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

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¹ See www.HeartMission.org for Heart Mission Therapy Services, LLC or see www.HeartMission.org/Our_Staff.html.

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Introduction

Sexual addiction is a pervasive and rampant problem in the world today. Its effects within the Body of Christ are equally as devastating as in the world at large. Various theories and methods have been used in counseling men and women alike who struggle with this difficult issue. This work will provide a review of the various definitions of sexual addiction followed by a discussion of its possible roots and subsequent consequences. A detailed analysis will then follow addressing the use of the concept of new identity in Christ in counseling young men with sexual addiction.

A. Defining Sexual Addiction

There are several models available in the secular literature that define sexual addiction. These include medical models, which seek to define and/or categorize the roots of sexual addiction from a biological perspective. There are also psychological or counseling models that define sexual addiction and its roots from a psychological and behavioral perspective.

1. Medical/Biological Model Definitions

The American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM), the American Psychiatry Association (APA), and the World Health Organization (WHO) all propose various definitions or criteria for the diagnosis of sexual addiction. The American Society of Addiction Medicine defines addiction as “a primary, chronic disease of brain reward, motivation, memory and related circuitry”.² They posit that addiction is related to behaviors that are rewarding, not solely dependence on a substance. The roots of addiction are noted to be about brain functioning and brain circuitry. It is about how the structure and function of the brains of individuals suffering from

² American Society of Addiction Medicine, retrieved March 8, 2012 from www.asam.org/pdf/Advocacy/20110815_DefofAddiction-FAQs.pdf.

addictions differ in structure and function of the brains of those who do not suffer from addictions.³ They state,

All humans have brain reward circuitry that makes food and sex rewarding. It is a survival mechanism. In a healthy brain, these rewards have feedback mechanisms for satiety or ‘enough’. In someone with [an] addiction, the circuitry becomes dysfunctional such that the message to the individual becomes ‘more’ which leads to the pathological pursuit of rewards and/or relief through the use of substances and behaviors. So anyone who has an addiction is vulnerable to food and sex addiction.⁴

The American Psychiatry Association publishes the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM). This organization no longer includes sexual addiction in their listing as a disorder (as of publication of DSM-IV-TR in 2000), but rather mention it under the section “*Sexual Disorders Not Otherwise Specified*”, where it is noted as “distress about a pattern of repeated sexual relationships involving a succession of lovers who are experienced by the individual only as things to be used”.⁵ Thus, this diagnostic definition does not focus on the sexual behavior itself but rather on the feelings of distress the person feels about the behavior.

Moreover, the World Health Organization publishes the International Classification of Diseases (ICD), a medical classification system that provides codes to various diseases and a wide variety of symptoms, signs, symptoms, abnormal findings, complaints, social circumstances, and external causes of injury or disease. Under this system, every health condition can be assigned to a unique category and given a code up to six characters long. Such categories can include a set of similar diseases. This system is used worldwide for morbidity and mortality statistics, reimbursement systems, and automated decision support in medicine. The ICD is the international standard diagnostic classification for all general epidemiological issues, many health management purposes, and clinical use. It is used to classify diseases and other health problems recorded on many types of health and vital records including death

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ American Psychiatric Association. (2000). *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (4th ed., text rev.). Washington, DC: Author.

certificates and health records.⁶ The most recent publication of this manual, the ICD-10, defines sexual addiction by calling it an “excessive sexual drive” using the term *satyriasis* for males and *nymphomania* for females.⁷

2. Psychological/Counseling Theoretical Definitions

Patrick Carnes, PhD is a pioneer in the field of sexual addiction treatment and research. Many of the present-day counseling models and theoretical perspectives of sexual addiction stem from his definition of sexual addiction. Carnes states,

Sexual addiction is parallel [to that of alcoholism or drug dependence in that]...a person has a pathological relationship with a mood-alerting chemical. The addict substitutes a sick relationship to an event or process [sex and sexual behaviors] for a healthy relationship with others. The addict’s relationship with a mood-altering experience becomes central to his life.”⁸

Carnes further notes that the positive aspects of a sexual experience—such as it being a source of nurturing, focus of energy, and origin of excitement—in an addict turns it into a relief from pain and anxiety, a reward for success, and a way to avoid addressing other emotional issues in the person’s life.⁹

