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Volume 3 – 2011

**The Concept of New Identity in Christ in
Counseling Sexual Addiction in Young Men**

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Introduction

So here’s what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday ordinary life-your sleeping, eating, going to work, and walking - around life - and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don’t become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You’ll be changed from the inside out. Readily, recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best of you, develops well-formed maturity in you (Romans 12:1-2) [The Message].

Sexual addiction is defined as “an obsessive-compulsive relationship with a person, object, or experience, for the purpose of sexual gratification.”¹ It is estimated that somewhere between 17 and 37 million people are sexually addicted.² This problem could be somewhat underestimated because of the nature of the problem and the societal stigma; or lack of acknowledgement of sexual compulsivity as problematic; or societal celebration of the behavior.

This article will begin by describing the concepts of religion, spirituality, and addiction. It is important to make the distinction between religion and spirituality because this article deals specifically with spirituality and the treatment of addiction. The distinctions between the two follow below in the discussion. The discussion of addiction is based on the broad concept of addiction. The second section narrows the discussion to address spirituality and sex addiction specifically. Next, the two main concepts, salvation and sanctification are discussed as they relate to their utilization in the addiction healing process. The next portion of this paper gives a brief

¹ Russell Willingham, *Breaking Free: Understanding Sexual Addiction and the Healing Power of Jesus* (Downers Grove, IL: IntVarsity Press, 1999), 27.

² Patrick Carnes, *Out of the Shadows: Understand Sexual Addiction*, 3 ed., vol. 3 (Center City, MN: Hazelden, 2001).

outline of secular based treatment modalities in order to make distinctions between secular and faith-based treatment using the new identity in Christ. These distinctions are necessary because the latter involves salvation and sanctification.

The seventh section of the paper will give needed background on the socialization of boys. This discussion is forwarded in order to delineate the differences in sex addiction treatment for men versus women. Because socialization of men and women are very different, specific issues must be addressed within the context of male socialization. Along with this section, is the personal story of socialization and sexual addiction of one of us, Willie Elliott. This personal testimony gives a frame of reference for the socialization of boys; the development of sex addiction, and the recovery from addiction through salvation and sanctification.

The next section of the paper discusses treatment through the concept of the new identity in Christ; specifically the earthly consequences of continuing in self-destructive behavior. Related to this is the next section, which outlines treatment issues of changing the social circle of the addicted individual; changing the behaviors and actions; changing the attitudes, thought, and beliefs; all which are the specifics of sanctification once an individual has salvation.

Last, the discussion of maintaining a holy life through the power of Christ is presented as the conclusion. Thus, this article describes the use of the concept of the new identity in Christ as a means of treating sexual addiction in young men. It explicates the role of salvation and sanctification in recovery from sexual addiction. This discussion is forwarded based on the assumption that the individual seeking treatment has salvation or is receptive to hearing about salvation through Christ.

A. Religion, Spirituality, and Addiction

Religion is defined as ‘an institutionalized (i.e. systematic and organized) pattern of values, beliefs, symbols, behaviors, and experiences that involved spirituality; a community of adherents; transmission of tradition over time; and community support functions (e.g. organizational structure, material assistance, emotional support, or political advocacy) that are directly or indirectly related to

spirituality”.³ As discussed by Hommel, Colzato and Zygon, religion provides an orientation to lead one’s life; provides the foundation for decision-making in the time of dilemma; and systems for rule-conforming behavior. Religious beliefs provide systematic biases in cognitive control parameters. These parameters result in individuals engaging in acceptable or wanted behavior.⁴ It then stands to reason that religion/spirituality, and specifically belief in Christ, directs the recovery from addiction.

The role of spirituality and religion in the recovery process is limited in investigation, but is a growing area of research. As explained by McNeece and DiNitto, some individuals have found support and assistance from clergy, church groups, and congregations. Others have had less positive experiences when religious organizations are punitive toward individuals with addictions.⁵ Consequently, this experience with religion may result in individuals thinking less about religion – organizations which are often based on spirituality, but can sometimes be more about rules- and less about spirituality. Canda and Furman describe spirituality as ‘a process of human life and development focusing on the search for a sense of meaning, purpose, morality, and well-being...orienting around centrally significant priorities and engaging a sense of transcendence (experienced as deeply profound, sacred, or transpersonal)”.⁶ For the purpose of this article and the new identity in Christ, spirituality is defined as the one-on-one relationship between God and man. This relationship then manifests itself in man realizing his potential in many areas, not through his own power, but through the power of God through Christ Jesus. This relationship can give power over addiction.

There exists some research and discussion in the literature related to spirituality and addiction. Addiction is generally discussed within the context of a cyclical process characterized by five components:

³ E R Canda and LD Furman, *Spiritual Diversity in Social Work: The Heart of Helping*, 2 ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁴ Bernhard Hommel, Lorenza Colzato, and S Zygon, “Religion as a Control Guide: On the Impact of Religion on Cognition,” *Journal of Religion and Science* 45, no. 3 (2010).

⁵ C. Aaron McNeece and Diana M DiNitto, *Chemical Dependency: A Systems Approach*, 3 ed. (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2004).

⁶ Canda and Furman.

stress; acting out; guilt and remorse; shame and depression; recommitments; and performance (See Figure 1). Specific to sexual addiction, the cyclical process is characterized by family wounds, shame, preoccupation/dissatisfaction, ritual, acting out, and shame, and despair (see Figure 2). Shame is identified as a major result of a dysfunctional family life and contributes to compulsive and addictive behaviors.⁷



Figure 1. Addiction Cycle, from *Spiritual Formation, Becoming Like Christ*⁸

⁷ Christopher J Rybak and Beverly M Brown, "Assessment of Internalized Shame: Validity and Reliability of the Internalized Shame Scale," *Alcoholism Treatment Quarterly* 14, no. 1 (1996).

