



# MAGDALA

CHURCH PARTNERSHIP GUIDE

## WHO WE ARE:

Magdala exists as a space where women can find hope, healing, and freedom alongside each other from sexual addiction through support, community, and accountability.

## WHAT ARE WE DOING:

Magdala provides resources, media, and a community for women of faith who are seeking healing in the area of their sexual practices. The heart of our mission is the formation of virtual and in-person small groups led by women trained in the use of our curriculum. Our small group members are healing from various sexual behaviors, including pornography use, masturbation, fantasizing, adultery, fornication, and experiences in sex work. We regularly publish blogs and podcasts covering the issues most relevant to women of faith seeking a healthy and moral sexual life.

## WHERE ARE WE COMING FROM:

We are an organization founded and operating in the Catholic tradition, though we welcome women from all faith backgrounds. Our doctrinal statement, included in the curriculum sample below, is the moral standard from which our groups are asked to operate, but we do not seek to change anyone's personal beliefs or require personal agreement in order to participate. We only require leaders and participants to agree that this is the sexual ethic which will be upheld in group discussion.

## WHAT WE OFFER YOU:

The Magdala Church Partnership offers you everything you need to successfully launch and run a recovery group for women on your campus using Magdala's curriculum. We offer three levels of subscription with different benefits, based on the needs of your community.

We want to ensure you receive the resources that are most helpful to you, and we never want cost to be a deterrent to women having access to help. If you feel one of our subscription levels will not fit your needs or your budget, please contact us at [info@magdalaministries.org](mailto:info@magdalaministries.org) to set up a meeting with a staff member, where we can discuss structuring a plan that will be best for you and the women in your community.



# OUR SUBSCRIPTION LEVELS

## LEVEL 1 (\$750/YEAR)

- 8 participant guides
- 2 leader guides
- Customizable marketing materials
- Onboarding with a Magdala staff member
- Access to online leader training modules, leadership community, and exclusive twice monthly formation meetings

## LEVEL 2 (\$1100/YEAR)

- 15 participant guides
- 3 leader guides
- Customizable marketing materials
- Onboarding and 3 mentorship meetings with a Magdala staff member
- Access to online leader training modules, leadership community, and exclusive twice monthly formation meetings
- 20% off merchandise

## LEVEL 3 (\$3000/YEAR)

- 20 participant guides
- 4 leader guides
- Customizable marketing materials
- Onboarding and monthly mentorship meetings with a Magdala staff member
- Access to online leader training modules, leadership community, and exclusive twice monthly formation meetings
- 20% off merchandise
- Magdala staff speaker at your church\*

\*Speaker stipend is waived; your church is still responsible for covering travel and lodging expenses.



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## WHAT AGE GROUP DOES THIS SERVE?

We wrote our curriculum to serve adult women, ages 18+, though our curriculum has been used in settings with high school students as well.

## DO YOU OFFER TRAINING?

Yes! Each church leader is onboarded by a Magdala staff member, and is also mentored based on their subscription level. They also gain access to a leader group chat with all of Magdala's other virtual and in-person small group leaders, as well as our online training modules and formation nights. Our staff is also always available by email to answer any immediate questions or needs.

## WHO CAN LEAD A MAGDALA SMALL GROUP?

We recommend that a Magdala small group is a woman who is experienced in either personal or interpersonal sexual sin and compulsion, and is in a stable place of recovery and healing where leading a group would not be detrimental to their own health. If you're unsure about the selection of a leader, our team is more than happy to help you navigate your choice.

## DO YOU OFFER GUIDANCE ON CONFIDENTIALITY AND SAFETY?

Our program, leader and participant agreements, and training are well structured to help you maintain confidentiality and a sense of safety among participants. We also offer guidance on ensuring your group meets any legal or church policy requirements regarding sensitive discussions of trauma, abuse, and sexuality in general. It is of the utmost concern to us that each participant feels safe to share her story, but also that all standards of legality and safety are met.