Sex Addicts Anonymous (SAA), a 12-step recovery program for sex addicts, defines sexual addiction as “a persistent and escalating pattern of sexual behaviors acted out despite increasingly negative consequences to self or others.”¹⁰ It involves: 1) Compulsivity – loss of ability to choose freely whether to stop or continue a behavior; 2) Continuation – of the behavior despite adverse consequences, such as loss of health, job, significant relationships, or freedom; and 3) Obsession – preoccupation with the activity. SAA notes, “It is not the behavior but rather the consequences that define the sexual addiction.”¹¹

⁶ World Health Organization, retrieved March 8, 2012 from www.who.int/classifications/icd/en/.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Carnes, Patrick. *Out of the Shadows*. (Hazelden, 2001).

⁹ Sex Addicts Anonymous, retrieved March 8, 2012 from www.saahelp.com/Definition/Definition_main.htm.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

The Society for the Advancement of Sexual Health (formerly called The National Council on Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity) also defines sexual addiction based on Carnes' theory by stating, "[Sexual Addiction is] engaging in persistent and escalating patterns of sexual behavior acted out despite increasing negative consequences to self and others."¹²

3. Behavioral Features of Sexual Addiction

Sexual addiction generally features various behaviors that are carried out compulsively and despite negative consequences to self, relationships, work or life. Some of these behaviors are:

- Masturbation
- Pornography use and abuse
- Multiple and/or anonymous sexual partners
- Partner sexualization and objectification
- Simultaneous and/or repeated sequential affairs
- Cyber (computer) sex or phone sex
- Sexual aversion
- Unsafe sexual activities and practices
- Frequenting strip clubs and adult book stores
- Prostitution (practice and patronization)

B. Possible Roots of Sexual Addiction and Subsequent Relational Consequences

The medical and biological theories that define sexual addiction fail to address possible early roots or examine an individual's history and background. The counseling and psychological fields often trace the roots of sexual addiction to an individual's childhood and personal history in one's family of origin. Following this theoretical perspective, the counseling and psychological literature provides information on four factors that seem to be significantly affected and impaired in the development of the child who later goes on to develop a sexual addiction: 1) self-image; 2) relationships; 3) needs; and 4) sexuality. There are core beliefs that are developed within each of

¹² Society for Advancement of Sexual Health, retrieved March 8, 2012 from <http://sash.net/en/articles/sexual-addiction.html>.

these areas that govern the choices and behaviors made during the child's adult life.¹³ This section will examine each of these factors.

1. Self-Image

Self-image is typically defined as the way an individual perceives themselves as well as how they view their own worth. Self-image is initially shaped and developed in response to an individual's relational experiences within their family of origin—primarily from their parent(s) and/or primary caretaker(s). In an addict, due to negative experiences within childhood, there is a generally a core belief developed within the child that they are a “bad” or “unworthy” person, that they are “unlovable”, or that they are unwanted. These beliefs are typically developed as a result of the child being emotionally, sexually, and/or physically abused, exploited, or even abandoned by an adult. Because there is no healthy outlet or person with which to process the horrific feelings that can emerge from such trauma, a child is left to carry the emotional weight of the trauma alone. As a result, the aforementioned types of core beliefs develop and contribute to a significantly negative self-image. Carnes notes, “The more prevalent these elements [of abuse, punishment, humiliation, and abandonment] are, the more compelling the addiction.”¹⁴

2. Relationships

As a child, the sexual addict often has very unhealthy relationships with parents and/or caregivers. They often experience unjust punishment, abuse, rejection, and abandonment. As a result, a core belief develops that says, “No one will love me as I am”.¹⁵ In adulthood, this core belief can manifest in the sexual addict navigating his way through relationships where he does not believe he will ever be loved unconditionally and that people cannot be trusted. This results in the addict maintaining relationships that lack genuine intimacy and emotional closeness. They develop a public image or front that can act as a shield from further rejection should someone

¹³ Carnes, 97.

¹⁴ Carnes, 100.

