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**A Pastoral Journey Wrapped Up in Grace:
Pastoral Counseling with Sexual Addicts in African Context**

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Introduction

Human sexuality in general is not only a taboo topic but very controversial and complex. It is more so in the case with sexual addiction. This is the case even though human sexuality is a divine gift to be celebrated and respected.¹ But whether we like it or not sexual addiction is a reality that cannot be wished away. It looks like sexual addiction is there to stay and the best that pastoral counselors can do is to understand it and forever look for ways of journeying meaningfully and pastorally with God's people as they struggle with sexual addiction and as they search for healing and liberation. This

¹ Andrew Weaver, et al, *Counseling on Sexual Issues: A Handbook for Pastors and Other Helping Professionals* (The Pilgrims Press, Cleveland, 2005), 17.

pastoral journey has to be wrapped up in grace instead of usual condemnation and vengeful judgment that is associated with Christians and other religious communities. Pastoral counseling has no choice but to make a contribution in the facilitation of a process that will lead to the discovery of the pain and the joy of healing and liberation for those people who are struggling with sexual addiction. Even though there are other helping professionals people will always seek the help of pastors when experiencing problems particularly related to aspects of human sexuality, as Weaver et al point out that “many individuals and couples do seek guidance for sexual issues”.²

Weaver et al cite twenty-one studies that were carried over two decades in diverse populations and that revealed that clergy reported being asked for counsel on matters such as sexual abuse, infidelity, sexual problems between marital partners, pornography, sexual offences, sex education, masturbation, sexually transmitted diseases, sexual identity.³

I suspect that if those studies were to be carried out in the African context the results would have been very interesting and radically different given the conservative nature of African communities when it comes to dealing with matters of human sexuality. Even though human sexuality problems persist, very few people come to pastors in the African context, not because problems do not exist but because of the judgmental approaches associated with conservative communities. Interestingly but not surprisingly pastors in the studies referred to above indicate that they feel less confident and less prepared to address sexual issues in comparison to other types of problems about which they are consulted. Weaver concludes that clergy need solid, practical information on subjects that concern the people who come to them seeking pastoral counsel.⁴ This is as a result of inadequate sex education in most seminaries in the U.S.A. and that is even the case in the African context. Having been at different theological institutions both as a student, as lecturer, board member I do not remember any of the institution dealing with matters of sex education in their curricula. I concur with Weaver et al that sexual education should be structured

² Weaver, 4-5.

³ Weaver, 5.

⁴ Ibid.

around pastoral issues and grounded in ministry experience.⁵ As human sexuality is central to the life and human relationships there is need to integrate human sexuality matters in the curriculum of theological institutions, seminaries and faculties. This must also be included in continuous education for clergy, which is unfortunately non-existent in churches in Africa. This is in view of helping student pastors and serving pastors to grapple with their own sexuality and to better equip and prepare them for ministry in the area of human sexuality in all its dimensions.

A. The Complexity of Human Sexuality and Sexual Addiction

Writing about pastoral counseling to the sexual addict in the African context is not an easy matter to write or publicly talk about from an African perspective as matters related to sex in general are still taboo in many African communities particularly in faith based communities. In many communities problems related to sex are often swept under the carpet as if such problems do not exist or as if such problems are not our business. In addition those struggling with sex related problems are forced to go underground by the condemnation and vengeful judgment that is often associated with our communities. These approaches are a contradiction to the teaching biblical teachings about grace, and people end up in hopelessness as a result of the denial of forgiveness and grace. Matters that go underground are very difficult, if not impossible to deal with.

Furthermore problems related to sex are often complex to write about in Africa as they are rarely spoken about openly, let alone written about, as Kunhiyop correctly states that matters related to sex such as homosexuality, lesbianism, same-sex intercourse and same-sex marriages and many other challenges are “not readily discussed in traditional societies”.⁶ Though one will be correct to say that this reticence to discuss openly and write about sexual matters is not only limited to African traditional societies, but extends even to non-traditional societies. It is for that reason that Kunhiyop states that “it is thus contingent upon Christian ethicists and church leaders to discuss these issues and articulate Christian ethical positions”⁷ It is

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Samuel W. Kunhiyop, *African Ethics* (2008), 271.