## WHAT WOMEN ARE SAYING

"Finding Magdala was a huge blessing that came into my life at my lowest moment of deep addiction and shame. Through the loving community of women that I met in this group, I was able to peel back layers and layers of lies that were caused by the evil of masturbation and pornography addiction. I was able to replace these lies with the truth that I am loved, I am worthy of love, and I am capable of loving others. I learned that I am not a slave to my addiction, but a warrior. And even better, I realized that I am not alone in this fight! Magdala has given me the exact tools that I need to battle with lust every day, and a community to support and encourage me. I cannot recommend the women of Magdala strongly enough! When women of Christ come together to draw closer to the Lord and to fight through something really hard there is a lot of grace and beauty and power in that. The Lord desires healing for every woman, all we need to do is receive it with open arms!" - Mara R.

"My Magdala Small Group helped me come to terms with the fact that compulsive sexual behaviors are actually a real struggle and that I wasn't alone in that struggle. In fact, other young, holy, Catholic women on my campus who I looked up to also struggled with the same thing and needed help like me. Being in the group made me think more positively about my struggle with sexual sin, especially the discussions and the accountability. I was able to see that it was something I could overcome as long as I was honest with myself and the people around me." -Trisha M.

"I cannot commend Magdala Ministries highly enough. While encouraging our spiritual life, the program offers practical advice on how to develop a healthy sexuality in the face of lust. Magdala was and still is crucial to my healing; it has allowed me to rebuild my self-identity when pornography had slowly chipped it away. Furthermore, the community that I found through Magdala has remained active in my day-to-day life, which has made me feel less alone in my struggle against porn. No woman dealing with sexual sin could ever regret being in a Magdala small group. It may even save their life. I know it saved mine." - Emily A

"One of the greatest blessings of my small group was knowing that I could 'vent' about the struggle of sexual sin there freely. I knew I would be accepted and encouraged towards goodness no matter what I said. This anti-shaming space was the positive force needed in my life to propel me to distinguish between condemning and convicting voices in my life..." - Therese L.



## WHAT CLINICIANS ARE SAYING

"With enthusiastic praise, I would like to recommend the Magdala program! Both the small group leader guide and the participant guide are timely and much needed resources that thoroughly and compassionately address a struggle so many women are facing today! The authors' head and heart knowledge of women's sexual addiction is an indispensable vehicle for the psychological, emotional and spiritual healing of women's minds and hearts. As a Clinical Psychologist for 30 years, I have found the program both enlightening and encouraging in my professional work with women. Sexual addiction among women is very real, and Magdala's curriculum offers a genuine path to the restoration of their peace and hope!"

- Dr. Jeanne Von Erden, Licensed Psychologist, Private Practice, Mason, OH

"Pornography, masturbation, and sex addiction are real problems--and not just for men. Even women with secure histories and supportive families can repeatedly fall into the trappings of sexual acting out. Casting aside any illusions that this battle with sexual temptation can be won through rugged individualism, Magdala Ministries provides a transformative environment of supportive accompaniment and other resources that can breathe new life into the women who wrestle with any or all of these issues. Highly recommended!"

