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Chapter 1

FROM WOUNDED TO HEALED

So you decided to jump in. Good for you.

Now that you've read my story, I'm going to level with you. I know that I was somewhat lucky. I know that we aren't always graced with the chance to go second.

The chance to share our struggle after someone has already shared hers.

You might be thinking, *So what about me? Where's my chance to go second?* Sometimes, maybe even most of the time, it seems we're just out here on our own to figure this out.

I get that. I really do. Which is why I designed this book to be your chance.

You see, I've just shared my story with you. And I did so first—well before I asked you to spill your guts.

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It is my hope—no, it is my prayer—that you will accept my sharing first as an invitation for you to go second.

Throughout this book, we will go step-by-step to healing from pornography use. And we will do so together. With each step, I will go first by sharing with you additional pieces of my own story and then provide you the opportunities to respond. The steps are simple. And there are just five of them.

The acronym SCARS will serve as our road map. These steps are adapted from the Twelve Steps of Sexaholics Anonymous (SA). It is not my intention to reinvent the wheel or knock the great work of SA or Alcoholics Anonymous. Or to appear like I know more about addiction recovery.

That is simply untrue. In fact, the complete Twelve Steps of SA³ are listed on page 143, and I strongly encourage you to work through them.

I know in today's age of instant gratification that we have attention spans that are next to nothing, so asking commitment to twelve of anything can be overwhelming.

And I realize how busy the life of a woman is.

Even some of the allure of pornography for women is that it is quick, easily accessible, and instantly gratifying.

On some level anyway.

However, pornography is not the problem. Masturbation is not the problem. Our compulsive sexual behaviors are not the problem.

They are merely the symptoms of something much, much

bigger. The symptoms of a core, unhealed woundedness. A wound that has been filled with a whole bunch of junk to deter from and ignore what's really going on.

When we first enter into this journey, we're so focused on being healed of our compulsive sexual behavior. Healed from the wounds those things have caused. But what really needs to happen is the healing of our core, unhealed woundedness. The unseen woundedness that led us here.

Most of us don't want to face what's unseen. But that is exactly what has to happen in order to be healed. Fully healed.

So, You're Skeptical

The use of the word "scars" to explain the steps of recovery actually came as a late-night revelation. I was reminded of Thomas in John 20. Such a doubter, he just had to see the scars on Christ's hands and on His side before he would believe it was really Jesus, raised from the dead.

I can understand his doubt. I too am a skeptic. Jesus could be standing in front of me, and I might still ask to see an ID.

I'd probably be the same way as Thomas, and I can bet you might be the same way too. Because again, you want to know that person who is standing in front of you, trying to help, can in fact understand where you've been.

Christ's scars served as a proof to Thomas that Christ was for real.

We must first expose our core woundedness for what it is. A deep pain that has simply been medicated and bandaged by our destructive behavior but was never truly cared for properly.

A wound that was dealt with (through avoidance and denial), but was not healed.

I'm not going to lie; exposing our unhealed woundedness can be downright ugly. It can be painful. It can even be infected by years of neglect.

But when we finally expose it, clean out the junk that's been filling it up, and fill it again with good, healthy things, over time and with proper care, the wound will actually begin to heal.

And in its place will be only a scar. A reminiscence of what was. Not of what still is.

Scars in and of themselves aren't bad. Scars are a sign that healing from something traumatic has taken place. Scars are a reminder of where we've been. Scars show others that we know what they're going through and that we may actually be able to help. In fact, there's a saying that scars are like tattoos with better stories.

What better story could be told than one of a healed and redeemed life?

Just as

the scars on Christ's hands and side proved who He was to Thomas, the scars left behind from our own wounds prove His healing in us.

Just as the scars on Christ's hands and side proved who He was to Thomas, the scars left behind from our own wounds prove His healing in us. He is after all the only true Healer.

Without further ado, I will introduce each of the five steps, as a prelude to what you will explore more deeply in the chapters to come. So grab a journal (you'll need one as periodic reflection questions are presented), a Bible, and maybe even a piece of chocolate.

And let's begin.

S Is for Surrender

"Today is the day that I am going to stop looking at porn . . ."

"Today's the day that I am going to live a pure life . . ."

Sound familiar? Of course it does.

