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**The Use of the Concept of Divine Love When
Counseling Those Trapped in Addictive Behavior**

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Introduction

This article will address ways in which divine love can be included in marital counseling in situations of addiction and infidelity. The Bible provides many accounts of how divine love should be implemented into one's daily relationships. Several Scriptures, as well as scholarly references will provide clear insight, and a greater understanding, as to how to integrate divine love into therapy with individuals who are trapped in addictive behaviors, such as sexual addictions, i.e., infidelity. There are various types of infidelity that impacts the marital union, as well the perception of the spouse involved in the extramarital affair, as to their reasoning behind the

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behavior being exhibited. There is a wide array of treatment options, which includes providing the necessary support for the individual who is experiencing the sexual addiction. Moreover, the spouse who was impacted by the sexual addiction and behavior of their spouse will learn of the options that will best suit them in rebuilding themselves, as well as their marriage, if that is what the couple decides to do. Furthermore, the role of the Pastoral/Spiritual Counselor will be discussed, as well as, how to best integrate divine love into therapy with those who are trapped in addictive behaviors. Though this article will hone in on infidelity; the use of divine love/God's love, from a spiritual standpoint; the various forms of treatment can be integrated with varying forms of addiction. The importance of learning about the salvation, or the lack thereof, of the marital union will be discussed as well.

I. Divine Love and Understanding How to Integrate into Therapy

The most extraordinary love of all and how God demonstrated His love for His people is best illustrated in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son". In another account, in 1 Peter 1:22 states, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently". In Romans 5:5, "And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us". Divine Love is discussed and defined in greater clarity in 1 John 4:16, which states, "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him. There are many accounts in the Bible that is provided for one to use as a guide, in their personal lives, as well as in assisting those trapped in addictive behaviors.

Evans (2006) questioned if humans have a universal obligation to love another, and he viewed love as something that should be given freely; however, he often wondered if love is more of a duty or an action to perform, instead of being given in a spontaneous manner. Deuteronomy 6:5 states, "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. Evans (2006) postulated that God's command for humanity to love God and their neighbors unconditionally is essential in achieving one's greatest

good, and this command is due to humans being created in God's image.

Clough (2006) provided a descriptive meaning of the word 'love'. One can demonstrate, express, as well as view love via many forms, i.e. healthy versus unhealthy love, materialistic worldview of love, one may love an individual's aspirations, as well as, organizations and nations. He summed it up that the word 'love' is simply defined as 'attraction'. Clough (2006) stressed the importance of understanding that from a therapeutic perspective; love is deeply linked to motivation. He mentioned that most definitions of love are not reflecting on the word 'love' from a Christian perspective. As pointed out in the previous descriptors of the word 'love', as well as from a greater context of 'divine love'; it is repetitively linked to God, and to be expressed as part of one's daily regimen instead of being described as simply an emotion.

Cheong and DiBlasio (2007) postulated that a biblical foundation that is essential to counseling is integrating Christ-like love along with forgiveness. Christian/spiritual counselors would need to understand God's command for one to love, God's character, maintain a Christ-centered foundation when incorporating God's love and forgiveness, and the ability to provide the necessary tools in assisting individuals with making the connection of how love and forgiveness works together simultaneously, when one experiences hurt and brokenness. Divine love and forgiveness is best illustrated in John 3:16 when God sent His Only Begotten Son Jesus, to pay an ultimate price for the redemption of the world's sins. Cheong and DiBlasio (2007) pointed out that forgiveness means not continuing to mention the offense to self, others, and to the one who caused the offense. Only through God, an individual has the power to forgive, due to God already have forgiven the individual for their sins. Moreover, an individual does not have the power to forgive in their own right, but it is only through God. It is the responsibility of individuals engrafted in God to spread the Gospel, and this is also an additional way of sharing God's forgiveness of sins. In Matthew 18:21-22, the question was posed by Peter to Jesus in verse 21, as to how many times shall one forgive their brother who has sinned against them? The reply from Jesus was in v 22 'Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, until seven times: but until seventy times seven.