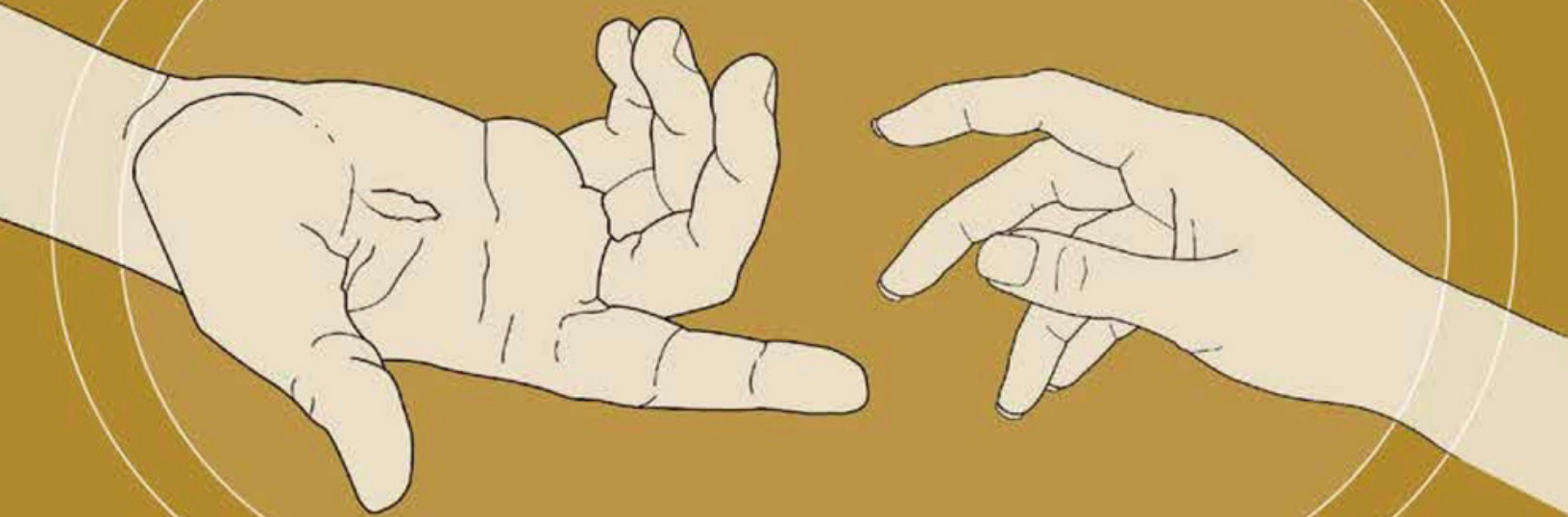
- Dr. Peter Martin, Licensed Psychologist, Immaculate Heart of Mary Counseling Center, Lincoln, NE

"Women struggle with sexual addictions, too. We are created by Love for love, and God desires his daughters to be free from compulsive sexual behavior. This marvelous resource addresses addiction through the lens of scientific research, faith, and community, providing a proven pathway to freedom for flourishing and love."

- Deborah Rojas, Counselor, Integrity Restored, Philadelphia, PA



# MAGDALA



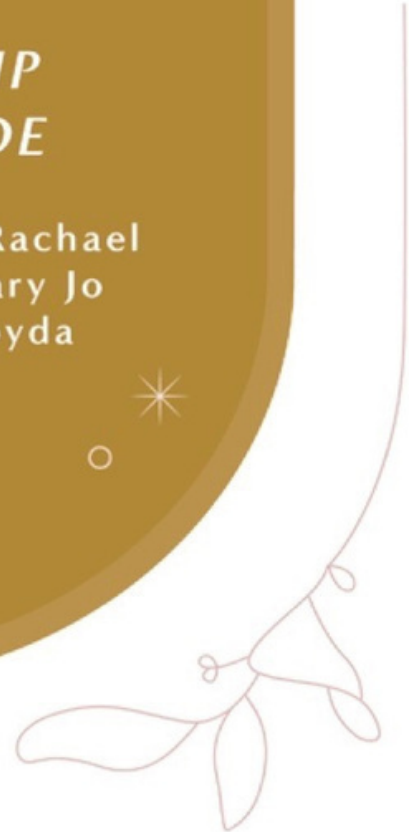
The Magdala Manual  
Small Group Leader Guide

# MAGDALA

The Magdala Manual

## *SMALL GROUP LEADER GUIDE*

Written and edited by Rachael  
(Gieger) Killackey, Mary Jo  
Carney, and Julia Hoyda





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## ABOUT MAGDALA

Magdala is an organization that seeks to offer faith-based, non-clinical group support and resources for women struggling with addictions to pornography, masturbation, or other sexually compulsive and addictive behaviors. Through virtual small groups, podcast episodes, and blog posts, women are offered support, community, and accountability as they try to overcome their addictions and compulsions. Virtual small groups and content are led and produced by other women who have recovered from such compulsions.

