



PROVENMENTM
BE ON GUARD.

Accountability is a Key to Breaking Free from the Grip of Lust

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Fighting to overcome lust, masturbation, pornography or other sexually compulsive activities is one of the hardest struggles most men will face in life. Yet, at times, it can seem like you're the only one in the battle. It also can be very frustrating to keep having setbacks. Perhaps you feel defeated because you've read self-help books teaching you techniques for fleeing from temptations or instructing you what to do after you stumble, but they never seem to bring lasting relief. You keep asking yourself,

Why doesn't it work for me?

Why am I still in bondage to sin?

The one thing missing from a self-directed healing path is accountability. Just how important is this? Well, no serious athlete attempts to compete without a coach, no successful business lacks managers, and no lasting government exists without layers of accountability. So why should a man expect to win a battle against sin all by himself—especially when it's a sin he has yet to overcome on his own after years of trying? Let's face it; we all need accountability. But we also need support and encouragement. When you wrap these together, we call it a *network partner*. In fact, God designed you to be connected to others in such a manner that lasting freedom normally won't work unless you walk the road to victory together with a *network partner*.

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What holds you back from asking another man to be your *network partner*? Perhaps pangs of shame, guilt, and self-condemnation strike fear in your heart at the thought of openly sharing your failures and struggles. Maybe your pride and stubbornness won't let you admit you need help. Whatever your particular reason for shying away from including another man in your journey, remember that one of the largest barriers to experiencing lasting freedom is a refusal to link up with another man in a true *networking partnership*.

■ *Defining Terms*

At its core, accountability means being obligated to account for your actions or being responsible to another. Perhaps this makes you bristle or want to run and hide. But, if you're willing to do things God's way—or if, perhaps, you're finally desperate enough to change—you'll be glad to hear the good news. God offers you a plan for true acceptance in a *networking partner*, instead of a blaming, shame-based form of accountability.

Although few Christian men quibble over whether they're accountable to God, those trapped in bondage to sexual sin often balk at God's proclamation that His children must also be accountable to and networked with another. The solution for addressing reoccurring setbacks is not to try harder by your own power, but to relinquish the stubborn pride that keeps you from surrendering your will to Christ by refusing to obey His command to *network* with other men.

If you've read our companion book, *A Proven Path to Sexual Integrity*, then you know that selfishness and pride are the real root issues behind this resistance. This same pride that makes you want to fight the battle on your own also feeds your selfish indulgence in forbidden sensual pleasures. It's time to embrace the Proven Path and take a *network partner*.

■ *Biblical Network Partnerships*

Networking isn't synonymous with accountability, *per se*. Most accountability partners merely ask each other to admit whether or not

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they have sinned during the week. It can be very draining to meet weekly with someone simply to tell them you messed up. That's why that kind of accountability is short-lived. The experience is so miserable that it inadvertently encourages men to shade the truth, skirt the issue, or—let's be honest—outright lie.

Shame and ridicule are counterproductive. When you're already struggling with your commitment to change, what you really need is encouragement from another man who understands what it means to struggle with an issue like this.

PROVEN *network partnerships* are different. They aren't focused on catching each other in sin or calling a man out. They center on investing in each other's lives and having (perhaps for the first time) deep, intentional relationships. The Bible paints a vivid picture of the partnering relationship God designed for men that develops through *networking* within the brotherhood of believers. Consider the following ways the Lord says you are to *network* with other believers:

- **Helping:** “A brother is born for a time of adversity” (*Proverbs 17:17*)
- **Instructing:** We are each “competent to instruct one another” (*Romans 15:14*)
- **Comforting:** “Comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God” (*2 Corinthians 1:3–5*)
- **Serving:** “You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.” (*Galatians 5:13*)
- **Restoring:** “Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.” (*Galatians 6:1*)
- **Carrying Burdens:** “Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ” (*Galatians 6:2*)

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- **Speaking Truth:** “Speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of Him who is the head, that is, Christ” (*Ephesians 4:15*)
- **Teaching & Admonishing:** “Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts” (*Colossians 3:16*)
- **Building Up:** “Build each other up” (*1 Thessalonians 5:11*)
- **Correcting:** “Correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction” (*2 Timothy 4:2*)
- **Encouraging:** “Encourage one another daily, as long as it is called ‘Today,’ so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness” (*Hebrews 3:13*)
- **Spurring On:** “Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds” (*Hebrews 10:24*)
- **Meeting Together:** “Not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another” (*Hebrews 10:25*)
- **Confessing:** “Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed” (*James 5:16*)

You may notice that we put “confessing” at the end of the list. The reason we did this is because most men equate accountability solely with a weekly meeting to confess their failures. That’s not “networking.” In fact, as you examine the context around this confessing verse, you’ll notice that confessing is hinged on prayer and healing. Those don’t happen simply by telling another that you had a setback. Rather, confessing is designed to mutually encourage, help, serve, build up, spur on, and warn of dangers.