⁸ Retrieved on 6/17/2011 from www.ChristianChallenge.us/Spiritual_Formation/Freedom/the_addiction_cycle.html.

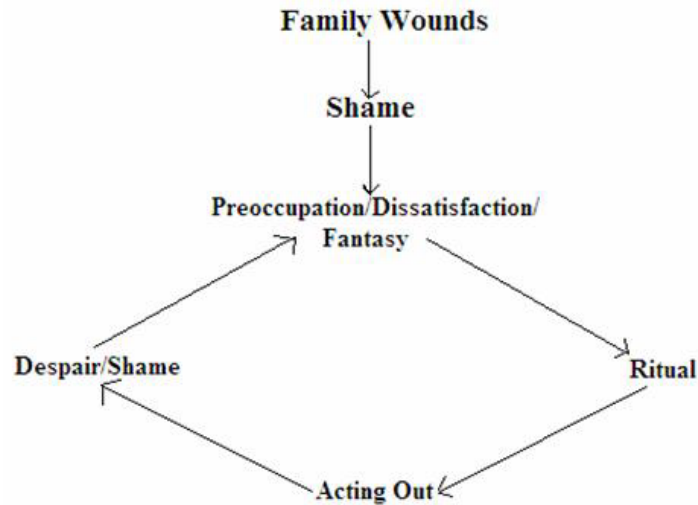


Figure 2. Sexual Addiction Cycle, from
*Front Range Counseling Center, Denver, CO.*⁹

Doweiko discusses addiction as a disease of the human spirit and discusses spirituality and its connection to addiction- that recovery from addiction as understood by early pioneers of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) was “a spiritual process through which the individual recovered the spiritual unity that she or he tried to achieve but could never find through chemicals” (pg 37).¹⁰ Sussman discusses the role of spirituality and explicates that spirituality provides the positive attitude about life; the shift away from self to the well-being of others; and a mindfulness larger than self. Spirituality is antagonistic toward self-seeking behavior and negativity which are characteristic of an addictive mindset.¹¹

B. Spirituality and Sex addiction

There is limited research on the use of the new identity in Christ for sex addiction. Of the existing literature, there is discussion by Willingham; what is needed in order to battle addiction. Willingham discusses 1) being found by Christ 2) surrendering to Christ 3)

⁹ Retrieved on 6/17/2011 from www.DenverSexTherapists.com/aboutus.html.

¹⁰ H Doweiko, *Concepts of Chemical Dependency* (Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole, 2009).

¹¹ S Sussman, “Addiction, Religion, Spirituality, Treatment,” *Substance Use & Misuse* 45, no. 14 (2010).

affiliating with a church 4) and moving forward from the previous life of addiction 5) exposing inner self to another believer and 6) giving back in the process of healing 7) some of what passes for lust is testosterone (not moral weakness) but men are still responsible for reigning it in. 8) that one cannot control what goes on INSIDE the body but you can control how one reacts to it.¹² The first point, being “found” by Christ is illustrated in Saul’s (Paul) experience on the Damascus road, where Jesus presented as a light from heaven. While few, if any, other conversions are as dramatic as this one, the basic point is that Christ seeks us out wherever we are (Acts 9:1-3). Second, surrendering to Christ is also demonstrated through Saul’s experience. He, even while blind, complied with the order that he was to go into the city (Acts 9:5-6). Willingham’s third point, affiliating with a church, is illustrated through the laying of hands on Saul by Ananias. After having hands laid on him by Ananias, he instructed Saul. “Brother Saul, the Master sent me, the same Jesus you saw on your way here. He sent me so you could see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” Then Saul was baptized into this new religion. Fourth moving forward from the previous life of addiction is demonstrated in Luke 15:11-14. “The younger son said to his father, ‘Father, I want right now what’s coming to me. It wasn’t long before the younger son packed his bags and left for a distant country. There, undisciplined, compulsive, and dissipated, he wasted everything he had. After he had gone through all of his money... That brought him to his senses. ... I’m going back to my father.’” The compulsivity of the prodigal son can be aligned with addictive behavior in that after hitting ‘rock bottom’ the prodigal son returns home to his father. This parable suggests that when an addict suffers the consequences of their behavior, they hit rock bottom and gradually move from the addiction to discovery and then to a life of recovery. The fifth point- exposing inner self to another believer can also be demonstrated in the parable of the prodigal son. The “Lost Son” says “I’ll say to him [my father] Father, I’ve sinned against God, I’ve sinned before you” (Luke 15: 18). Sixth, giving back in the process of healing – “... but [Saul] then went right to work...preaching in the meeting places that this Jesus

¹² Willingham.

was the Son of God.” Once Saul realized how much he gained from being saved from his sins, he wanted to share it with others.

An additional point made by Willingham discusses the relationship between feelings of desire and the biological processes related to feelings. He states that some of what passes for lust is testosterone (not moral weakness) but men are still responsible for reining it in – while the literature demonstrates mixed results there is only a slight to moderate relationship between testosterone and risk-taking behavior. So while it may negatively impact a young man’s behavior the vast majority of them can, and do control their behavior.¹³ Fifield explicates the use of spirituality in addiction treatment. Christ is identified as the power greater than self and the power greater than addiction which gives the individual power over his/her beliefs, desires, and actions.¹⁴

One faith based strategy addresses treatment in terms of the new identity in Christ; that treatment comes through salvation, sanctification, and employs healing through Christ. These healings can take place through use of traditional medical and counseling modalities – these tools are viewed as one means that Christ brings healing. The underlying premise of treatment of sexual addiction through a new identity in Christ is because of reconciliation.