This scripture is not to give individuals permission to blatantly sin against their brother or sister, due to the people of God's role and responsibility of exercising forgiveness. However, the individual who committed the sin i.e. infidelity, should recognize, or it should be brought to their attention, regarding God's grace in forgiving the sin that was committed. It is important to note that God loves all individuals, but He hates the sins that individuals commit. Cheong and DiBlasio (2007) postulated that the distinction between secular and semi-secular approaches is Christ-centered, where love and forgiveness is paramount for Christian counselors to integrate into therapy.

Szablowinski (2009) pointed out that the command that God has given one to forgive others, including the enemy, actually minimizes how far one is from the divine, as well as human forgiveness. When an offense has been caused by the offender of the sin; the victim generally experiences negative emotions toward the offender such as, anger, resentment, and possibly seeking vengeance to repay the offender for the hurt, pain, and disappointment that was caused. Szablowinski (2009) mentioned that it is of great importance to know that retribution for justice does not have to result in violence, and from a Christian standpoint, it should not result in violence. Moreover, the Christian/spiritual counselor should promote and integrate into therapy that justice begins with God, in reference to the process of reconciliation. This process should also be reiterated in the individual's treatment plan.

II. Infidelity/Sexual Addiction That Impacts Marital Union

There are eight types of extramarital relationships that impact the marital union. Each type of marital infidelity will be defined in greater detail. According to Bagarozzi (2008), the various types of extramarital relationships is as follows: 1) brief encounters, 2) periodic sexual encounters, 3) instrumental and utilitarian affairs, 4) short-term affairs triggered by developmental challenges or changing life circumstances, 5) paraphilia affairs, 6) cathartic affairs, 7) more complex and enduring relationships, and the last one is one of the latest form of infidelity, 8) online/internet infidelity.

Bagarozzi (2008) postulated that brief encounters are generally not premeditated sexual affairs, but it consists of situations such as one night stands, where both parties agree to the terms of their one

night stand or short term sexual relationship. The affair may last from a week to a few weeks. What would be the motive behind engaging in this type of sexual experience? Bagarozzi (2008) mentioned the convenience of having another partner, assists the individual with loneliness, on a temporary basis, as well as adding adventure in the individuals life for the moment. Bagarozzi (2008) noted that these short term encounters generally do not hinder the individual's marriage, as long as the encounter remains a secret from their spouse. However, psychologically, the unfaithful spouse may be affected by the intrapsychic turmoil, which may surface in the marriage, at some point.

The second encounter is periodic sexual encounters. Bagarozzi (2008) explained that this type of encounter is premeditated, chronic, and persistent. The individual does not intend on developing a long-term, and/or meaningful relationship. The purpose of this type of relationship is to fulfill specific sexual needs that their spouse is not willing to participate in. Moreover, the individual engages in the specific sexual acts with a willing participant (partner), or prostitutes, in order to fulfill their needs. In some cases, the individual is bisexual in orientation, but their spouse is unaware, and the spouse is under the pretense that they are in a heterosexual marriage. Moreover, the bisexual spouse tends to be involved in homosexual encounters that are not being met in the marriage.

The third encounter is instrumental and utilitarian affairs. Bagarozzi (2008) stipulated that this type of encounter is based on the premises of personal gain when the individual enters into the sexual relationship. An example of this would be financial, i.e. career advancement, increase in pay, employment, or maintaining employment, as well as gaining power and influence in political circles or professional organizations. This type of affair is used as an exchange commodity.

The fourth encounter is short-term affairs triggered by developmental challenges or changing life circumstances. Bagarozzi (2008) explained that this type of affair is based on the premise of the individual's inadequacy to master or transition in a specific developmental life task or crisis. For example, the individual may be experiencing difficulty in transitioning into marriage, parenthood, struggling with their personal identity, as well as conflicted, regarding

their sexual orientation, and having a difficult time committing to a heterosexual partner and lifestyle. This type of affair basically entails the individual's inability to cope with the chronic illness of their spouse, loss of employment, severe changes in financial status or income, birth of a handicapped child, as well as, expiration of a family member. When middle-aged men begin to question if one is still desirable, attractive, or adequate sexually, then their worth and validation is sought outside of the marriage, and the same stands for post-menopausal women.