⁷ Ibid.

also imperative that those involved in pastoral counselling grapple with this complex problem of human sexuality in particular sexual addiction. One of the first black porn hustlers in South Africa is reported to have said the following in a newspaper report: “Although black South African are conservative about sexuality their attitudes are slowly changing as a result of a growing middle class which is open minded.”⁸

If matters related to sex in general are not openly talked about and written about it is more so with sexual addiction. Sexual addiction happens in what Dr. Harry Schaumburg⁹ refers to as “the subterranean world of the human heart that very few people are willing to enter”. It is often not appreciated that many other sex related and relationship problems either result from or in some ways are related to sexual addiction, which Dr. Mark Laaser refers to as “a secret sin” that almost all are too ashamed to talk about.¹⁰ Sexual addiction remains a taboo topic in many communities particularly in African communities, traditional and non-traditional. This is even worse within the walls of a church, amongst ministers and Christians in general. Although these matters are rarely talked about, it does not mean that there are no men and women who struggle with sexual addiction. In many cases those who struggle with sexual addiction might not even be conscious of their addiction and its underlying causes. They often give all kinds of explanations for their behaviors without admitting or acknowledging that they have a problem of sexual addiction. A recent South African Sunday newspaper (City Press) reports had the following headline, “SA’s porn industry on the rise.”¹¹ The newspaper went on to report that South Africa produces five locally made porn films a year worth R300 million.

During a visit to South Africa, Dr. Patrick Carnes told the Cape Argus that South Africa is at risk of spiraling sex addiction rates.¹² He also said South Africa has to overcome ambivalence towards sex and

⁸ Lucas Ledwaba, “Porn Hustler Wants SA to Enjoy Sex” City Press, 19/06/2011: 8.

⁹ Harry Schaumburg, *False Intimacy: Understanding the Struggle of Sexual Addiction* (Navpress, Colorado Springs, 1997), 24

¹⁰ Mark Laaser, *Healing the Wounds of Sexual Addiction* (Zondervan: Grand rapids, 2004), 14.

¹¹ Lucas Ledwaba, “South Africa’s Porn Industry,” City Press, 19/06/2011, Business City Press, 3.

¹² Patrick Carnes in newspaper interview with the Cape Argus of May, 16, 2008. Article by Di Caelers.

intimacy in a country where two factors crucial to sexual addiction are prevalent, namely: dysfunctional families and early trauma. South Africa has all the elements that feed sexual addiction, including H.I.V and Aids, family violence, financial pressures and unwanted pregnancies.

B. The Reality of Sexual Addiction

Whether it is taboo or not sexual addiction is a reality not only in the world but also in Africa, traditional and non-traditional. This is a reality also in the church. In the last decades the church has been experiencing problems related to sexuality as Mark Laaser states:

The Christian Church, both Protestant and Catholic is experiencing tremendous turmoil in the area of sexuality. We have Christian leaders whose sexual behaviour has become embroiled in sexual sins again and again. The media exposes their folly and the sacred becomes the focus of our culture's wit and sarcasm.¹³

Sexual addiction may be a secret sin¹⁴ that the world does not openly talk about, but it remains a reality in many of our communities and families.

Describing sexual addiction as a problem that has reached epidemic proportion, Patrick Carnes cites a number of cases to emphasize the point that sexual addiction is a reality:

We have a clergyman, a Roman Catholic priest, who has 163 counts of sexual misconduct with children. We have a bishop whose affairs became a national scandal-only to find that the woman has been involved with a series of ministers. We have a denomination facing close to a billion dollars in out of court settlements for child sexual abuse. We have a clergyman who preached national crusades against pornography, arrested for the production and distribution of child pornography.¹⁵

It is not only the clergy who are struggling with issues of sexuality, including sexual addiction but ordinary Christians and members of the community. Admittedly sexual addiction, which often leads to sexual misbehavior is a matter of serious concern amongst the clergy, Christians, and the population in general. It is also not a

¹³ Mark Laaser, *Healing Wounds of Sexual Addiction* (Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2004), 9.

¹⁴ Dr Patrick Carnes refers to sexual addiction as a secret sin in his foreword to Mark Laaser's book, *Healing the wounds of sexual addiction*, 9-10.

¹⁵ Carnes in Laaser, 9.