## HOW WE BEGAN

Magdala began in 2018 at Ave Maria University when our founder, Rachael Killackey, started giving her testimony at campus events. Women frequently approached Rachael after her talks to ask what resources and support were available to them, because many desired also to heal and seek freedom from compulsive sexual behavior. Rachael and co-founder Mary Jo Carney began to look for some form of group curriculum that they could use to help women on their campus. However, they quickly discovered that there was a lack of adequate group support for women of faith in this area—so Rachael took matters into her own hands and wrote the first edition of Magdala’s curriculum. Rachael led the very first women’s small group on their campus at Ave Maria University that year. The following year Mary Jo led the group and it has continued on AMU’s campus to the present day with new leadership each school year. After three years of successful small groups at Ave Maria, Rachael continued to sense that perhaps God was asking her for more. In 2021, Rachael made the decision to expand Magdala’s outreach from a single campus to a multi-campus outreach along with a thriving virtual small group platform that has now evolved to serve women all over the world. The Magdala Team is honored to answer the call from the Lord to walk alongside women seeking recovery from sexual addiction. From day one, our mission has been to listen to and meet the needs of the women who come to us for help, guidance, and support. With God’s grace, we will continue adapting our approach to cultivate both personal healing and a cultural shift in the value of feminine sexuality.

## HEY THERE!

Thank you for reading our Magdala program. If you’re reading this, we’re assuming you want to help women overcome addiction to pornography, masturbation, fantasizing, and lust-based tendencies. This is a tough bracket to be in, especially since women are just starting to speak up on the issue. However, there’s a whole lot of hope and we’re so glad you’re here! Just a couple notes before you get started:

### ✦ *Pray*

As the leader, you are stepping into a role of mentorship that requires you to hear and battle difficult things, spiritually, emotionally, and physically. The Lord has so much grace available for this call. Equip yourself and your women with prayer and praise, especially at the beginning and end of each meeting! Feel free to use our prayer appendix on page \_\_\_\_ for this purpose. As the women become more comfortable in the group, at your discretion, invite them to lead the closing prayer.

### ✦ *Seek Support For Yourself*

It’s so important to stay strong and healthy as a leader. Spiritual direction, discipleship, or therapy are all great outlets to help you process anything you need to regarding this struggle or what goes on in this group. Having a good relationship with your own accountability partner during the course of leading this small group may prove to be helpful. Co-leaders can also be designated to help you shoulder the responsibility of leading a group and to help you as you discern how each member is progressing through their recovery. If in the course of your time as a leader you find that your personal recovery has begun to decline, please notify the Director of Formation, or another campus mentor within Magdala another member of the Magdala Leadership Team who will help you to assess the situation and make a plan moving forward that is best for both you and your small group.

### ✦ *Refer When Needed*

This group can bring up a lot of wounds, lies, and situations that may need to be referred to a professional. Magdala small group leaders are responsible for clearly explaining to their members that they are not acting as licensed professionals, and that some things can only be dealt with fully in a therapeutic setting. Magdala small groups are not therapy groups. Small group members are welcomed to share details of their mental health that relate to their recovery, without going into unnecessary detail (see next point). If a small group member shares details of depression, anxiety, eating disorder, trauma, abuse, or other clinical concerns, be sure to follow up with her afterwards and gently encourage her to see a psychologist, MD, counselor, and/or other rehabilitative specialists. For moderators of married women’s groups, please refer all questions regarding marital troubles, separation, or divorce (as it is related to addiction) to a licensed marital counselor, priest, and/or their diocesan tribunal.