Reconciliation, man reconciled to God through Christ, is manifested in the treatment of sex addiction. Those in the treatment process use this as the underlying truth or a foundation for the possibility of being healed from addiction. Reconciliation means the breach between God and man has now been eliminated through Christ’s death on the cross and resurrection. So man is charged with the human responsibility to live as a testament to the saving grace. (1 Peter 2: 11, 12). That manifests itself through living and engaging in behaviors which reflect Christ living in the individual and the individual being directed by the Holy Spirit. Knowing that reconciliation has taken place can remove the hopelessness, helplessness, and guilt felt by men and women in sexual addiction treatment, understanding that there is no eternal condemnation for the

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Mary Anne Fifield, “Spirituality in the Therapeutic Community: A Christian Perspective,” *American Journal of Pastoral Counseling* 8, no. 1 (2005).

behavior; that God now only sees them through his son Christ. God no longer sees the individual in his/her humanity, but sees us as the adopted sons and daughters made possible through the blood sacrifice of Christ (Romans 8:15, Galatians, 4:5, Ephesians 1:15) Those battling addiction can now reframe their identity from sex addicted person to son/daughter of God through Christ. The reframing of the identity moves the individual to behave in a way that reflects the new identity.

Also related to the new identity in Christ is the understanding that an individual becomes free from the Mosaic Law. Addictive behavior may often have legal consequences. Through identity of a new creature in Christ, the individual has an understanding that there is a different freedom; because of Christ's death and resurrection, there is remission from sin. Because of Christ's redemption of us through the crucifixion, all sin punishable by God's law (Old Testament), is no longer paid for by the individual; but was paid for one time (and completely) through the crucifixion of Christ on the cross (Romans 3:21-26; 4:5).

We would like to suggest that the concept of a new 'identity in Christ' is reflected in the theological concepts of salvation and sanctification. There is in fact overlap in these two concepts, but also distinct differences. While salvation is primarily immediate, and a personal event, sanctification is an ongoing process; termed by some as 'progressive sanctification'-the biblical process that requires active behavior from the believer consisting of the study of God's word, exercising faith in sound doctrine as a means of experiencing sanctification.¹⁵ This process is also described in the activation process of the ten spheres of spiritual growth, as written about by Amen.¹⁶

1. Salvation

The concept of salvation is the idea that as part of divine providence, God saves people from the following:

¹⁵ The understanding of progressive sanctification is beyond the realm of this article. For more refer to Anthony D. Kidd, "Slaying the Fiery Beast: The Foundation for a Successful Battle Plan," in *Secret Sex Wars: A Battle Cry for Purity*, ed. Robert Scott (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2008).

¹⁶ Ra Un Nefer Amen, *Metu Neter Vol 1: The Great Oracle of Tehuti and the Egyptian System of Spiritual Cultivation* (Brooklyn: Kamit Publications, 1990).

1. Death – by providing for those who are saved, eternal or afterlife
2. Spiritual death – comes to those who reject God by providing divine law, illumination, and judgment Salvation provides the following:
3. Forgiveness of sin; freedom from the penalty of sin (guilt and shame has been eliminated)
4. The status of Children of God which bring eternal life
5. Indwelling of the Holy Spirit – who guides and directs the saved individual's new life based on the Word of God
6. Ministry – the obligation to spread the word of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to others (Acts 1:8; 2:38).

Even though our sins will never stop, we are saved from sin for all eternity because of the crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Christ.

It is not enough that the grace of God exists as a potential solution for the nature of humanity, salvation is the personal and particular revelation that Christ died for the sins of the specific individual. The person (sinner) must be repentant, and turn from sin (which for all intensive purposes is a way of life). The sinner must be sorry for rejecting Jesus Christ through sinfulness (a significant insight for me-Elliott). Through salvation an individual becomes a 'new creature', having a new identity in Christ (II Corinthians 5:17). Therefore if any person (engrafted) in Christ (the Messiah) he is a new creation (a new creature altogether); the old (previous moral and spiritual condition) has passed away (Amplified Bible).

2. Sanctification

Sanctification comes from the word "sanctify" which originates from the Greek word *hagiazō* which means to be set apart.¹⁷ Sanctification is the 'setting apart' of those who have salvation for the divine purpose of God and is the process of becoming mature; conformed to the image of Christ (being made perfect).

The Apostle Paul told the Phillipians to 'work out your salvation' (Phillipians 2:12). By this, he was not suggesting that they could add anything to finished work of Christ. He was saying that because they had been saved through the death and resurrection of Christ, that there is some human responsibility; things they must do not FOR salvation, but BECAUSE of salvation. As explained by Goettsche there are many actions involved in the working out of salvation:

¹⁷ Joseph Thayer and James Strong, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Coded with Strong's Concordance Numbers* (Hendrickson Publishers; Rei Sub Edition, 1996).

- We are to work at making sure that our hope is truly grounded in Christ and not on our own efforts
- We are to work at taking advantage of the ways that God has given us to help us grow. We should read the Bible, pray, worship, serve, give, fast and so forth.
- We should work to make a break with sin. We are not to just sit back passively, but are to work at repentance and renewal.
- We are to work at adopting and applying the positive behaviors that the Bible admonishes. In other words we are to work at love, compassion, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, endurance and others.