Roman Catholic problem but all churches and communities outside the church but it is human problem that happens in all societies. In efforts to demonstrate that Christians are not immune from the problem of sexual addiction, Laaser¹⁶ cites shocking and interesting statistics in the American context that reveals that 10 percent of the total population are sexually addicted. He extrapolates that to Christian congregations and states that in a congregation of 500 members, 50 are sex addicts. This percentage must have increased. Other studies reveal that a significant number of men are struggling with pornography. If a more or less similar studies could be made in the African context both in general population and in the Christian community, there would still be a significant number of people who are also suffering from sexual addiction, even among those who would elsewhere pretend to be “holier than thou” including those who are regarded as conservative. This is a pointer towards an agenda for further research in the African context regarding the prevalence of sexual addiction, and all associated complexities. Laaser goes on to point out that Christians who struggle pray ceaselessly, read the Bible constantly, and consult pastors, but they still can’t stop. He may have said that in the American context, but there are probabilities that this is also the case in Africa, if newspaper reports regarding sex related complications in many communities are to be believed. Laaser challenges the Christian community when he says: “It is time to bring the problem of sexual sin into the arena of discourse within the Christian community”.¹⁷ Even more importantly it is time to bring this to the curriculum of theological seminaries and university faculties in view of equipping and preparing candidates for ministry for this difficult terrain of pastoral counseling. It is also time for creating space within African communities both inside churches and the broader community outside the church, as Laaser says:

The church can no longer ignore sexual addiction or pretend it exists only ‘out there’, for it plagues both our families and our congregations.¹⁸

We often correctly write or talk about H.I.V and Aids as an epidemic, but very rarely do we refer to the reality sexual addiction as an

¹⁶ Laaser, 15.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

epidemic, but it has reached epidemic proportions. This epidemic of sexual addiction is exacerbated by the availability of sexually explicit material on the Internet. Laaser points out that the availability of pornography through the mainstream media has increased dramatically.¹⁹ He goes on to state:

Even “prime time” television once considered safe for family viewing, now regularly includes sexually explicit content.²⁰

Dr Patrick Carnes also points out that sexual activity on the internet has fundamentally altered our sexuality. With this availability of sexually explicit material, barriers and obstacles were obliterated overnight.²¹ This availability of sexually explicit material can only serve to fuel the fires of sexual addiction. It must be pointed out that sexual addiction did not start after the dawn of pornographic material, but rather this only makes matters worse. It needs also to be mentioned that sexual addiction is not limited to those who have access to the internet.

C. Understanding What Sexual Addiction Is

Before grappling further and dealing with counseling the sexual addict it is worth making attempts to understand what sexual addiction is. Sexual addiction is described as the behavior of a person who has an unusually intense sex drive and or an obsession with sex.²² It is also regarded as an addictive disease, which according to Laaser “has existed for centuries and has been misnamed, mistreated, ignored or completely undiagnosed.”²³ Dr. Patrick Carnes, an authority on the understanding and dealing with sexual addiction also sees sexual addiction as a disease. During a visit to South Africa in 2008 he said:

¹⁹ Ibid., 17.

²⁰ Ibid., 17.

²¹ Patrick Carnes, *Out of the Shadows: Understanding Sexual Addiction* (Hazelden, Minnesota), xiii.

²² *Sexual Addiction Causes, Symptoms, Diagnosis and Treatment on Medicinet*. Com. www.medicinet.com/sexual_addiction/article.htm, accessed on 20/6/2011.

²³ Laaser, 15.

Far from being a condition attached to child molesters and the like, Carnes said sexual addiction was a brain disease affecting the same pleasure zones of the brain as other addictions such as drugs, alcohol and gambling.²⁴

Laaser describes it as a sickness involving any type of uncontrollable sexual activity eventually leading to negative consequences. In further justifying that sexual addiction is a disease, Laaser says that “both sexual addiction and disease have observable symptoms and a natural progression that, if left untreated, get worse and eventually leads to death.”²⁵ Saying that sexual addiction is a disease does not imply that it is not sinful, and neither does it absolve the sexual addict from personal responsibility. Laaser states that defining sexual addiction as having a cause is also consistent with a definition of sin. Like sin, addiction has a cause and symptoms and it can eventually kill.²⁶

It continues to cause untold damages to individuals, families and societies. To this effect Laaser points out that:

Even though it has killed, humiliated, and wounded countless people, some still believe it does not exist. Those who suffer from sexual addiction have been laughed at, scorned, and persecuted. Too consumed by shame to ask for help, they have been confined to lives of loneliness and isolation. Only recently have we recognised the secret sin as a disease and offered treatment to its sufferers.²⁷

Denial of its existence, the accompanying secrecy, the shame associated with it and in most cases the judgmental approach associated with particularly Christians paralyses possibilities of dealing with sexual addiction effectively and graciously. It also impacts negatively on the possibilities of offering effective pastoral counseling. Even more importantly it contradicts the teachings of the church on grace and diminishes possibilities of journeying pastorally with those who are struggling with sexual addiction.