¹⁵ Carnes, 101.

discover who they really are underneath. Carnes describes it by stating,

To be close will mean to lose reality or integrity somehow. So intimacy is avoided. As the child grows up, a personal front or public image designed to look good shields the emerging adult from the searching gaze of others, which would lead to rejection.¹⁶

3. Needs

The sexual addict learns in childhood that his needs will not be met by important others. Because they feel unworthy and unlovable as well as lonely and unprotected, they develop a core belief that they can never depend upon others to get their needs met. As a result of this overall lack of nurturing, the addict will find things on which to depend to get their needs met—even if on a temporary basis. For the sexual addict, sex and sexual behaviors serve as a means to meet their deep emotional needs. Sexualizing people and activities and the act of sex itself can serve as a means to the end of achieving the feeling of being nurtured and loved within the addict. Out of this pattern of thinking another core belief emerges that says, “Sex is my most important need.”¹⁷

4. Sexuality

As a result of destructive core beliefs about his self-image, how he perceives relationships, and the belief that his needs will not be met by important others, the sexual addict begins to view sex as his most important need. Because sex—even when it is used to abuse the addict in childhood—has come to be viewed in a distorted and destructive fashion, the addict chooses sex and sexual activities as the nurturer for himself. In the same way that an alcoholic views alcohol as his most important need or the way a food addict views food as his most important need, the addict develops a severely distorted view of his sexuality and sex itself. His sexuality becomes the source of nurturing and all relationships and everything in the addict’s life are viewed from this central vantage point.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Carnes, 102.

C. The Concept of New Identity in Christ and the Sexual Addict

While there has been some evidence within the field of medical research that brain function is impaired and altered by addictive behavior, the medical field is currently still in the process of researching the addictive brain—whether this altered brain function is reversible and what the potential treatment options may be. It is beyond the scope of this work to examine the many facets of the research currently being conducted on the brains of sexual addicts or the medically-based treatment options that are available. This paper seeks solely to examine the treatment of a sexual addict through a theoretical counseling perspective of which the basic assumption is that beliefs drive subsequent choices and behavior and thus impact feelings and relationships.

Moreover, core beliefs in the areas of self-image, relationships, needs, and sexuality that typically develop in the childhood of a sexual addict tend to be pervasive and dictate how that individual subsequently thinks and behaves in adulthood. Without a fundamental change in an individual's pattern of thinking and a destruction of these core beliefs, there will be little lasting, effective change done in the life of the individual. A change of this magnitude can only be successfully wrought by means of a new identity in Christ, which is achieved through the renewal and regeneration of the Holy Spirit in the life of an individual.

1. The New Identity in Christ

A new identity in Christ is received when a person believes in and places their trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, as described in Romans 10:9-10, which states, "...if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified and with the mouth one confesses and is saved." (ESV)¹⁸ This is the core of salvation—a complete renewal of the mind and regeneration by the Holy Spirit, who comes to reside within an individual at the point of salvation. Titus 3:5 describes it thus, "He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and

¹⁸ *The Holy Bible*, English Standard Version (ESV). London: Crossway, 2001.

renewal of the Holy Spirit.”(ESV)¹⁹ This “regeneration and renewal” is, in fact, the impartation of a new nature; it is what makes a believer in Christ a new person. The Bible describes it this way in 2 Corinthians 5:17, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” (ESV)²⁰ This is the new identity in Christ.

2. Impact of New Identity in Christ on the Sexual Addict

The new identity in Christ, received through salvation and the regeneration of the Holy Spirit, will inevitably impact the core beliefs that had previously driven the sexually destructive behaviors of an addict. The following section will examine the potential impact of the new identity in Christ on an addict’s self-image, relationships, needs, and sexuality.

3. New Identity in Christ and Self-Image

It was previously noted that self-image is defined as the way an individual perceives themselves as well as how they view their own worth. Additionally, it was also noted that self-image is initially shaped and developed in response to an individual’s relational experiences within their family of origin. When a person receives a new identity in Christ, their self-image begins to be redeveloped on the basis of the new relationship with God as His child. In the same manner that a parent’s words and valuation impact a child and influences how that child perceives themselves, God’s words and valuation can impact a believer in Christ and influence that person’s self-image for good. For example, person who grew up with a poor view of their own worth and a core belief that they were unlovable will find quite the opposite within their new identity in Christ. They will find that they have been chosen by God, through His love, for blessing and are “accepted in the Beloved”.²¹ They can choose to stop believing the lie that they are unlovable (or “bad” or “unworthy”, etc.) and, by faith, believe the truth of who their Father says they are—“fearfully and wonderfully made”.²²

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ephesians 1:3-6, KJV.

²² Psalm 139:14b, ESV.