We are to guard against the influence of the world. In other words we will adjust our friendships, our amusements; our use of time in order to combat the real presence of sin in our lives (pg1).¹⁸ This working out of salvation – the process of sanctification can be utilized within the context of sexual addiction. The Bible addresses the issue of sexual addiction within the context of sexual immorality. “It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister. The Lord will punish all those who commit such sins, as we told you and warned you before. For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore, anyone who rejects this instruction does not reject a human being but God, the very God who gives you his Holy Spirit” (I Thessalonians 4: 3-8) [New International Version].

C. Secular Treatment Modalities

According to the U.S. National Council on Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity (NCSAC), sexual addiction has been defined as “engaging in persistent and escalating patterns of sexual behavior acted out despite increasing negative consequences to self and others” (NCSAC website). It has also been described as a “progressive intimacy disorder” characterized and comprised of compulsive sexual acts and thoughts.¹⁹ Skeptics label the concept of sexual addiction a

¹⁸ Bruce Goetsche, “Working out Your Salvation” <http://www.unionchurch.com/archive/011401.html> (accessed June 16, 2011 2011).

¹⁹ “National Council on Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity”, Society for the Advancement of Sexual Health <http://www.sash.net/en/am-i-a-sex-addict-topmenu-104.html> (2011).

myth. They feel the phenomenon is neither a disease nor a disorder but an excuse for people to be irresponsibly “over-amorous” and to participate in promiscuous sex. Others believe that it is a true addiction, not unlike addiction to alcohol or drugs. The main characteristic of people with a sexual addiction is that their behavior is compulsive and uncontrollable.²⁰

Treatment of and recovery from sexual addiction focuses on two primary issues; facing the psychological issues of the addiction such as depression, guilt and shame, and, the logistical concerns regarding separating the individual from their addiction.²¹ Residential treatment benefits the individual by separating them from the people, images and situations that may trigger their addictive behavior. There is a chance for recovery in outpatient settings depending on the existence of adequate family, friend, social and spiritual support.

The most common therapies employed to treat sexual addiction are: Cognitive Behavior Therapy, Group Therapies, Interpersonal Therapies, Moral Reconciliation Therapy, and prescribed medications normally used to treat depression.

- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy – a talking therapy which aims to solve problems concerning dysfunctional emotions, behaviors and cognitions through a goal-oriented, systematic procedure. It is based upon a combination of basic behavioral and cognitive research.
- Group Therapies – one or more therapists treat a small group of clients; any form of psychotherapy when delivered in a group format. The group process is explicitly used as a mechanism of change; by developing, exploring and examining interpersonal relationships within the group setting.
- Interpersonal Therapies – a time limited psychotherapy which focuses on the interpersonal context and on building interpersonal skills. This therapy works effectively with depression
- Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT) – an evidenced based cognitive behavioral therapy approach designed to be utilized within a prison-based drug treatment therapeutic community. MRT is a process that seeks to raise the moral decision making strategy of individuals. It has now been used with other non-prison populations.

²⁰ “Sex Addiction Treatment and Recovery”, Drug Rehab Directory and Referral Service <http://www.thedrugrehab.com/sex-addiction-treatment-and-recovery/> (accessed June 20 2011).

²¹ Ibid.

These therapies can be used in conjunction with medication. Of these four therapies, Moral Reconciliation Therapy is most often used for sexual addiction. MRT was designed and developed to treat sexual addiction by enhancing a person's self-esteem and by helping the individual to grow morally, positively, and socially; seeking to raise the moral decision-making of individuals.²² MRT focuses on the following basic issues of treatment:

- Assessing current and prior relationships
- Attitudes and behaviors
- Confronting their beliefs
- Decreasing self-indulgence
- Developing a tolerance for frustration
- Developing a higher stage of moral reasoning
- Formation of positive identity
- Reinforcing positive behavior and habits²³

Many secular therapies share some spiritual- like components, but do not explicitly use the new identity in Christ as the foundation for the healing process and suggest that spirituality is not necessary in the healing of addiction²⁴ . Spiritual-based treatment has as its foundation, the explicit understanding that the power to move away from addiction is because of the relationship man has with Christ.

D. Addiction Treatment – Concept of New Identity of in Christ

“Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator” (Colossians 3:5-10 – New International Version).

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ John E Nelson, *Healing the Split: Integrating Spirit into Our Understanding of the Meantl III* (New York: New York Press, 1994).

E. The Socialization of Boys-Moving from the Old Creature to the New Creation in Christ

The notion of male sexuality as demanding, insatiable, and uncontrollable continues to dominate American culture. There also continues to be a double standard in the socialization of boys and girls in terms of sexual behavior. In a study completed by Kaiser Family Foundation, (Teen gender double standard persists, 2003) 85% of teens said parents had different expectations of boys and girls: girls were demeaned for sexual activity (referred to as ‘sluts’) while boys were praised and expected to have sexual prowess, (referred to as ‘ladykillers’).²⁵ An emphasis on numerous sexual partners, as a rite of passage into manhood can result in development of addictive behavior, particularly when the pre-addictive behavior is positively reinforced by fathers, older brothers, uncles, peers, and other significant male role models. Misinformation on sexual behavior is often perpetuated in peer groups. Further reinforcement for the inappropriate behavior occurs through media, particularly television and popular music.