The fifth encounter is paraphilia affairs. Bagarozzi (2008) postulated that this type of sexual behavior called paraphilia's, are disorders that are compulsive in nature. For example, the individual may involve a willing or unwilling participant to engage in bizarre or abnormal sexual practices, in order for the individual to act out their sexual fantasies, as well as in effort to diminish depression, anxiety, and extreme psychic pain. Bagarozzi (2008) described the most common paraphilia's, i.e. voyeurism, sexual sadism, pedophilia, exhibitionism, transvestite, frotteurism, and fetishism. The behavior exhibited is the primary goal to be accomplished, while sexual gratification is secondary.

The sixth encounter is cathartic affairs. Bagarozzi (2008) stated that cathartic affairs are similar to that of paraphilia affairs, due to the individual being driven by unconscious conflicts. The behavior is compulsive in nature, and the individual attempts to execute the unconscious conflict by acting out the behavior. Cathartic affairs differ from paraphilia affairs because abnormal and bizarre sexual practices are generally not the context of these types of affairs. When the individual locates a willing participant to engage in the unconscious themes, then the affair may continue for years.

The seventh encounter is more complex and enduring relationships. Bagarozzi (2008) had explained that one of the most common extramarital relationships is pre-divorce affairs. Both participants plan to marry once the individual's divorce is final, and the current marriage is no longer standing in the way of both participants marrying each other. Bagarozzi (2008) mentioned that individuals who marry on a non-voluntary basis, generally gets involved in long-term extramarital relationships. Bagarozzi (2008) noted that this type of relationship is termed 'tripod affair'. Whether

the individual is involved in short-term or long-term affairs; the purpose is to assist in bearing with a totally unrewarding and unsatisfying marriage. The affair is not always due to a non-voluntary relationship/marriage; it is actually executed to maintain the marriage, and to keep it stabilized.

The eighth encounter is online/internet infidelity. Young, Griffen-Shelley, Cooper, O'Mara, and Buchanan (2000) postulated that online infidelity is a convenient way for individuals to become involved in sexual pursuits, which may in turn, lead to a cyber-affair. The individual's level of compulsivity escalates, as their time on the computer increases. Individuals with sexually compulsive behavior will find the internet an avenue to engage in various forms of cybersex, and finds themselves involved with a 'cyber lover' Virtual affairs has impacted many marriages. Hertlein (2008) defined internet infidelity as a breach of their marital contract of faithfulness, due to at least one partner being involved in a romantic or sexual relationship facilitated by internet use. The various types of extramarital affairs were described in great detail, in order to understand the reasoning behind the individual's behavior, as well as how to best demonstrate divine love and forgiveness when counseling those with addictive behaviors. Also, to provide the best possible treatment plan and support options that will be most beneficial to the couple.

III. Treatment and Support Options for the Individual/Couple

When devising a course of treatment for the couple, due to an extramarital affair; it is important to learn what are the presenting issues, as well as pinpointing the type of affair that has taken place. Bagarozzi (2008) discussed the importance of meeting with the couple on an individual basis initially, and the reason being is due to the spouse who has cause the offense, may be forthcoming when the offended spouse is not present, as to the number of occurrences, the type of extramarital affair, as well as their reasoning behind the infidelity. Bagarozzi (2008) pointed out that the offended spouse may also be engaging in an extramarital affair that the offending spouse is unaware of. Bagarozzi (2008) posed that the individual interviews is helpful in assisting therapists in determining if there may be a possibility of an Axis II diagnosis, assist in understanding the dynamics of the situation, as well as gaining a clearer understanding of both of the individuals personality and what that is comprised of.