Sexual addiction is a very complex problem which follows from dependency on sexual experiences to achieve a sense of personal fulfillment.²⁸ According to Collins addictions can be complex

²⁴ Dr Patrick Carnes during a visit to South Africa, as reported on the 16 May 2008 (Cape Argus, Di Calers).

²⁵ Laaser, 25.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., 14.

²⁸ Harry Schaumburg, *Sexual Intimacy: Understanding the Struggle of Sexual Addiction* (Navpress, Colorado Springs, 1997), 24.

combinations of social, psychological, biological and spiritual influences.²⁹ Of course he was writing in the context of addictions in general. Sexual addiction is defined as a “progressive intimacy disorder characterized by compulsive sexual thoughts and acts”³⁰ These thoughts constitute an obsession. These obsessive thoughts of sex tend to dominate the sex addict’s thinking, making it difficult to work or engage healthy personal relationships.³¹ Nancy Heche goes on to point out correctly that this definition is based not on the type or frequency of sexual acts in which one engages, but upon the “escalating negative consequences” and the disregard for the effects on one’s personal life. ³² These negative consequences are also referred to in the definition of Schaumburg who stated that sexual addiction is a complex problem with multiple causes and far-reaching consequences. ³³ According to Schaumburg³⁴ the common most definition of sexual addiction includes the following four evidences:

- Compelling and consuming behavior
- Behavior leading to negative consequences
- Out of control behavior
- Denial of the behavior’s seriousness

In his elaboration of what happens in sexual addiction, which includes the abovementioned four evidences Schaumburg states that:

Sexual addiction exists when a person practices sexual activity to the point of negatively affecting his or her ability to deal with other aspects of life . . . and becomes dependent on sexual experiences as his or her primary source of fulfillment . . . regardless of the consequences to health, family and/or career. A probable sex addict exhibits the following-compelling and consuming behaviour, behaviour leading to negative consequences, out of control behaviour, and denial of the seriousness of the behaviour. The primary goal of sexually addictive behaviour is to avoid relational pain-essentially to control

²⁹ Garry Collins, *Christian Counselling: A Comprehensive Guide* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2007), 692.

³⁰ Nancy Heche, Sexual Addiction, in *The Complete Guide to Understanding Homosexuality: A Biblical and Compassionate Response to Same-Sex Attraction*, edited J. Dallas and N. Heche (Harvest House Publishers, Oregon, 2010), 303.

³¹ See www.medicinet.com/sexual_addiction/article.htm.

³² Heche, 303.

³³ Schaumburg, 20.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 22-23.

life. S/he feels that life isn't fulfilling, experiences disappointments in intimacy, loses of hope, and lacks self-confidence.³⁵

Behaviors associated with sexual addiction include the following:³⁶

- Compulsive masturbation
- Multiple affairs
- Extra-marital affairs, infidelity or womanizing as this is sometimes referred to with regard to men.
- Multiple or anonymous sexual partners and/or one night stands, or habitual casual sex.
- Consistent use of pornography
- Unsafe sex
- Sexual promiscuity
- Phone (including obscene phone calls) and computer sex or cybersex
- Prostitution or use of prostitutes
- Exhibitionism
- Obsessive dating through personal ads
- Voyeurism (watching others and/or stalking others)
- Indecent liberties (frateurism)
- Incest
- Sexual sadism
- paedophilia
- Sexual fantasy
- Sexual harassment
- Molestation, rape and incest
- Bestiality

In many cases some of those who have sexual addiction are not even aware they have addiction and in cases where they are aware

³⁵ Schaumburg, 22. See also Heche, 304.

³⁶ Sexual Addiction, www.medicinet.com/sexual_addiction/article.htm.