Further, it should be noted that the formation of a new self-image based on one's new identity in Christ is not an instantaneous process. This is a lifelong growth process of having one's mind renewed by faith in God's Word.²³ This faith, which is granted by God Himself, comes through a continual meditation on the Word of God.²⁴

4. New Identity in Christ and Relationships

For the sexual addict, relationships are viewed through the filter of a core belief that says, "No one would love me as I am".²⁵ This will cause the addict to operate in relationships believing he will never be loved unconditionally and that people cannot be trusted, which will breed emotional distance and false intimacy within the relationship. A new identity in Christ should generate a new belief in the addict based on the reality of the person's relationship with God. As a believer who had been previously driven by the belief that "no one would love me as I am", the addict now has the experience of God's unconditional love as revealed through His suffering on the cross for the sins of mankind. The Bible reveals this in Romans 5:8 where it states, "...God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (ESV)²⁶ It is this reality and experience of unconditional love from God that will enable a person to find himself in relationships marked by unconditional love and acceptance with other believers. This is because the Spirit of God is at work in the hearts of His children and it is His love that flows from one to another within the Body of Christ.²⁷ Thus, an addict can experience new relationships with others who have found a new identity in Christ that are marked by trust, unconditional love, and acceptance. It is this experience of new, godly relationships that will serve to dismantle the previously held core belief of the addict that said, "no one would love me as I am."²⁸ The possibility of this is because the addict has first found that he is loved as he is by God.

²³ Romans 12:2, ESV.

²⁴ Romans 10:17, ESV.

²⁵ Carnes, 97.

²⁶ Romans 5:8, ESV.

²⁷ 1 John 4:11-12, ESV.

²⁸ Carnes, 97.

5. New Identity in Christ and Needs

For the sexual addict, he has believed that he can only get his deep emotional needs met through sexualizing people and activities. He has believed that this is the means to achieving a feeling of being nurtured and loved. It is through this line of thinking that the core belief emerges which says, “Sex is my most important need.”²⁹ The addict’s life is driven by a more subtle implication that life itself is found in sex and sexualized activities and, without it, a proverbial emotional death is inevitable. With a new identity in Christ, an addict can come to understand that life and all that is needed for living it is found only in the knowledge of Christ.³⁰ The idol that has been made out of sex can be discarded by the newfound belief in the truth that God is the one who brings us life and refreshment and enables us to feel loved and nurtured—with or without sex. The reality that God alone is the addict’s portion and that satisfaction is found in Christ alone can be faced with a new identity in Christ.^{31 32 33} Additionally, with his new identity in Christ, the addict will discover the reality that there are going to be certain needs and desires that simply will not be met while here on earth—and he can accept that.

6. New Identity in Christ and Sexuality

Sex for the sexual addict has come to be viewed in a distorted and destructive fashion because of his negative core beliefs in regard to self-image, relationships, and needs. Thus, his view of his sexuality is also distorted and virtually everything in life is viewed from the central vantage point of sex. However, with a new identity that is found in Christ, the addict will find an opportunity for a renewal of the mind in regard to his sexuality and sex itself. Since his new self-image is being formed based on the reality of who God says he is, he may experience relationships of trust, unconditional love, and acceptance with God and other believers. He finds God meeting him at his places of deepest need and he accepts that some of his longings will not be met in this fallen world. The addict who has

²⁹ Carnes, 102.

³⁰ 2 Peter 1:3, ESV.

³¹ Psalm 16:5, ESV.

³² Lamentations 3:24, ESV.

³³ Philippians 4:19, ESV.

found a new identity in Christ can now start to view his sexuality through the lens of who God says he is as a man. Further, sex itself can be viewed as what God designed it to be—an expression of love and a means for procreation created to be experienced within the confines of the marital relationship.³⁴

D. Use of the Concept of New Identity in Christ in Counseling Sexual Addicts

Having given sufficient attention to the concept of the new identity in Christ and how it relates to the formation of new core beliefs for the sexual addict, this section will address the core thesis of this work: the use of the concept of new identity in Christ in counseling young men with sexual addictions. The obvious question to be addressed in light of the myriad treatment options available in the world regarding sexual addiction is whether the use of the concept of new identity in Christ is sufficient to adequately counsel a sexual addict. It is the belief of the author that the concept of a new identity in Christ is the one foundational theoretical perspective that is needed to counsel a sexual addict. All practical treatment approaches within said counseling can and should be drawn from this perspective. Before an examination of how this concept can be applied, the issue of free will and personal choice will be addressed.