Bagarozzi (2008) postulated that the advantage of interviewing the individuals separately; is instrumental in gaining a clearer understanding of the spouse's motives for remaining in their marriage, as well as an avenue of assessing their ability to reciprocate forgiveness to each other. It is of great importance to learn more about how each spouse perceives their marriage Bagarozzi (2008) provided examples: personal beliefs and judgments, regarding the satisfaction or the lack thereof about the voluntary or non-voluntary marriage, how each spouse view each other's commitments, regarding their voluntary or non-voluntary marriage, how vested is each spouse in resolution, due to the extramarital affair, as well as the level of satisfaction or the lack thereof for each spouse, before the infidelity occurred.

The offended spouses' of extramarital affairs tends to experience three types of triggers. Manning and Watson (2007) provided three types of revelations that trigger the offended spouse, pertaining to their sexual behavior. It is as follows: 1) discovery of the issue, i.e. love letters, pornographic magazines, and receipts for sex-related purchases; 2) when the spouse who has caused the offense discloses the issue partially or completely; 3) when the offended spouse questions the spouse, due to sensing that something is not right, in which this in turn, brings the issue to the forefront. It is important for the counselor to assist the offended spouse in learning what their triggers are, in effort to assist them in minimizing or alleviating these occurrences that triggers them from having the same affect, as it once had when the spouse initially learned about their offending spouse's sexual behavior.

Bagarozzi (2008) suggested that the following instruments are great assessment tools to administer when infidelity is the presenting issue. These tools are as follows: 1) Justification for Extramarital Involvement Questionnaire; 2) Marital Disaffection Scale; 3) Trust Scale; and 4) Spousal Inventory of Desired Changes and Relationship Barriers. Though it is not a scale, but it should be considered as part of the assessment process to incorporate forgiveness when devising a treatment plan. A brief overview will be provided of each assessment tool, in effort to provide a greater understanding of its purpose, as well as, what is being targeted in the assessment.

The first scale is the Justification for Extramarital Involvement Questionnaire. Bagarozzi (2008) postulated that this assessment tool is a Likert-type questionnaire that is administered via interviewing the person on an individual basis. The assessment consists of four domains, which includes: 1) sexual justifications, i.e. excitement and sexual satisfaction; 2) extrinsic motivations, i.e. career advancement; 3) emotional gratification; 4) romantic and love motives, as well as involvements.

The second scale is the Marital Disaffection Scale. Bagarozzi (2008) presented that there is a slow decline, regarding the emotional attachment to one's spouse. The decline towards disaffection may consist of emotional estrangement, how much one cares for their spouse decreases, while apathy and indifferences increases toward their spouse. The assessment tool is a Likert scale, which consists of 21 items to measure the level of disaffection in marriage.

The third scale is the Trust Scale. Bagarozzi (2008) pointed out that there has been a violation of trust in the marriage, as a result of infidelity. The primary focus is rebuilding trust, and throughout the therapeutic process, it must be continuously addressed. The assessment tool is a Likert scale that hones in on three areas of interpersonal trust: 1) the level of faith in one's spouse; 2) dependability and predictability of their spouse's actions and behavior; and 3) sexual fidelity, and dependability in this area. This scale can be used to measure the degree of trust that has been regained by the offended spouse, as a pre-treatment and post-treatment assessment, as well as when therapy has been concluded.

The fourth scale is the Spousal Inventory of Desired Changes and Relationship Barriers. Bagarozzi (2008) discussed how the assessment tool is a self-report instrument via pencil and paper that measures three dimensions of the spouse's perception of their marriage, such as: 1) commitment to one's spouse and marriage; 2) perception of barriers, in reference to separation and divorce; and 3) ten critical areas of marriage is assessed to measure overall satisfaction with the exchange process in their marriage. The purpose of this 3-5 minute questionnaire is to provide the therapist, as well as each spouse, about the perception of their responses to the same questions, their level of commitment to the marriage, the perception of their spouse's level of satisfaction, regarding the marriage, as well

as the voluntary and non-voluntary context of the marriage. The therapist can make a determination, regarding the course of therapy, once the assessments and diagnostic formulations has been completed, i.e. group or individual treatment.