Accessed 20/06/2011, see also Laaser, pp 28-44. He fully discusses and categorises the above-mentioned list into building blocks behaviour and types of sexual addiction.

they are either in denial or even engage in justification for their behaviors. Many of these behaviors are common throughout the world and have been observed from since time immemorial. Even during biblical times there were behaviors that are similar to those displayed by sexual addicts. For instance a king who already had wives such as David could still afford to send messengers to bring another man's wife, Bathsheba into his house and have sex with her and make her pregnant after initially watching her from the roof of the king's palace. This sounds like what started as voyeurism and progressed to having multiple sex partners. King David went on to plot the husband Uriah's death. After the death of Uriah, David added Bathsheba to the wives that he already had and she bore him a son. This did not please the Lord.³⁷ While there is no basis to claim that David was a sexual addict, his behavior is not different from that of people who are seriously struggling with the sexuality and the behavior of many sexual addicts. Of course he was later strategically confronted by the prophet Nathan, following the encounter that ended with:

“You are that man! . . . Thus says the Lord: “behold, I will raise up adversity against you from your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbour, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of the sun. For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, before the sun”³⁸

Credit to King David, his response was an unconditional admission of guilt: “I have sinned against the Lord.”³⁹ He acknowledged his transgressions and showed great remorse, and the Lord was gracious to forgive him. Though he was punished, the punishment did not exclude God's grace as the prophet Nathan journeyed with him pastorally and prophetically. That is a classical case of a pastoral journey wrapped up in grace that was initiated by the prophet Nathan.

The problem of behavior normally associated with the struggle of human sexuality and particularly sexual addiction did begin and end with David. It went on to his son, Absalom when he sexually violated and raped his lovely sister whose name was Tamar, who responded with the protest: “No my brother, do not force me, for no such thing

³⁷ 2 Samuel 11:27.

³⁸ 2 Samuel 12: 11-12.

³⁹ 2 Samuel 12: 13, cf. Psalm 51.

should be done in Israel. Do not do this disrespectful thing!”⁴⁰ In fact no such thing should be done in any nation or society. However this continues to happen even in our contemporary times.

Addicts in general are struggling with very important aspects of their lives and mostly unconsciously search for fulfillment elsewhere. The same applies to sexual addiction which according to Nancy Heche is used as a means to tolerate emotional stress, distract from past trauma, or feel more important or powerful.⁴¹ The sexual addict is confronted by two possibilities of intimacy, namely real intimacy and false intimacy. A choice is made, mostly unconsciously, for false intimacy. Schaumburg describes real intimacy as the sexual and relational intimacy two spouses share within their committed, loving marriage.⁴² In my view this kind of relational intimacy can even be experienced in a loving relationship other than a formal, traditional marriage. This real intimacy does not necessarily exclude disappointments and fears such as fear of being exposed, fear of abandonment, fear of loss of control, and fear of their respective sexual desires. False intimacy, according to Schaumburg, is essentially self-created illusion to help a person avoid the pain inherent in real in real intimacy.⁴³ For instance a married sexual addict may have painful relational problems with his or her partner, and instead of dealing with the inherent pain of the relationship may go out to search for false intimacy in the form of sexual pleasure. The relational problems will not automatically go away, but the search will continue until it becomes an addiction as the person engages in serial sexual encounters. Of course sexual addicts are not necessarily only found among the married couples but even individuals who either in a relationship or single. This often happens regardless of the risks involved or negative consequences that are likely to follow. Schaumburg correctly points out that:

Most professionals agree that sexual addiction exists when a person practices sexual activity to the point of negatively affecting his or her ability to deal with other aspects of life, becomes involved in other relationships-whether real or

⁴⁰ 2 Samuel 13:12.

⁴¹ Heche, 305.

⁴² Schaumburg, 18.