All of us, at one time or another, have made these idle promises to ourselves. To God.

But what happens is a couple of days of good intentions, maybe even a couple of weeks with success in our attempts to not act out, but ultimately we stumble again. And instead of beginning, we become discouraged and fall back on what's familiar and comfortable.

Falling even harder into a routine of destruction.

Well, why does this happen to us?

Behavior modification doesn't work without first surrendering control of our behavior (emotional disorders, physical desires, mental afflictions) to God.

Surrender begins by asking the question, “Do I trust God enough to get well?”

C Is for Confession

The word *confess* means “to acknowledge.” Confession of sin is an acknowledgment of sin, with the intent of seeking forgiveness. We have a scriptural promise in 1 John 1:9 that “if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins.”

Confession should not be done out of arrogance. Confession should not come from a desire to manipulate someone or a situation. Confession should not be hasty or rushed to simply get it over with. Confession should not be done out of fear.

And getting caught does not count as a confession.

Light eliminates the darkness. Shining light on your addiction will bring light to a situation that has been dark for too long.

Confession may be the scariest of the steps because it means finally opening up to another human being about what we’ve experienced.

But confession is nothing if not simply obedience as found in James 5:16: “Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.”

If you are faithful in obedience, God will be faithful in seeing you through it.

A Is for Accountability

Most of us know that accountability is about being responsible, or answerable, for our behavior and actions. However, addicts are resistant to accountability more often than not because of the notion that they will be told what to do and how to do it.

Even reading this idea of accountability may be rubbing some of you the wrong way. But it goes deeper than just dos and don'ts.

For as long as we've been addicted, our basic MO has been to lie or deceive others in order to keep our addictive behaviors a secret. We've told so many lies that we may not even trust ourselves anymore.

Or know where one lie ends and another lie begins.

The act of accountability restores the character that has been lost in us and makes us into women of integrity.

Integrity. Something most of us have been living without for too long.

This is done by not simply being held accountable to our actions but being held accountable to growing spiritually, growing closer and more intimate with God.

But accountability cannot be done alone. Recovery cannot be done alone. Proverbs 12:15 (NLT) says, "Fools think their own way is right, but the wise listen to others."

So it is vitally important first, to surround yourself with other believers. People who are going to lift you up—not pull you down or be an enabler of your past decisions. Find a healthy church, and

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a small group or Bible study where you can grow in community with other women.

Second, pinpoint someone who can act as your mentor, guide, or trusted friend.

This person should be female and preferably someone who has walked the same road you're on right now with a track record of at least a year of freedom.

If you can't find someone who meets those criteria, then find a pastor, biblical counselor, or someone else of spiritual authority to adopt this role.

Find someone who will hold you accountable and form a plan for when you are tempted (which no doubt is going to happen). A mentor provides encouragement, an ear to listen, prayerful support, and will be a model and guide for you on how to live a life without porn.

And third, join a support group.

On pages 145–149 of this book, you'll find resources for locating groups meeting online and locally around the country.

A support group will allow you to commune with women who know exactly where you are because they are exactly where you are. And you can help one another through the recovery process.

I believe fully in the power of community through the body of Christ to help break the cycle of addiction. Of any addiction. I so wish there had been a women's group when I began my journey to freedom.

R Is for Responsibility

By accepting responsibility, we begin looking less inside ourselves and more to the outside—where our actions may have had an impact on others.

You may even need to create a personal inventory of how your addiction has harmed others: whether the harm was physical, emotional, spiritual, or even financial.

This isn't about filling you with shame or regret. Not at all.

Remember what John wrote in 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins."

Our sin is covered. We shall feel no more shame.

Be gentle with yourself as you create this inventory. Talk it through with your mentor or support group.

This step is about growing in maturity. Moving away from denial, blame, or self-pity to accepting responsibility for your own actions.

Refer to the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15.

This is a beautiful account of someone taking full responsibility for their behavior and acknowledging that their behavior didn't affect just themselves personally, but the effect it may have had on those in their lives and on the heart of God.

The Last **S** Stands for Sharing

This is the final step in the SCARS sequence and should be done after *at least* six weeks of freedom. It may need to be longer for you.

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It is my firm belief that God never wastes an experience.