Behavioral addictions have been shown to have similar behavior/response patterns as chemical addictions, mirroring the same cycle of pleasure and compulsion. Many addictions begin as a social activity becoming more frequent, necessary and compulsive. The craving intensifies until the person can engage in the behavior. The craving temporarily subsides until the ‘high’ of the behavior is gone. The cycle then begins again. Reinforcement of the cycle through socialization/peer influence can occur at any and every point of the cycle. Societal norms suggest that individuals have rights; many of which are in contradiction to the Word of God. As explained by Sholar, people have no human rights that run counter to God’s Word.²⁶ This is the foundation for understanding and sorting out what is acceptable by societal standards vs. God’s Word and is a major component for treating sexual addiction using the new identity in Christ.

²⁵ “Teen Gender Double-Standard Persists,” *Contemporary Sexuality* 37, no. 4 (2003).

²⁶ Victor Sholar, “Living Free from the Slavery of Sexual Sin,” in *Secret Sex Wars: A Battle Cry for Purity*, ed. Robert Scott (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2008).

Consequently, treatment in some cases involves undoing of previous socialization: a changing of behaviors, thoughts, and attitudes about sex. “You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your fathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot” (I Peter 1: 18-19). This understanding helps individuals battling sex addiction know that the power of God will undo the socialization received in the world. The Word commands that individuals move away from socialization that is in contradiction to the Word of God.

F. Author’s personal story

Introduction

I (Elliott) will use my own personal development and socialization as an example of how one male who became a sexual addict as a young man. I will utilize two models of socialization. The first is Erickson’s stages of psychosocial development.²⁷ The second is Amen’s discussion of the ten spheres of spiritual development.²⁸ These stages and spheres provide a frame of reference for examining and understanding the socialization of a male. The emphasis of this examination will be on how a male can become a sexual addict as a young man. We will start this examination with a look at my infancy, which began with my interesting birth.

1. Infancy and Early Childhood

My infancy, that would be characterized by pain and suffering, began with an interesting birth process. I was born three months premature. This resulted in a stunted physical development that resulted in me looking five to ten years younger than children of my same age, throughout childhood and until the age of twenty-five. Because I was born three months premature, I was placed in an incubator for the first three months of my life. The fact that I was placed in an incubator, due to being developmentally stunted which led to my father believing that I must be a girl, and because he wanted a girl badly since he already had two boys. So he rushed out and

²⁷ Charles Zastrow and Karen K Kirst-Ashman, *Understanding Human Behavior and the Social Environment*, 8 ed. (Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole, 2010).

²⁸ Amen.

bought beautiful yellow roses for my mother. When he got to the hospital and discovered I was a boy, he threw the flowers in my mother's face and stormed out of the hospital. Because I was not a girl, when I did get out of the hospital, three months later, I was sent to live with my Aunt (to be called Auntie) and my Uncle Will (my namesake - thus little "Willie"). Three years later my parents divorced and the blame was placed on me for being a boy and not a girl. Being kicked out of my family of origin at such an early age greatly contributed to my self-hatred.

In order to explain how this self-hatred fits within the context of my socialization as a male, I will use information from Erickson's stages of psychosocial development. The first stage in Erickson's model of psychosocial development is Basic Trust vs. Basic Mistrust. This stage suggests that the infant's basic needs must be met on a regular/consistent basis by key parental figure(s), in order to develop hope in the infant. However, in my case, since I started life with being placed in an incubator for three months and then being shifted to my Aunt and Uncle Will, I think that my basic trust never developed. And it was this lack of basic trust that would eventually be the foundation of the self-hatred that would contribute to my sexual addiction.

Because this is a faith-based work I would like to use a spiritual framework to explain male socialization in general, and my socialization, specifically. Because even though I was happy the first five years of my life, my happiness was based on the false assumption that my Aunt and Uncle were my "real" parents and that they would always serve in this capacity. This belief set me up for great heartbreak and low self-esteem, when I was returned to my mother's home. Also, when I realized why my parents had divorced, I internalized this as being my fault. The frame of reference I will use was developed by Amen, which he labels the Ten Spheres of Spiritual Development, as a means of depicting socialization. According to Amen, these ten spheres provide an explanation for how a man, through his biological existence, can progress, spiritually, from relating on a biological basis primarily to reflecting the God of the universe, spiritually on this earth. The spheres are present at birth but other than the first two spheres, (10 and 9) all others must be activated through a process of initiation. The first sphere to be discussed is

Sphere 10, because the spheres run from the bottom (which is 10) to the top which is (0), with ten being the Physical body (10a) and the Sensory body (10b). This sphere, the Physical Body (10a), is activated at birth and is what makes our earthly experience possible. Next, is the Sensory Body (10b), which is the seat of perception, sensual cravings and the expression of these faculties. The sensory body is also the seat of what is known as the temperaments. Rolfe's discussion of the four temperaments describes the personality and health of an individual.²⁹ According to a measurement assessment provided by Rolfe, I was born primarily a melancholic, someone prone to depression, which reinforced my low self-esteem and self-hatred. These feelings, of low-self-esteem and self-hatred would be manifested in my sexual addiction.

The Ninth Sphere, which is imitation, which is also activated at birth, is the ability of human beings to learn from outside of ourselves. This sphere was very significant for me because of the lessons that I learned from the male role models in my earliest years of life. My first, and most important male role model, was my Uncle Will. I am his namesake, which meant I was to grow up and be like him. This first life lesson to me was that real men have a wife that they live with and a girlfriend that they see on the other side of town. This I learned and knew, because up until about 4 or 5 years of age, my uncle took me everywhere he went. This was a significant part of my socialization as a male and the foundation of my future sexual addiction- that real men have a wife and girlfriend. In order to begin to describe how I got into my sexual addiction I will begin with my childhood.