The fifth ‘assessment’ tool is to integrate forgiveness into the treatment plan. Bagarozzi (2008) pointed out that it should not be assumed that the offended spouse will be accepting of the offending spouse’s plea for forgiveness when they initiate marital therapy. It is important to understand that forgiveness may be a separate entity, and may not be incorporated in the reconciliation agreement to the offended spouse. The offended spouse may set conditions, as to how the reconciliation will take place i.e. infidelity must not occur anymore. In voluntary marriages, provisional reconciliation generally occurs when unfaithfulness has occurred only one time in the marriage. Not in all cases, but the offending spouse may placate the offending spouse, regarding provisional reconciliation, until another situation that is better than the current relationship presents itself.

Manning and Watson (2007) stated that there are five categories of change-oriented supports that were identified via the coding process that is common, and includes: 1) recreational; 2) relational; 3) professional; 4) spiritual; and 5) conceptual.

The first change-oriented support is recreational. Manning and Watson (2007) postulated that the recreational supports were activities that the offended spouse always or previously enjoyed, prior to learning about the sexual behavior of their spouse. The offended spouse found comfort, increased wellness, perspective, healthy breaks that assisted in the necessary changes, as well as in resolution for the issue at hand. The level of involvement in these activities became more frequent and intense, after the discovery or disclosure of the issue.

The second change-oriented support is relational. Manning and Watson (2007) mentioned how the offended spouse had reached out to a significant relationship, as a source of comfort, advice, temporal, emotional, and/or social support. The participants in the study had used the word ‘shielding’, as a way of protecting themselves, as well as protecting the issue from public knowledge. The ‘shielding’ process was a means, as to who could be resourceful, trustworthy in

sharing the information, as well as a sense of direction, regarding the marriage, before receiving feedback from others.

The third change-oriented support is professional supports. Manning and Watson (2007) defined supports, as one who have required specific training and licensing in a particular area of focus, i.e. therapist, physicians, or nurse practitioners. There are 12-Step groups-Sexaholics Anonymous that provides assistance for those struggling with addictive or compulsive sexual behaviors. The following supports were identified as helpful to wives of sex addicts: 1) individual therapy, couples therapy, group therapy for couples, family physician, hospital, nurse practitioner, psycho-educational seminars, family therapy, ob-gyn.

The fourth change-oriented support is spiritual supports. Manning and Watson (2007) explained that spiritual supports pertains to a higher power, faith, clergy, religion, scriptural texts, as well as the individual's faith community, in which they draw support from. Most clergy are professionally trained in ministry, counseling, or theology; however, since a fee was not required, the services were differentiated from professional supports. The following supports were found most helpful via utilizing this form of support: 1) clergy; 2) a particular belief or doctrine; 3) God; 4) prayer; 5) scripture reading; 6) religious meetings or services; 7) Jesus Christ; 8) impressions or spiritual promptings; and 9) charitable service.

The fifth change-oriented support is conceptual supports. Manning and Watson (2007) stated that conceptual supports are based on the premise of ideas, metaphors or perspectives that were of great assistance or the catalyst for change. For example, the offended spouse may not have ever known how to create boundaries, or that the offended spouse may have overextended themselves in giving to their spouse or others, and now knows which individuals' in their life or circle, that they are able to give to.

Schneider, Corley and Irons (2001) postulated that the recovery process for sexual addiction is much different from that of chemical dependency. The goal of chemical dependency is abstinence, as with all psychoactive substances; however, the goal of sexual addiction only from compulsive, self-destructive, and self-defeating sexual behaviors. The primary goal is healthy sexuality, which is generally achieved via commitment to a program of continued recovery and