⁴³ Ibid.

through fantasy-and becomes dependent on sexual experiences as his or primary source of fulfillment.⁴⁴

This pursuit of an illusion often happens regardless of possible consequences to health, relationship, reputation, family or even career. Like most addictions, sexual addiction has no respect for race, religion, status, profession or class. Dr. Schaumburg⁴⁵ narrates the story of a pastor who used to masturbate at High school and later during seminary years he progressed to pornography and frequently rented X-rated movies in hotel rooms. He later progressed to picking up prostitutes in the streets. He would later justify his actions: “I use prostitutes as a way of relaxing from the rigors of ministry. I deserve it after working very hard the rest of the week”. A more or less similar story is narrated by Mark Laaser in his book: *Healing the wounds of sexual addiction*. He tells of a pastor (sex addict) who started from excessive masturbation since college and later progressed to X-rating bookstores and massage parlors. This habit continued into his professional career. Although he was afraid that he would be caught and publicly humiliated, he could not stop practicing his sexual addiction. When approached by vulnerable women for help, he initiated sex with them. He confused sex with love and believed he really cared for the women, never realizing how much he was hurting those women who came to him for help.⁴⁶ Whereas Laaser was writing this in the U.S. context, no one can claim that this kind of sex addiction does not happen in the African context. One minister had jokingly pleaded with colleagues (former class mates at the theological seminary): “Please colleagues I need your help. I can’t help myself as young ladies throw themselves at me.” When asked whether he thought that he could be having a sexual addiction for which he needs professional help, he denied it and claimed that it is the fault of those young ladies. Some of the former colleagues praised him as “lady’s man” and a “play boy pastor,” or lover boy or a Casanova. These are nice sounding names reserved for men in our patriarchal and male-dominated society. In a society still unable to liberate itself from the chains of patriarchy and gender inequality and

⁴⁴ Ibid., 22.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 14.

⁴⁶ Laaser, 13-14.

oppression, one imagines that if the pastor was a woman, she would not have been praised but condemned alone as an adulterous woman or prostitute (a whore or slut), and would have been subjected to the same treatment as the woman in the Bible who was caught committing adultery and was brought alone to mob justice to be stoned. She was saved from the brutality of her patriarchal society not by the bell but by the grace of God, as Jesus showed understanding compassion and grace, but still confronted her with a challenge to “sin no more”. In the text John 8: 1-11 we have the grace of God in action as Jesus ends the encounter with the woman with the words: “Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more”.⁴⁷ How sad that our society continues to use beautiful romantic language for men who go off the rails with matters related to sex but bad, derogatory words when it comes to women. In fact women are more stigmatized than men. One agrees with Laaser that “greater stigma is attached to being a female sex addict”.⁴⁸

Thus the cases referred to above by Laaser and Schaumburg could have happened anywhere else in the world other than the U.S.A. The risks involved could include the following inter alia:

- contracting H.I.V and Aids,
- taint his reputation with the possibility of losing his status as minister and the possibility of public humiliation
- waste of personal and family financial resources
- be divorced on the grounds of adultery

Understanding of this complex problem with multiple causes and symptoms is the starting point towards effective pastoral counseling of sexual addicts.

Understanding is more fundamental than the judgmental approach associated with Christians who start with condemnation and dismissal of sexual addiction as sinful, and therefore deserving of the worst punishment from God. One agrees with Schaumburg that the solution to sin is not as some Christians make it sound.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ John 8:11.

⁴⁸ Laaser, 18.

⁴⁹ Schaumburg, 24.

D. Pastoral Counseling to the Sexual Addict as Grace in Action

While understanding sexual addiction as a disease and as sinful it is of critical importance, it is equally important for the pastoral counselor to deal with the following pastoral responsibilities *inter alia*:⁵⁰

- Awareness of the pastor's own sexuality and how it may affect relationships. How else can pastoral counselors pastorally journey with those struggling with human sexuality, when they have not grappled with their own sexuality?
- The ability to listen with understanding to the explicit and sexual concerns of parishioners and counselees.
- The perceptiveness to discern the relationship between a counselee's sexual and other issues in his or her life.

It is also very important for pastoral counseling to recognize that human sexuality is a central aspect of life and relationships.⁵¹ An equally important aspect of the pastoral counselor's work with sexual addicts is complete departure from the usual judgmental approach that is often associated with Christians. For instance, just as Jesus did not judge the woman accused of adultery, Christians have no right to judge sexual addicts. This does not mean acquiescence with sin or disease, but a response that depicts Christians and the church as a loving, caring and compassionate community. In the response of Jesus the woman accused of adultery experienced the grace of God in action. Equally, though King David was punished, his punishment did not exclude the grace of God. When David acknowledged his sin and said "I have sinned against the Lord" the response was full of grace, as the Lord changed his mind about the imminent death of David: "The Lord has put away your sin. You shall not die".⁵² In the case where sexual addiction and subsequent behavior leads to any criminal offence, the grace of God does not in any way imply that criminal liability and justice must be swept under the carpet. The offending

⁵⁰ John Patton, *Sexual Issues in Pastoral Care*, in *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, edited by Rodney Hunter, (Abingdon Press, Nashville, 2005), 1148.