2. Childhood through Young Adulthood

In this section I will now elucidate my childhood through adolescence in order to further explain the events leading into sexual addiction. My childhood profoundly changed when I was five years old and I was kicked out of my Aunt's house and sent to my mother's housing unit in the projects. It is no accident that this was shortly after the birth of my Aunt's first grandchild which was a boy. What I was faced with upon returning to my mother's house was now four other

²⁹ Randy Rolfe, *The Four Temperaments: A Rediscovery of the Ancient Way of Understanding Health and Character* (New York: Marlowe & Co., 2002).

boys, and no permanent father. I was considered a spoiled brat, because at my Aunt's house I was the only child for the past five years. This treatment by my mother and brothers led to me feel like I was not a member of this family. The culmination of my feeling like I was not a member of this family culminated at age twelve when an older brother began to sexually abuse me. As a result of the sexual abuse I wet the bed from the age twelve until age sixteen, when my brother went to the armed services. Thus, in line with the self-hatred that began early in my life, I began to experience the confusion and fear of being sexually abused which sent the message that I was worthless, because these things were being done to me that are suppose to be done with girls. I grew up with the fear that I would become gay because I experienced pleasure while being sexually abused. My reaction formation to this experience would be hypermasculinity in an attempt to prove to everyone that I was a "real man" when I didn't believe it myself. This hypermasculinity was reinforced by the idea that a real man has many girlfriends and a wife. The stages of Erickson follow next and help explain my pre-teen development.³⁰

I will omit two of Erickson's stages (Will and Power) because they are not relevant to this discussion of my move into sexual addiction. The more relevant stage is Competence: Industry vs. Inferiority, ages 7-13. According to Erickson, boys at this stage are becoming individuals. For me this led to more feelings of inferiority because I was being sexually abused. This contributed to the self-hatred that contributed to the development of the sexual addiction. Amen's Spheres that corresponded to this stage were spheres Eight (Segregation) and sphere Seven (Imagination). In the eighth sphere, a boy must learn to deal with difference, and begins to learn what "difference" means. In my socialization experience, girls/women represented difference, and this difference meant they were to be exploited, particularly sexually. This added greatly to the mentality that would lead to my sexual addiction. The next sphere discussion is a paradox because it provides the idea that sexual addiction can become a career, or at least a way of life. This is exactly what sexual addiction became for me; a way of life.

³⁰ Zastrow and Kirst-Ashman.

Sphere Seven, Imagination, is the basis of creativity and the coordination of details into a whole. It is the fundamentals of doing the work of this sphere (whatever type of work the boy is choosing to do) that can eventually become a career. And this is where the seed began to grow; the fantasy of having sex with many different women. Though it was not yet a reality, I imagined that it could happen. And this was the fantasy of most young men, in my neighborhood, because that what is known clinically as sexual addiction is celebrated as the height of being a real man. This is the idea of sexual addiction, as a potential career for me played out in my young adulthood; was a significant part of my entrance into young adulthood; and was the primary reason for my first marriage.

3. Young Adulthood

My young adulthood was filled with self-hatred driven sexual affairs with women, while I was married to my first wife. I had fifteen extra-marital affairs in an effort to prove I was a real man to everyone, especially myself. Even though I had a wife and two children I had many sexual affairs. While I was legally married, I was not emotionally psychologically or spiritually married. The reason for this condition was because I could not “bond” enough with a woman to form a true intimate relationship with her. Berne characterized this phenomena as a “life script” which he defined as “Each person decides in early childhood how he will live and die, and that plan, which he carries in his head wherever he goes is called his script” (p 31).³¹ My life script is from the fairy tale “Peter Pan”, which is about a boy who will never grow up. In my case I became the man/boy who would never commit, emotionally and/or psychologically, to a relationship with a woman. As a reflection of this aspect of my life, called a life script, my two most favorite sayings were ‘...women are like buses, if you miss one, don’t worry, another will come along shortly’. The second one was ‘if you catch a fool, bump her head, the bigger the fool the harder you bump her head’. These sayings reflect psychological development; conflict; and lack of intimacy explained in Erickson’s next stage, Intimacy vs. Isolation.

³¹ Eric Berne, *Games People Play: The Basic Handbook of Transactional Analysis* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1996).

Erickson's stage of Love: Intimacy vs. Isolation occurs in young adulthood age 25-40. Staying within Erickson's framework, the issue a young man must resolve, before he is capable of forming an intimate relationship with a woman. For me, at the beginning of this stage, the answer was no. In fact, I used sexual affairs to avoid forming a real relationship with a woman. In light of this, the main reason I married my first wife was because she got pregnant and my parents threaten to withdraw support for my college education if I did not marry her. I found that a few women were even more attracted to me after I was married which help fuel my sexual addiction and eliminated even the pretense of the need for intimacy with my sexual partners.

The next sphere to be activated is Equilibrium. According to Amen, this sixth sphere is the most important one. It is the sphere where the forces outside and inside are joined together.³² Equilibrium which is where a young man experiences handling himself internally, in terms of his mind, spirit, and emotions, while resisting the external temptations which would push him to acts of sexual addiction. The activation of this sphere in me began with the realization that my sexual activities were actually a sin, and that my sexual addiction was my attempt to save myself from the misery of my self-hatred. I also came face-to-face with the reality that I could not save myself from this present hell. This is when a spiritual guide entered my life to teach me what I could do to save myself from my present hell. This spiritual guide began to instruct me in the ways of salvation through Jesus Christ.