And sharing is about knowing that you have a story, and that sharing that story is an essential part of your healing.

You will need to share again and again, because we can never finish rejoicing in the work the Lord has done in us. There's always someone else to tell.

First, prepare your story by writing it out. Once you have written your story, you'll begin to consider who may need to hear it. Practice telling your story to these people, and then pray about how God may want to use your story further.

If you had told me fifteen, ten, or even five years ago that I would be writing a book that exposes my whole story and be the founding director of an anti-pornography ministry, I would have laughed in your face.

But that is how big the God we serve is.

He can take what was once a broken vessel and piece it together again. He intends to use your story in remarkable ways. And His refinement is most often the best part.

Testimonial:

AmyChristine Comes Clean

Pornography has turned my life upside down. My first exposure to pornography was through a childhood friend at the age of eight, but the curiosity exploded when the Internet made its debut.

Like all young people, I developed a normal desire to know more about sex. My parents and church taught me nothing; the only knowledge I had was from health class at school, so I turned to the Internet to find out more. What I didn't realize was that those beginning moments of searching the World Wide Web for information on sex soon snared me in its web.

I was hooked—I became engrossed in searching the Internet for entertainment any chance I could get. In my teens, it started with chat rooms but also led to searching for erotic stories. In my twenties, the search exploded as I became desperate for more. I began actively searching for pornography to fill my growing needs. What started with pictures soon led to videos, all being readily available on my parents' unfiltered computer. Then, as if dealing with pornography wasn't enough, I was now adding masturbation to this ongoing struggle.

Words cannot begin to convey the amount of shame I have endured while living with these sexual sins. Chains began having their grip on me at the tender age of eight years old. But despite this shame (or because of it), I became a follower of Jesus Christ when I was fifteen. Now, as a thirty-year-old Christian woman, I am still fighting these chains, and let me assure you, it is not easy

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being a Christian woman struggling with this highly taboo sin of pornography.

I did not date much in my teens or twenties. I didn't need to, since in my world, pornography was my relationship. I didn't need anything from anyone. Pornography was a constant friend, which now I label as false intimacy.

Pornography is a drug of the mind. I could use it, and no one needed to know. Unlike if I had used street drugs, however, I never had to interact with anyone, so, on the surface, I could maintain the "goodie-goodie" label. As time elapsed, pornography became a daily routine, but there were often days where I had to search out deeper and darker things to get the same result.

In late 2009, I reached the end of my rope. Living with this oppressive shame and guilt, in combination with my profession as a flight attendant, severely affected my health. Because I'd spend hours a night searching out pornography, I was sleep deprived in a job that already had its own challenges of sleep deprivation. My spiritual sickness was now leading to physical sickness, but I still couldn't seem to stop. In early 2010, I was desperate to make a change. In February 2010, I turned thirty, and I didn't want to go one more decade addicted to pornography.

The biggest jump start has been accountability. I have a wonderful spiritual mom who mentors me and has held me accountable. I placed filters on my computer and even went to the radical extreme of giving up my laptop for nine months, since I had to remove all access. Computers that are not filtered or protected are dangerous to the pornography addict, much like giving an alcoholic a beer to

hold and expecting him not to drink.

And while accountability is a great step in the right direction, I also need fellowship. For me, fellowship in a church body is critical, yet my job as a flight attendant often causes me to work weekends, thus curtailing the very fellowship I need and crave. There has also been the need to belong, and thankfully, this past spring the Lord led me to Dirty Girls Ministries, where I found other women (both believers and nonbelievers) who struggle as I have. Many stories are similar to mine. I have continued my journey by joining a recovery group and combined that with Christian counseling.

Sadly, porn has consumed twenty-two years of my life. I lost part of my childhood, my innocence, as well as time, energy, relationships, potential relationships, my walk with God, and now my health. I know that freedom is possible because I've seen and heard the testimonies of others. That's why I know that this journey is not meant to be walked alone.

Truthfully, I feel like I am moving at a snail's pace. I know God's desire for me is to be whole, and I will not give up no matter how slow the process seems. And while I have my days of feeling this journey will never end, I've also tasted freedom too. The enemy of our souls wants us in isolation and in the pit, but with Christ's strength and grace, I will not remain in that pit anymore.