therapy. Sexual addiction is considered to be a chronic disease in which, there is a great possibility of a relapse. This is why the individual refers to himself/herself as ‘recovering’ rather than a ‘recovered’ addict. Schneider, Corley and Irons (2001) mentioned how addictive sexual disorders generally coexist with substance use disorders. For most individuals, when they enter recovery from chemical dependency, then the compulsivity ends. For others, the compulsivity remains, and begins to take on the characteristics of a primary disease. Schneider, Corley and Irons (2001) stated that treatment options for individuals with addictive sexual disorders consist of: 1) individual therapy; 2) involving family members in a program to become educated about the sexual addiction, and confrontation; 3) abstinence in the first 30-90 days of treatment, which would include masturbation. (Masturbation is generally part of the compulsive behavior, so it is important to refrain from this activity in the process of recovery); 4) psychotherapy is significant after undergoing primary treatment, especially to address the issue of ongoing shame, childhood trauma, false beliefs, and the consequences for past actions; and 5) drug therapy is most definitely an option for treatment of sexual disorders. Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) such as fluoxetine, sertraline, paroxetine, and fluvoxamine, to inhibit orgasm intensity of their sexual preoccupation and it suppresses compulsive fantasies, which allows the individual to fully engage in treatment and self-help groups/programs. Schneider, Corley and Irons (2001) noted that sex therapy is most effective in the second year and beyond in treatment. Counselors are encouraged to carefully define and rigorously monitor recovery boundaries of clients and of the professional-client relationship.

IV. Role of Pastoral or Spiritual Counselor When Integrating Divine Love into Therapy

The role of the Pastoral or Spiritual counselor is to assist the marital union in making the connection that divine love and forgiveness are linked together. It is also important to note that the counselor should stress the importance of how the process of forgiveness actually frees the individual from being in bondage to the other individual’s sins, mistakes, faults, and/or error. Olmstead, Blick and Mills (2009) posited that counselors incorporate forgiveness and marital infidelity treatment sequentially. Infidelity treatment includes

assessing family of origin and relationship history, and discussing mutual acceptance of responsibility. Counselors described four areas when working toward forgiveness: 1) assessing the client's understanding; 2) psychoeducation; 3) clarification; 4) client language, and 5) time. Olmstead, Blick and Mills (2009) stressed the importance of gaining an understanding of their client's view of forgiveness. Also, the counselor should clarify the wants and needs of the couple. Clarification is vital since some couples may be willing to forgive and reconcile, while others may be willing to forgive, and not remain in the marriage. Olmstead, Blick and Mills (2009) stressed the importance of clarifying the language of forgiveness since an individual's description, and various terms used in defining forgiveness, which may differ from the counselor's language. It is imperative that the counselor and couple understand and view the terms in the same way, during the forgiveness process. Olmstead, Blick and Mills (2009) suggested that after the initial session with the couple presenting the problem of infidelity; the couple should openly be labelled as one of the following: 1) marital; 2) reconciliation; 3) separation; and 4) ambivalence. It is recommended to place the decision of reconciliation, not forgiveness at the outset of treatment. God's wisdom, divine love, and forgiveness will be presented when the time is appropriate.

V. Salvation

The Pastoral or spiritual counselor has a role to inquire about the salvation of the marital union. There may be one individual who is saved, but the other spouse is not. Both may be unsaved, or one or both parties of the marital union may be in a backslidden state in their relationship with God. It is vital to examine the spiritual state of the clients. The bible clearly states in James 1:8, 'A double minded man is unstable in all his ways'. This is why it necessitates examining the spiritual state of the client. In Proverbs 14:14 states, 'the backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: and a good man shall be satisfied from himself'. When the individual is prepared to begin life anew, then Romans 10:9-10 may be presented by the Pastoral or spiritual counselor who can have the individual repeat the verse after them, for salvation/rededication to take place. Romans 10 v 9 states, 'That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou

shalt be saved. The next scripture v 10 states, 'For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. The final scripture to note is Ephesians 2:8-9. The bible states in Ephesians 2:8, 'For by grace are ye saved through faith; and not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: v 9 states, 'Not of works, lest any man should boast'. Once the marital union is on one accord spiritually with God, then the marital union will yield optimal results.

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