1. Free Will and Personal Choice

For any counseling approach to be successful, there first must be willingness on the part of the individual being counseled to both desire and choose a different way of living. While a believer in Christ is given a new nature at salvation and, thus, receives a new identity in Christ, this does not preclude that individual from choosing to continue to walk in his old identity. That is, every believer in Christ has a choice of which nature he will submit to and allow governance over his life. The Bible speaks of these two natures in Galatians 5:17, which says, “For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other...” (ESV)³⁵ Further, if an addict is to expect victory in his battle over sexual addiction, he must exercise his ability and

³⁴ 1 Corinthians 6:12-19, ESV.

³⁵ Galatians 5:17, ESV.

responsibility to choose to walk in his new identity in Christ. Romans chapter 6 addresses this responsibility in verses 2 through 4 where it states,

How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. (ESV)³⁶

For the addict to understand and accept his ability to choose to which identity he will submit—the new in Christ or the old in the flesh—is foundational to a successful sexual addiction counseling experience.

2. Applying the Concept of New Identity in Christ in the Counsel of Sex Addicts

The use of the concept of new identity in Christ in counseling the sexual addict should be applied by two means: 1) assisting the person in dismantling their destructive, fleshly core beliefs and 2) assisting the person in forming new, healthy core beliefs. Both of these means are presupposed to only be successful done through the empowering work of the Holy Spirit, the ultimate Wonderful Counselor. He is the One who empowers and gives wisdom, guidance, and insight to the human counselor.

The task of dismantling and breaking down the original destructive, fleshly core beliefs involves helping the addict revisit the trauma(s) that generated the formation of the beliefs. Practically, this may involve exploring the experience in the counseling setting by the counselor inquiring about how the person felt, thought, and behaved when they suffered the trauma(s). This will often inevitably lead to significant pain and the emergence of intense emotions for the addict. The goal of this approach is to allow the person the opportunity to grieve the experience of the trauma(s) in a safe, nurturing, and loving environment, presupposing that the person never had the opportunity to do this. This also creates an opportunity for the counselor to lead the person in bringing their pain to God and opening up the door for the person to gradually experience God's healing, nurturing, and love through the counselor by means of open sharing, prayer, and

³⁶ Romans 6:2-4, ESV.

meditation on God’s Word. It is often at this juncture in the process that the addict must wrestle with any struggles with trusting others (the counselor is often the first person to whom trust must be granted) or even their difficulty trusting God. It should be noted that this process can take time and is not necessarily a one-time occurrence.

Subsequent to the process of the addict retelling their story, facing their pain, experiencing God’s nurture and care through the counselor, the person will need to specifically address the destructive core beliefs that have arisen from the trauma and how these beliefs have orchestrated how the addict has chosen to live life and operate in relationships. It is at the point of becoming aware of the destructive core beliefs and being able to identify them when they are at work that the addict can choose to believe something differently based on God’s Word and His way. Ephesians chapter 4 verses 22 through 24 addresses this process when it states,

put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. (ESV)³⁷

This basically involves the person choosing, in the moment they become aware that they are being driven by the old, destructive core belief, to believe a new biblical core belief. The following hypothetical illustration will exemplify this point.

Tom is a married sexual addict who developed a core belief subsequent to a negative childhood experience that said, “I am unlovable”. In his adolescent years, Tom found that his first sexual experience seemed to alleviate the pervasive feeling of being “unlovable”, albeit only temporarily. Engaging in sex and sexualized activities made him feel loved and alive in the moment, so he pursued them with vigor. This led to another core belief that said, “Sex is my most important need. If I don’t get sex, I am unlovable.” Tom began to orchestrate all of his life and relationships around sex and sexualized activities—even hurting others in the process. This hurt also extended to his wife who frequently felt used and objectified by Tom. She also felt betrayed when she discovered that he was viewing pornography on their family computer and had started going to strip

³⁷ Ephesians 4:22-24, ESV.

clubs. After his wife confronted Tom and threatened to leave him, he agreed to see a counselor to get help.