When I was made aware that Jesus had already died for my sins, of sexual addiction and all my other sins, and that I only had to accept this offer of salvation, I did accept this offer. Once I accepted Jesus Christ as my savior, I began to realize that I had to accept him as the Lord of my life also. It was explained to me that now my life was no longer my own because I had accepted a new identity in Christ. I had become a "Christian" or I had become "Christ -like" internally and that now my everyday life had to reflect this new identity in Christ. This new identity was lived out through a process called

³² Amen.

sanctification, which is the act of being set apart from the thinking and acting in a worldly way.

The act of being set apart, was for me when I begin to realize that my sexual addiction was an attempt to feel better about myself and that I could accomplish this better through walking through life with the new identity in Christ as to whom I was. This new identity in Christ is an ongoing process that can be described utilizing the stages of change as discussed by Prochaska and DiClemente.³³ The changes will demonstrate that the new identity in Christ is a lifelong process and that the sexual addiction recovery process can be contained within the new identity in Christ.

The Stages of Change according to Prochaskas and DiClemente are stated in the following manner: The first stage is Precontemplation, which is the stage of resistance; this is where the young man resists recognizing that he has a sexual addiction. In the case of sexual addiction resistance does not have to be very strong because sexual addiction, in heterosexual males, is celebrated in our society. And it is because of this celebration status, that most young men will never consider treatment of any kind until the consequences of this behavior becomes severe enough to precipitate a crisis in the life of the young man. This “crisis” is known as “hitting rock bottom” in the addiction treatment/ self-help field. This was me, as a resistive young man, because not only did I refuse to recognize I had a problem but because sexual addiction is celebrated.³⁴ I had other young men cheering me on and supporting my addiction. However, in the face of this enabling behavior, another young man came to my apartment threatening to kill me because I was having an affair with his wife. This was the event that created a crisis in my life, and how I defined myself, and my beginning to realize that I needed to change my behavior. (Also, my wife and child were in the apartment at that time, and I feared for their safety.) This recognition of the need to change on my part led me to the next stage which is Contemplation.

³³ James Prochaska and Carlo DiClemente, “Addiction in Human Development: Developmental Perspectives on Addiction and Recovery,” in *Addiction in Human Development: Developmental Perspectives on Addiction and Recovery*, ed. Jacqueline Wallen(New York: Haworth Press, 1993).

³⁴ William L White, *Pathways: From the Culture of Addiction to the Culture of Recovery* (Center City, MN: Hazelden, 1996).

The next stage is Contemplation, which is the stage where the addict becomes open to considering the options of the interventions of change. This stage relates specifically to salvation because salvation begins when the young man begins to recognize that he is a sinner (addict) and needs to be saved from his sins. (Rom. 8:28-30; Luke 23:39-43). This was beginning insight, the realization that I needed to be saved from myself and my own destructive thoughts and beliefs which led directly to addiction. The sanctification aspect of this stage was the realization that I would have to change my basic thought patterns by replacing my worldly thinking to biblical thinking (Rom. 12:1,2). I realized that I needed to stop thinking with my “world” mind and start thinking and believing and thus walking (living) in my new identity in Christ. The outcome of this stage is to move to the Action Stage.

The next stage is the Action Stage, where the addict is ready to take action in order to change and/or reframe the negative behavior (sin/addiction) into something that is positive for his life and his community³⁵. An example of changing the negative into a positive is examining the life lessons learned from this process such as respecting women and myself. Another example is the reframing of this behavior into the new identity in Christ. The action for me was to begin to study the Bible. And from my study of the Bible, I began to apply biblical concepts to my life and thus to live out my new identity in Christ.

The final stage is Maintenance; this is the stage where the recovering addict works to sustain his withdrawal from active addiction, while carrying out his new identity in Christ. The most important part of maintenance for me was being a part of a community of believers (traditionally called the church). I specifically began to utilize the community of believers as my support system to instruct me in the ways of the new identity in Christ. And yes, I did experience relapse, but after each new event I became stronger in my new identity in Christ. Today, and each and every day, I struggle with my sexual addiction. However, I know through

³⁵ William E Cross, *Shades of Black: Diversity in African-American Identity* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991).

my new identity in Christ I will maintain sobriety through the rest of my life, in my new identity in Christ, day by day.

4. Earthly Consequences of Continuing In Sin

“Can [a man] carry fire against [his] chest without burning [his] clothes” (Proverbs 6: 27). The writer is warning against sexual immorality and explicates consequences. In this chapter, he talks about the importance of sound instruction and how it will protect you from sexual immorality. He outlines what happens when men commit adultery and the earthly consequences.

Son, do what your father tells you and never forget what your mother taught you. Keep their words with you always, locked in your heart. Their teaching will lead you when you travel, protect you at night, and advise you during the day ... It can keep you away from bad women, from the seductive words of other men’s wives. Don’t be tempted by their beauty; don’t be trapped by their flirting eyes...Can you walk on hot coals without burning your feet? It is just as dangerous to sleep with another man’s wife. Whoever does it will suffer. People don’t despise a thief if he steals food when he is hungry; yet if he is caught, he must pay back seven times more-he must give up everything he has. But a man who commits adultery doesn’t have any sense. He is just destroying himself. He will be dishonored and beaten up he will be permanently disgraced. A husband is never angrier than when he is jealous; his revenge knows no limits. He will not accept any payment no amount of gifts will satisfy his anger (Proverbs 6: 20-22; 24-25; 27-35).

The 7th chapter of Proverbs, Solomon addresses the consequences of fornication. He describes watching a foolish young man who falls prey to the temptation of a woman. When the young man yields to sexual temptation, he is described as ‘an ox on the way to be slaughtered, like a deer prancing into a trap where an arrow would pierce its heart’. Solomon warns not to be taken in by this temptation; that “it is a shortcut to death”.