✦ ***Step In When Needed***

Sometimes the answers to discussion questions will be obvious to your group members, and sometimes they won't. Throughout the leader guide in the discussion questions, items in parentheses should not be said aloud unless the discussion needs more prompts to move forward.

✦ ***Keep it Voluntary and Appropriately Detailed***

It's extremely difficult to be upfront and vulnerable about this issue, so keep it voluntary and expect some awkward pauses as the women consider their answers to discussion questions. Embrace that silence. Magdala strongly recommends that when group members share their setbacks, they do so with the minimum level of explicit detail necessary to illustrate their point. We strongly encourage women to specifically describe what happened leading up to and after their setback, but to keep descriptions of the setback itself appropriately discrete. If group members wish to work through details of their recovery that are more explicit, they may do so within their accountability conversations. Accountability partners should be upfront and honest about the amount of detail that is harmful or triggering to them. If a group member clearly shares too much explicit detail within the group, simply avoid a strong reaction in the moment, and shift the conversation as quickly as possible. After the group session, approach her gently and remind her to keep explicit details to a minimum whenever possible.

✦ ***Keep it Confidential***

What is shared by the women in the group needs to stay there and the women should never share someone else's journey with someone outside of the group. Magdala holds a zero tolerance policy on confidentiality: if a woman shares information (specifically the names or contact information of group members) outside of the group without permission, she will be removed from the Magdala small group immediately. If someone is in danger or something needs to be reported, it is the small group leader's responsibility to handle that, not the small group participants. If a small group member has concerns about a fellow member, they should bring those concerns to the small group leader's attention.

✦ ***Exemplify and Encourage Commitment***

It takes great courage for someone to admit they have a problem with their sexual practices and resolve to change their habits. Attendance at meetings, especially official meetings, is a measure of your members' commitment to pursuing chastity in their lives and in their sexual practices. When a woman does not attend meetings, her actions suggest that it's not really that important to stop watching porn/masturbating/fantasizing and/or that they don't need anyone else's help. It requires great vulnerability for women to talk about their personal problems with new people. Skipping official meetings is bad for group morale. When a woman consistently fails to attend meetings, regardless of her intentions, her actions convey to the others that their progress (or lack thereof) is not important to her, which damages group trust. Ultimately, a woman's choice to attend group meetings reflects her decision to fight isolation by taking part in group work. It can be tempting for your members to give into fear and avoid group meetings, but the other women likely have the same fears and their decisions to skip meetings will influence everyone else's decisions as well. Emergencies and accidents are always grounds for just cancellation, but other situations are up to your discretion as the leader. Please refer the women to their signed Participant Agreement Form for more specific information and keep in mind that 3 or more situations of cancellation with undue cause or no-shows will be grounds for their termination from the group.

✦ ***Make it Your Own***

This program is somewhat adaptable to your group's needs. Sessions 1 – 6(A) as well as sessions 14 – 17 should remain in the order we have set them. However, if you feel like one session needs to come before another in sessions 7 – 13, feel free to switch it up. Regarding timing and time constraints, if you find you have time just for two or three of the parts of a session, don't sweat it! Prioritize quality over quantity, and finish the remainder of the session at another meeting, or modify the activity. Most activities, particularly journaling ones, can be modified to become activities done on your group members' own time if necessary.

✦ ***Form Intentional Community***

This group offers addiction recovery support, but you need to put effort in as the leader to form a true community of sisters in Christ. We find that groups are most successful when friendships are formed both within and out of official group session work. Don't underestimate your power, as a leader, to encourage your members to engage in fun and life-giving activities together! Try hosting a movie night, game night, or playing fun games virtually if your group is remote. See Appendices 5 and 6 for inspiration.

✦ ***Don't Forget Pre & Post Group Surveys***

These surveys help our ministry to understand where we are meeting the needs of our women well and where we still have room to grow. Please refer to your leadership training with Magdala for instructions on administering the surveys and don't forget to administer the pre-group involvement survey before all women have shown up to their first session!

## DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

Moral and theological accuracy is integral to Magdala's mission and ministry, as well as pastoral care. All Magdala small group leaders, even if they are not practicing Catholicism, are bound to abide by the following doctrine, for the sake of maintaining both an uplifting and honest environment, rooted in Christ. Please refer to your Director of Formation for any questions or concerns regarding the following doctrine.

- ✦ Human sexuality is a sacred good created by God, intended for His glorification and an authentic expression of love (CCC #2331-2333). This good is to be affirmed and never be construed otherwise.
- ✦ Sexual activity is part of God's design for marriage between man and woman, and is an expression reserved for those in this vocation (CCC #2335).
- ✦ All the baptized are called to the virtue of chastity, which means to live out their God-given sexuality according to their state in life (CCC #2337). Within marriage, this includes sexual activity as part of conjugal love. Outside of marriage, this means a call to abstinence from sexual activity, or chastity through continence (CCC #2348-2349).
- ✦ Pornography, masturbation, fornication, and other lust-based activities are indeed sins against chastity, and should never be encouraged as a healthy expression of our sexuality (CCC #2351-2356).
- ✦ Same-sex marriages are against God's design for marriage and persons who experience homosexuality, like all other persons, are called to a life of chastity. However, the Church defends it is not sinful to have a homosexual orientation and experience attraction to the same sex, or to experience such within a heterosexual marriage (often referred to as mixed-orientation marriage). (CCC #2357-2359).
- ✦ Further, persons who identify as homosexual, queer, bisexual, non-binary, transgender, or other non-heterosexual or non-cisgender identities are to be treated with love, respect, and compassion, and encouraged to live a life of virtue in concordance with their most integral identity--that of being a child of God (CCC #2333, 2393).
- ✦ The Church condemns any use of contraceptive means of birth control, but allows the use of varied forms of medical interventions that are not inherently contraceptive (hormonal birth control pill, IUD, etc.), when the person is sexually abstinent for the duration of the use, and as long as the use is justified by a medical condition. (CCC #2370, *Humanae Vitae* 14).
- ✦ The Church permits the use of natural family planning within the sacrament of marriage, based on the foundational disposition of openness to life in all circumstances. Natural family planning is an act of trust on the part of the Church towards married couples, in that they are responsible for using natural family planning for just and moral reasons to either avoid or achieve pregnancy. (CCC #2370, 2399).
- ✦ Most importantly, Christ's redemption is total. There is no sexual sin that Christ cannot and has not redeemed, and the baptized are therefore called to live in trust of His mercy, love, and forgiveness (John 3:16-17).
- ✦ Sometimes the answers to discussion questions will be obvious to your group members, and sometimes they won't. Throughout the leader guide in the discussion questions, items in parentheses should not be said aloud unless the discussion needs more prompts to move forward.

# DISCLAIMERS

- ✦ *For in-person campus leaders: Magdala adheres to Title IX laws on a campus-by-campus basis. If you are unaware of your campus policies regarding Title IX please familiarize yourself and/or ask a trusted staff member on campus.*
- ✦ *For virtual group leaders: Magdala adheres to Mandatory Reporting laws on a state-by-state basis. If you are unaware of your state policies regarding Mandatory Reporting please familiarize yourself.*
- ✦ *For parish group leaders: be aware of your Diocesan Safe Environment Policies, and if speaking with minors on this topic be certain to obtain permission from a parent or guardian prior to their participation.*
- ✦ *For All Leaders: The viewing, sharing, or possession of child pornography is a criminal offense and must be reported to the proper civil authorities.*

**Must-Haves For Every Session**

- Bible
- Magdala Guide
- Writing Utensils (In-person: bring extra. Leadership at its finest.)
- Journal (optional)
- Tissues
- Scissors (Spiritual Battle Session)

Okay, looks like you're good to go! Thank you for your commitment to freedom, and know of our team's prayers for you and your women. Jesus is with you! If you have any further questions regarding the materials and sessions in this manual, feel free to contact us at [www.magdalaministries.org](http://www.magdalaministries.org)

Notes:

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*SESSION 1:*  
**DESIRE**




# SESSION 1: DESIRE



## *Session Summary*



One of the most painful parts of a struggle with sexual sin and lust is that it not only damages your relationships with God and others, but it damages the beautiful heart God has given you. As women, our hearts are made to reflect the beauty and goodness of the heart of God.