⁵¹ See John Patton, 1148.

⁵² 2 Samuel 12: 13.

addict must still be subjected to due process of the law, and if the judicial system of a country finds the person guilty following due process of the law, justice must be allowed to take its course. Having to face the consequences of the sexual addict's behavior that leads to criminal offence does not have to mean that the person convicted is the worst sinner that can never be rescued or a sinner who is beyond the grace of God. Many people share the belief of a client of Welton Gaddy,⁵³ who believed that the sexual problem that leads to extramarital affairs and adultery is the worst sin a person can commit. This is an erroneous belief that seems to reject the biblical teaching about God's grace that is offered for all, including persons deemed to have committed the worst sins. One agrees with Gaddy that there is no act of wrongdoing that grace cannot touch. It is unfortunate that Christian, churches and pastors in particular often compound the problem and intensity of the trauma that people who are guilty of sexual offences go through with their unforgiving and judgmental attitudes. They preach vengeful judgment. This according to Gaddy is a scandalous misunderstanding of sin, adultery and grace.⁵⁴ The pastoral counselor must move away from that scandalous misunderstanding. There is no scale for sins that render other forms of sin heavier than others, to the extent that other sinners are worth denying grace and forgiveness. There should be no doubt that God protests against the wrongs of the world. According to Gaddy⁵⁵ God sees sin and responds with grace, that is, all the grace that is needed to deal with sin. The grace of God is so abundant that no matter what we do about our sins. During his ministry Jesus demonstrated the inclusiveness of grace and the power of loving forgiveness, with the best example being found in the pastoral interaction between Jesus and the woman accused of adultery. In addition, Jesus himself was often accused of associating with tax collectors and sinners.⁵⁶

According to John Patton pastoral responsibility must be expressed through the pastor's knowing enough to understand the parishioner's or counselee's concerns and being able to suggest

⁵³ Welton Gaddy, *Adultery and Grace: The Ultimate Scandal* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, 1996), xi-xii.

⁵⁴ Gaddy, xii.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 119.

⁵⁶ Matthew 11: 19.

resources for dealing with those concerns that involve more knowledge and ability than the pastor has.⁵⁷ He was writing not specifically about sexual addiction but sexual issues in general. However what he writes about sexual issues in general is applicable to sexual addiction.

Conclusion

Many people within our communities, inside the walls of the church and outside are struggling with matters of human sexuality and sexual addiction. Unfortunately matters of sexual addiction are hardly discussed openly. Even worse, the matter of sexual addiction is covered in shame and secrecy as it is forced underground by the condemnation and vengeful judgment that are associated with religious communities including Christians. Those accused of and dealing with sex related problems and particularly sexual addiction are often deemed to be beyond rescue as their sins are seen as unpardonable. As a result they are kept away from God's grace, and this is contrary to the biblical teachings on grace. This is contrary to God's approach to sinners. This is contrary to Jesus gracious interactions with sinners. These approaches which are contrary to biblical teachings make it difficult for God's people to experience the liberating love and grace of God. They make it impossible for those struggling with sexual addiction to experience forgiveness and liberation. Often these are approaches that are based on the "scandal of misunderstanding of the grace of God." The challenge for pastoral counseling is to move away from such unhelpful approaches. The starting point for pastoral counselors is to make efforts to understand what sexual addiction is and to understanding complexities associated with sexual addiction. Also important for pastoral counselors to deal with their own sexuality, as without that they will not be able to journey meaningfully and pastorally with God's people who are struggling with sexual addiction. In this pastoral journey that should be wrapped up in grace, a pastoral counselor must listen with understanding to the explicit and sexual concerns of parishioners and counsees. As the journey continues of accompanying those struggling with sexual addiction efforts must be made to understand

⁵⁷ John Patton, 1148.

the context of those who are our clients and counselees. Pastoral counselors in the African context can and must learn from other cultures and societies, but must also make efforts to drink from the African wells so that the pastoral journey with addicts may be contextual and relevant. As that journey continues God's people must be made to experience God's liberating love, forgiveness and grace.



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