One night when Tom approached his wife for intercourse and she gently told him she was not in the mood due to an upset stomach, he began to feel an overwhelming sense of rejection and abandonment. Earlier in the marriage, these feelings of rejection and abandonment would quickly turn to anger toward his wife for not meeting this “important need”. Tom would then emotionally abandon his wife, leave the house, and visit a strip club to ogle women and masturbate to satisfy the burning sexual desires within him. This would bring him a temporary feeling of relief followed by excruciating guilt. However, because he was now working with his counselor to process his childhood trauma and embrace new biblical beliefs, Tom was now able to quickly recognize the feelings of rejection and abandonment that surfaced when his wife said she was not in the mood. Instead of being driven by the belief that he was unlovable, Tom chose to take his negative feelings before God in prayer and seek comfort. He also began to meditate on the truth that he was loved by God and his wife despite how badly he may have felt in the moment. Tom also remembered the truth that sex—despite what significant satisfaction it could bring—was not his most important need. He then acted on the strength from God as received through his new identity in Christ to resist the urge to act out sexually.

The aforementioned story is an example of a man carrying out the basic process of the use of the concept of new identity in Christ to achieve victory in his struggle with sexual addiction. As used in counseling, this is the process of assisting a person whose new identity is rooted in Christ with replacing old destructive beliefs with new biblical beliefs. While it involves a person’s choice of will to believe the truth of Scripture rather than an old lie, it is ultimately carried out with true success in the power of the Holy Spirit. Further, while it may seem rather simplistic, it is indeed a long and difficult process that is often met with setbacks and disappointments, as described by the Apostle Paul when speaking of his own struggles with living righteously in Romans chapter 7.

Moreover, the application of this concept can be attempted in a trite manner. For example, when an addict is met with the sudden urge to give in to the temptation to act out on a sinful sexual desire

and shares this burden with someone, he could be told to simply deny his flesh. While denying the flesh is indeed a part of the process, when used as the primary means to the end of victory over temptation, it is more of an external focus on behavior rather than an inward focus on the heart. By this means, the addict could then resist the temptation without addressing the inward heart motivations and experience temporal victory. However, due to the likelihood of the addict have a traumatic history and destructive patterns of thinking and behaving, it would be more beneficial to first address the belief(s) that are motivating the urge to act out. In this way, there would likely be more significant and lasting change, as this addresses the sexual urge on a deeper level.

E. Considering the Unbeliever and Secular Methods

In considering the concept of the use of new identity in Christ in counseling young men with sexual addictions, the question of whether an unbeliever can successfully be treated for sexual addiction using this concept is inevitably raised. As with many treatment modalities in the counseling field, a person can benefit from many different approaches and find significant healing as well as experience some changes in negative patterns of thinking and behaving. In fact, the idea of replacing old destructive beliefs with new biblical beliefs in counseling the sexual addict as mentioned in this work is basically the same approach as the secular method of counseling, Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy.³⁸ However, it is the author's conviction that any secular theory that seems to include biblical principles is because God's principles of counseling as revealed in His Word are timeless. His Word and methods came first, then counseling theories that are apparently similar—not the other way around.

Further, while a counseling method such as Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy does have significant benefit in the treatment of sexual addiction, it is frequently carried out through human effort which avails no lasting change. The changes that an unbelieving sexual addict could make through secular counseling modalities are often brought about by sheer will power and not through supernatural means such as the work of the Holy Spirit. Thus, while an unbeliever

³⁸ National Association of Cognitive-Behavioral Therapists, retrieved on May 9, 2012 from www.nacbt.org/whatiscbt.htm.

can be treated for sexual addiction, without a new identity there will not be any significant heart change. A lasting, permanent change in the core beliefs that drive sexually addictive behaviors can only be generated through a new identity in Christ—a complete renewal of the mind and impartation of a new nature. This is a supernatural feat accomplished only by and through the Spirit of God.

Conclusion

This research has discussed the use of the concept of new identity in Christ in counseling sexual addiction in men. The sexual addict has often come to the point of using sex and sexual activities in a sinful and destructive manner due to some childhood trauma(s) and the subsequent development of core beliefs involving the areas of self-image, relationships, needs, and sexuality. A counselor who employs the use of the concept of new identity in Christ in treating sexual addiction may find success in helping the addict dismantle their destructive core beliefs by use of replacing old destructive ones with new beliefs that are biblical. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the addict's understanding of their new identity in Christ, their choice to believe God's truth about their self-image, relationships, needs, and sexuality and to act differently, this can be successfully accomplished and lasting victory in the area of sexual addiction can be achieved.

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