEEPER

Listen to the Fight For Love Podcast episode “What is Codependency?” at <https://www.podcastics.com/episode/24558/link/>

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES (THESE ARE SPECIFICALLY TARGETED TO CODEPENDENCY.)

Beattie, Melody

Beyond Codependency: And Getting Better All the Time.

Beattie, Melody

Codependent No More: How to Stop Controlling Others and Start Caring for Yourself.

Mellody, Pia, Andrea Wells Miller and J. Keith Miller

Facing Codependence: What It Is, Where It Comes From, How It Sabotages Our Lives.

Schneider, Jennifer P

Back from Betrayal: Recovering From The Trauma of Infidelity.

WEEK 4

BENEFITS OF FIGHTING FOR LOVE CHAPTERS 7-8

CHAPTER 8: BRINGING LIGHT TO THE CHURCH'S FIGHT (PAGES 125-144)

This chapter highlights the current trajectory of our pornified society—where an entire generation is being sexually conditioned to be aroused by what they see in violent porn. The fact that more than 50 percent of Christian couples are struggling with porn affects the Church's ability to be "salt and light" to our broken world. Readers are given a vision of how a church can foster a culture of transparency and a community of healing—where Christians can be honest about their brokenness and their need for God. A church where God is glorified, not just for the miracles of thousands of years ago, but for ones He is doing in people's marriages every day.

Despite the incomprehensible gift of grace I have been given, I would still prefer to downplay exactly why I need it. Basing my sense of self-worth on what Jesus did for me, rather than from what I do, is a constant struggle. Being transparent and vulnerable in a judgmental world is an act of faith. My spirit desperately wants to please God by being faithful, but my flesh craves the approval of other people (page 135).

What are your biggest fears about people finding out about your husband's struggle with porn?

When we come out into the light and own our sin before the watching world, we are showing them that it's safe to come out of hiding when it comes to God. We can repent, because we actually believe the payment is covered and healing is in our future. We are saying to the world that God is worth more to us than our reputation, and we have faith that He can actually change us (page 138)!

What do you feel when you see other people's lives and relationships not just restored but transformed? Do you believe God is capable of doing that in your situation?

If all Christians were actually living according to the Bible, porn addiction wouldn't even exist in the church. Addiction is thriving because our performance-based façade keeps us isolated and secretive, making the ground extra fertile. If a person did look at porn, they'd confess it straight away, so that the desire wouldn't be able to take root and turn into a habit. For "everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light" (Eph. 5:13, NIV), (page 143).

What steps could be taken in your church to help break the shame around the issue of porn addiction?

GO DEEPER

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Pure Desire Ministries

www.puredesire.org

Faithful and True

www.faithfulandtrue.com

Pure Life Ministries

www.purelifeministries.org

Proven Men

www.provenmen.org

WEEK 5

HELPING OTHERS FIGHT FOR LOVE CHAPTERS 9-10

CHAPTER 9: WOMEN WHO STRUGGLE WITH PORN (PAGES 145-160)

This chapter discredits the widely held assumption that Christian girls and women don't get addicted to porn. Using testimonies and the latest research studies to break the shame, it explores the reasons how and why women are now the fastest-growing user group of porn.

How hard do you think it would be for a woman to come forward with her own struggle with porn addiction?

What do you think would make it easier for women to come forward?

Which parts of this chapter did you find most interesting?

What practical steps need to be taken to provide support for women who struggle with porn at your church?

GO DEEPER

TAKE THIS FREE ONLINE TEST TO SEE IF YOU ARE ADDICTED TO PORNOGRAPHY

<http://resolvetherapy.org/sex-addiction-quiz/>

WEEK 5

HELPING OTHERS FIGHT FOR LOVE CHAPTERS 9-10

CHAPTER 10: PORN-PROOFING YOUR KIDS (PAGES 161-180)

This chapter tackles the uncomfortable topic of raising kids in a household full of second-hand porn. It also explains how children and teens are particularly susceptible to becoming addicted to porn themselves and what implications this has on their sexual, social, emotional, and cognitive development. This chapter ends with practical advice on how to externally block porn on devices, how to create an internal filter within your child, and also what to do if you suspect that your child is addicted

What feelings did this chapter bring up for you?

What practical steps are you going to take to protect your child?

What is the single most powerful thing you can do to protect your kids from becoming addicted to porn?

Are you ready to fight for love?

GO DEEPER

- Screen a family night viewing of Fight The New Drug's short documentary series **Brain, Heart, World.** <https://brainheartworld.org/>
- Work with other local churches and bring in Fight the New Drug to present at the middle and high schools in your community.
www.podcastics.com/episode/24558/link/

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Jenson, Kristen A., and Debbie Fox

Good Pictures Bad Pictures: Porn-Proofing Today's Young Kids.

Jenson, Kristen A., and Debbie Fox

Good Pictures Bad Pictures Junior: A Simple Plan to Protect Young Minds.

Fight the New Drug: www.fightthenewdrug.org (terrific resources for educating your children and teens about porn; free three-part documentary to stream; great guide for how to talk to your kids)

Culture Reframed: www.culturereframed.org (helping parents and other adults build kids' resilience to hypersexualized media and porn)

Google Safety Center For Families: www.google.com/safetycenter/families/start
add a descriptor here?

Protect Young Eyes: www.protectyouneyes.com (great information on how to choose the right technological solution for your family)

ProtectKids.com: www.protectkids.com (great information on protection for your kids)

Netsmartz Workshop: www.netsmartz.org (resources for dealing with sexual predators)

Cyberbully: cyberbully.org (resources for helping kids dealing with an online bully)

Filters: Net Nanny, CovenantEyes, OpenDNS, Google SafeSearch