As you accept God’s command to and need for networking, you’ll find that you’ll grow in even more spiritual roles in aiding others—those

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who need your help as much as you need theirs. Here are a few more roles of *network partners*:

- **Keeping Confidences:** “A gossip separates close friends” (*Proverbs 16:28; 17:9*)
- **Warning to Flee:** “Flee from idolatry” (*1 Corinthians 10:14*); “flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (*2 Timothy 2:22*); “flee from sexual immorality” (*1 Corinthians 6:18*)
- **Encouraging Purity:** “But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people” (*Ephesians 5:3*); “It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality” (*1 Thessalonians 4:3*)
- **Inspiring to Stand Firm:** “Therefore, my brothers and sisters . . . stand firm in the Lord” (*Philippians 4:1*); “You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming” (*2 Peter 3:11–12*)
- **Warning against being Idle or Disruptive:** “We urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone” (*1 Thessalonians 5:14*)
- **Urging to Abstain from Sexual Sin:** “I urge you . . . to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul” (*1 Peter 2:11*)
- **Reminding to Love:** “Let us love one another, for love comes from God” (*1 John 4:7*)
- **Encouraging to Be on Guard:** “Since you have been forewarned, be on your guard” (*2 Peter 3:17*)

Clearly, Biblical *networking* is centered upon fostering *open and honest relationships*, which is another one of the six essential elements (the “O”)

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of the PROVEN Path. It requires you to concentrate on *others*—instead of yourself, your rights, your expectations, and your circumstances.

By removing yourself from the center of the universe, you not only become useful in the lives of others, but also gain the “E” (an *eternal perspective*) that is similarly necessary for living out a PROVEN life. It’s also an antidote for pride and leads to the “R” (*repentance*) and “V” (*victory*) of the PROVEN life.

Finally, the more you obey the commands of the Lord with a sense of purpose, you round out the *PROVEN* elements as you become more *passionate* about the Lord. In short, when you set limits upon what you’re willing to do to obtain victory over lust by rejecting the “N” of *networking*, you’re also rejecting the other letters and elements of your new title and role of a PROVEN Man.

■ *Making the Decision*

Right now, you may be facing a huge dilemma:

If I don’t take a networking partner, I won’t experience lasting freedom, but if I share my struggles with another man, I may be judged or rejected.

This fear is real. It’s what keeps most Christian men suffering in silence. However, as you read in the verses earlier, God demands that our sins be exposed to light to be eradicated, and true *networking* is a primary method. That doesn’t mean there won’t be pain associated with the process. In fact, if one *networking* relationship doesn’t work, find another. Freedom is not a one-shot deal, but a new and lasting Proven lifestyle. Accept that God is sovereign and will provide you with all the strength, determination, and support you need in every circumstance.

Don’t let the devil try to rob you of your position by making you feel overwhelmed by the magnitude of the role and importance of *networking partners*. Rather, be thankful that the Lord is raising you up.

Remember, *networking* is not something you do alone. In fact, the Lord doesn’t send men out alone, but two-by-two as fellow Proven

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Men. As you embrace *networking partnerships*, you'll be joining the brotherhood of Proven Men, which includes illustrious teams such as the 12 Disciples, David and Jonathan, Moses and Joshua, or Paul and Barnabas. It also includes everyday people, like myself and thousands of others, who are currently making the same decision to link up and not only go through the 12-Week Study but also share our lives with other Proven Men.

■ *Choosing your Network Partner*

Many ask what to look for in a *network partner* and where to find him. Following are a few suggestions.

First, there is no magical formula. Your *networking partner* simply needs to be someone who wants to keep growing closer to the Lord (*i.e.*, a fellow Proven Man). He doesn't necessarily need to struggle with the same sin.

Certainly, you should not eliminate a man merely because he isn't a spiritual giant. When I started Proven Men Ministries, I was not a pastor and had not attended seminary. What I had was freedom from sexual addiction and a hunger in my heart to help others break free.

I knew God had told me to form this ministry, but I felt a bit like the weeping prophet Jeremiah. I didn't think I could do this on my own and begged God to send me someone to journey with. Naturally, I waited with eager anticipation for God to send me someone like Billy Graham, because I wanted to reach a million men. So I asked the Lord to send me a spiritual giant.

One by one in my mind, I presented my choices to the Lord like the prophet Samuel who examined the strong sons of Jesse in Bethlehem.¹ Each time God said no. Then I looked at this 300 pound man named Brian who kept hanging around. He looked like a lost puppy, unsure of himself, but he kept sending me encouraging notes and wanting to spend time with me.

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As Samuel first thought as he eyed the skinny young man David, I exclaimed “Surely not him, Lord?” as I viewed the opposite end of the extreme in Brian. But the Lord couldn’t have made it clearer that I was judging as the world does, not seeing the heart of this giant with a tender spirit. I welcomed Brian into my life and began meeting weekly with him. I thought that I was going to train Brian, but it turned out that I was to experience a true *networking* relationship with him. Brian is now living in victory, the Vice-President of Proven Men, and my dearest ally and friend.