G. Changing the Social Circle

Sexual behavior pre and during addiction can be significantly influenced by a man’s social circle; those who may be encouraging, confirming, and validating the behavior. In treating sexual addiction, men can understand their recovery within the context of resurrection,

or being raised again; having a new life absent of addiction. In the 15th chapter of I Corinthians, Paul is instructing the people at Ephesus because some were questioning whether after physical death, they would be raised from the dead in Christ. Paul explains to the people that because Christ was raised from the dead, they can now believe that they will also be resurrected. He speaks strictly about those who have no belief in the resurrection and that state “let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we will die”: those who believe that should do anything on earth in terms of indulgence because there is nothing after physical death. Paul states the consequences for spending time with these kind of people: “Do not be fooled. Bad companions ruin good character. Come back to your right senses and stop your sinful ways...” (I Corinthians 33-34).

H. Changing Behaviors/Actions

Treatment involves the changing of behaviors of and related to sexual addiction. Because the new identity in Christ manifests itself in obeying of God’s Word, the treatment process involves the changing of behaviors to more align with the life of Christ. Specifically, the changed behavior involves sex only within the confines of a marital union. In the event of unmarried men, following Christ means remaining celibate until marriage. “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God” (I Thessalonians 4:3-5). These behaviors are the ultimate behavioral goals. The process of moving away from sex addiction toward the ultimate goal is with the understanding that this may be a process involving relapse/recidivism. As with any addiction, the therapist would have to understand and not condemn individuals in the actual process; meaning that individuals are not considered to have ultimately failed when they temporarily engage in the addictive sexual behavior throughout the process. It is at the time of relapse that the therapist’s role is crucial; providing direction, insight, and helping individuals deal with the earthly consequences that are the result of relapsing behavior.

For the Lord disciplines him whom he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives. It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without

discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons...For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant; later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed (Hebrews 12:6-8; 11-13).

This denotes *process*. This often times is where other religious based treatments have fallen short; condemning those who, in the treatment/healing process, revert back intermittently to inappropriate sexual behavior. The process of behavior change involves the foundational premise that the intermittent inappropriate behavior becomes increasingly less occurring until which point the individual has few if any relapses. For we are not perfected when we are still in the flesh. God commands us to always battle against the flesh; to mortify or kill what it desires to do. “So then brothers and sisters, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh (for if you live according to the flesh, you will die), but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live” (Romans 8: 12-13).

And God promises that life will be different because the Holy Spirit abides in us, even as we battle behaviors driven by the flesh. “But for you who welcome Him, in whom He dwells-even though you still experience all the limitations of sin-you yourself experience life on God’s terms. It stands to reason, doesn’t it, that if the alive-and-present God who raised Jesus from the dead moves into your life, he’ll do the same thing in you that he did in Jesus, bringing you alive to himself? When God lives and breathes in you (and he does, as surely as he did in Jesus), you are delivered from that dead life. With his Spirit living in you, your body will be as alive as Christ’s!” (Roman 8: 10-11).

Having a new identity in Christ means there is both hope for change, motivation to change, and promise that God has the power to change-to remove the old life of addiction. The Word of God instructs on what to do (behavior) with the old life-the life of addiction; illustrating human responsibility for changing the addictive behavior. The bible instructs us to give that old life a decent burial; to be put death the sinful actions (Romans 8:12-13).

I. Changing Attitudes, Thoughts, and Beliefs

Also required in the process of treatment is the changing of attitudes, thoughts, and beliefs. The process of changing behavior and then also changing attitudes, thoughts, and beliefs is not a perfectly simultaneous process. Behaviors and actions often are changed before the attitudes, thoughts, and beliefs about those actions. In non-faith based treatment, this is referred to as *cognitive dissonance* and is recognized as a vital part of the process.³⁶ The dissonance between behaviors and attitudes resolves once an individual's attitudes align with the already changing behavior.

Individuals in treatment cannot wait on attitude and thought changes; they can begin the change in behavior knowing the change in attitude and thoughts will follow. Christ did not command us to *feel* first and then obey; but to merely obey. “As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy’” (I Peter 1:14-16). When Christ came to earth to die for the sins of man, He asked the father “And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matthew 26:39). Christ had made the decision to save man from sin, but before the crucifixion asked God why he must die. His action (coming to earth) came before his complete acceptance of His action; to die on the cross, taking the wrath of God upon Him for our sins. (Christ is perfect in all ways-this ‘questioning’ of God I propose was a demonstration to us later who would follow; that often we must act before we completely accept our decision to do so and to trust the Father in doing so – to exercise faith.) We must do the right thing according to God; our thoughts and attitudes will subsequently align with our behavior.

J. Healing and Maintaining a Holy Life Through the Power of Christ

The process of sanctification is powerful in terms of recovery from sexual addiction. As an individual continues in the healing

³⁶ Maxie C Maultsby, Jr., *Rational Behavior Therapy* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1984).

process, moving away from self-destructive behavior, thoughts, and attitudes, many will question whether they can maintain this lifestyle.³⁷ Paul and Timothy’s message to God’s people in Philippi gives assurance that God will keep his people. Phillippians 1:6; 9-10, “And so I am sure that God, who began this good work in you, will carry it on until it is finished on the Day of Christ Jesus...I pray that your love will keep on growing more and more, together with true knowledge and perfect judgment, so that you will be able to choose what is best. Then you will be free from all impurity and blame on the Day of Christ.”

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³⁷ The authors believe that often an individual who is farther along in the healing (sanctification) process BECOMES healing as he helps others who are battling addiction.

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