Session 1 is for the women to get to know their own hearts and the hearts of others in the group setting. Addictive behavior is always an uphill battle that requires deep internal motivation to confront and conquer. Without acknowledging our hearts' goodness and desires, this battle can't be won. God created our hearts for goodness, holiness, and happiness, but sexual sin gets in the way. The point of this group is to understand and reorder the disordered desire that sexual struggles feed, so that the true desires of the heart can be lived out.



### *Opening Prayer*

Pray the Suscipe of St. Ignatius of Loyola (p. 51) and offer a prayer from your own heart.



## *Introductions*

Have all the women introduce themselves, including the following:

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1.) What they do in daily life (job/hobbies/living situation)?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2.) What their struggle is that brought them to Magdala?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3.) How they learned about Magdala.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4.) What they hope to get out of their time with Magdala?

## *Scripture: Psalm 139:1-18*

Scripture Highlights: You are known and loved and you are more than your sin.

Do you feel like your heart is good?

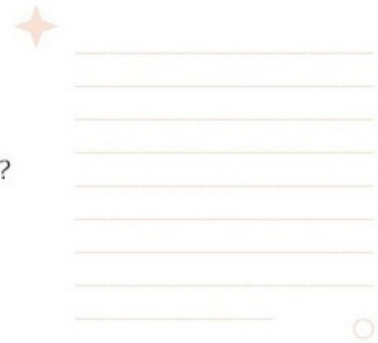
Do you believe that you are fearfully and wonderfully made? What does this mean to you?



**Activity: I Want Journaling (10 minutes)**

Have the women write spend 10 minutes or so writing down the things they want, from the small to the big desires. In the template provided, there are 4 sections in their journal for these desires; Week, Month, Year, and Life. What do they want today or this week? (pass that test? Get extra sleep? Catch up with that friend?) What do they want this month? (Stay on budget? Go to confession? Make a workout routine?) What do they want this year? (Run a marathon? Volunteer time? Deeper peace? Clearer discernment?) What do they want for their life? (Dream job? Husband? Family? Community?) What kind of person do they want to be?

**Discussion:**



- 1.) How do you see your desires--good or bad?
- 2.) What desires do you have that your struggle is getting in the way of?  
(Relationships? Vocation? Career?)
- 3.) What desires has God given you to help the world see Him?
- 4.) What do you want Jesus to do for you?

**Announcement:**

**Accountability Partners!**

Inform the women that they are encouraged to get to know each other very well both in and out of the group for their benefit, but also because they will have the option of having an accountability partner from the group. Explain to the women that accountability is a necessary part of recovery from sexual addiction, and that they may select a partner from outside or inside of group, but that selections will be final by the fourth session. Talk about the requirements for accountability: Once a week conversational check-in (can be brief, a phone call is highly advised), check-in for prayer in temptation or accountability after a fall, prayer for each other, and if it's conducive to their schedule and personal recovery, physical exercise together once a week.

**Pre-Group Involvement Surveys!**

If you are missing any of your pre-group involvement surveys, feel free to remind the women to fill them out as soon as they are able to. Explain to them that these surveys are anonymous and help us to improve Magdala for future women. Tell the women that they are free to be honest in this survey since it is anonymous and you, the small group leader, will not see their responses.

**Closing Prayer**

Pray from your own heart for the success of the group, in thanksgiving for everyone present and their desires, and that God would fulfill everyone's desires and/or pray the Litany of Trust (p. 52) together; entrusting your desires to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.