The Lord also brought me a pastor named Steve to mentor and guide me. Our three-way *networking partnership* is a sure foundation upon which we each face new hurdles and challenges, while sharing the victories and joys of life together.

I learned some valuable lessons about placing limits on who can be a good *network partner*. As you start this journey, be sure to grasp that a *network partner* is just that, a partner. Each man is a co-pilgrim, sharing similar goals and desiring the other to succeed. Both support, serve, and spur the other. As iron sharpens iron, so do two Proven Men sharpen each other (*Proverbs 27:17*).

As you seek a *network partner*, make sure that both of you are committed to being open and honest. One of the biggest problems many men face is a reluctance to be vulnerable with others. Therefore, you and your *networking partner* must be willing to push through the discomfort. Each of you needs to share intimate details regarding struggles, failures, hopes, dreams, and victories. This includes recognizing and then talking about feelings. Each must have the freedom and expectation to ask the other hard personal questions. Of course, confidences must be kept, because nothing breaks down a relationship faster than gossip and betrayal.

Finally, your primary *networking partner* must be a man, not be a girlfriend or your spouse. There are many reasons, including that you need to develop relationships with other men in order to foster a better relationship with your wife. In addition, it’s damaging to a marriage to turn it into an accountability relationship, especially in the area of

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sexual sins. It often leads to a spouse engaging in a heightened, negative role of looking for and finding faults in order to point out every sin committed. It's also not necessarily in the best interest of a spouse to know every minute detail of sexual sins, which can cause needless damage.² In short, you need a safe place to discuss struggles in a *network relationship* with another Proven Man.

■ *Finding a Network Partner*

It's your job to find a *network partner*. Although you are to pray for guidance, you must do the legwork. It can be someone you already know or you may have to diligently search for someone. Our website has additional resources for finding a *network partner* (See www.ProvenMen.com).

Although it may be beyond your comfort zone, the church is one of the best places to look for a *network partner*. One reason why the church is a great starting point is because it offers a variety of men's functions, such as men's prayer meetings, Bible studies, breakfasts, and church-sponsored sports activities. Those are terrific places to find another man like you that loves the Lord, but is stuck in some sin. They need you as much as you need them! If you're not regularly attending church, it may be time to start afresh. In fact, Christ called the church His bride (*Ephesians 5:25-32*) and we are told not to skip church just because it's not in vogue (*Hebrews 10:25*). A second great thing about the church is that they have male leaders who generally know of other men who desire a *network partner* and would be a good candidate. Take a risk and talk to your men's ministry leader or pastor for help.

In short, finding a *networking partner* requires that you take the initiative and not give up. It will be worth it because it will help you engage in open relationships and to network with other believers, which are

² Included in our companion book, *A PROVEN Path to Sexual Integrity; Straight-forward help with issues of lust, pornography, masturbation or other forms of sexual addiction from a Biblical perspective* is Appendix C, which addresses "What do I tell my Wife or Fiancée?". That article suggests an approach for first telling your girlfriend or wife of your struggles with sexual integrity.

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essential components to living a Proven life. There is simply no replacement for personal interactions with other Proven Men.

■ *Making the Decision to Network*

Many, if not most men in the church, struggle with sexual purity in their relationships and in regard to pornography and masturbation. Most remain in bondage because they don't want to be the first to risk seeking out *networking partners*. Won't you break the mold, for your sake and that of the other men who need it as much as you do?

The prescription for lasting healing is to incorporate all six letters of a Proven life, which is completed by *networking* with other godly men. *Networking* is God's way of putting the final stamp upon you and freeing you from the false intimacy of lust, sexual affairs, pornography and masturbation.

Don't stop short of God's promises and power by going it alone or remaining isolated and closed. Choose today to take all steps necessary to link up with another man in an open and honest *networking partnership*.

■ *Using the 12-Week Study as a Foundation for Networking*

One of our key tools for helping men obtain sexual integrity is *The 12-Week Study to a PROVEN Path to Sexual Integrity*. Yet, it is a journey not meant to go alone. That's why we created a weekly meeting Guide (available for free on our website) for you to use with your *network partner* while working through the Study. First, you open your heart to change by daily completing the 12-Week Study. Second, you incorporate times of prayer for your *networking partner*. Third, you engage in weekly discussions with your *network partner* that also puts an end to secrets and shame by fostering openness and honesty—the vital elements of a Proven life.

Although not necessary, it's also helpful to read the companion book, *PROVEN Men: A PROVEN Path to Sexual Integrity*, because it outlines the basis of the Proven Path that includes networking.

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For those wishing to be part of a weekly support group, we've also prepared a weekly Leader's Guide for support groups. Sometimes meeting in a support group leads to greater breakthroughs for many men. Others thrive meeting with another man using our free Guide for two men. Either way, you should not dismiss the importance of engaging weekly with a *network partner* while working through our intensive 12-Week Study. ■

*For more information about Network Partners
or help becoming Proven in the area of sexual integrity,
visit our website at www.ProvenMen.com*