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**Using the Concept of New Identity in Christ to  
Counsel Sexually Addicted Adolescent Girls in the  
Context of a Journaling-Empower Group Setting**

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Introduction .....	2
I. Development Stage of Adolescent Girls .....	5
A. Theoretical Issues .....	5
B. Parental Influence .....	6
C. Cultural Influence .....	7
D. Physical Growth.....	8
E. Cognitive Growth.....	8
G. Faith.....	8
H. Sociological Growth – Community Support.....	10
II. The Concept of New Identity in Christ .....	11
A. Christ the Basis .....	11
B. Jesus as a Divine Being.....	12
C. New Identity in Christ.....	13
D. Rationality in Counseling .....	16
III. Sexuality in the Bible.....	18
IV. Sexual Addiction .....	21
A. Intense Emotions .....	21
B. Sexual Addiction Defined.....	21
C. Addiction .....	22
D. Sexual Addiction .....	24

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E. Problems in Defining Sexual Addiction in Adolescents .....	25
V. Journaling-Empower Groups for Young Girls.....	27
VI. Counseling Young Girls .....	28
A. Journal-Empower.....	28
B. Journaling.....	29
C. Journaling-Empower Group.....	30
VII. The Counselor .....	34
Conclusion .....	36
Works Cited.....	38

### Introduction

Young girls today are having sex at early ages. Results show that girls younger than fifteen years are engaged in sexual activity. Many adults are under the notion that this age group is still too young to engage in sexual activity. Yet results that were published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* in 1997 showed that 17 percent of the national sample of thousands of seventh and eighth “graders indicated that they had been sexually active.”<sup>2</sup>

Some research studies have indicated a decline in adolescent girls’ sexual activity. They cite a drop in teen pregnancy rates, abortion, and teen birth rates and yet the use of contraceptives has risen by more than 70 percent since 1979. It is further reported that less than half use the contraceptives during sexual activity.<sup>3</sup> Thus the epidemic of sexual activity among young girls is still a matter of concern. The consequences are that these young girls are unaware of the ramifications of sexually transmitted diseases, early pregnancy, ruined reputation, and the emotional hurt. They are at the stage where they are dealing with physical, emotional, social, and intellectual changes. Thus their sexual activity is detached. They are not emotionally involved. The sexual act is considered as an experience to “consolidate their ego identities.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Anne Jarrell, “Teens are Becoming Sexually Experienced at Younger Ages,” in *Teen Sex* (San Diego, CA: 2002), 34.

<sup>3</sup> Liza Mundy, “Sexual Activity among Adolescent Girls is Increasing,” in *Teen Sex*, (San Diego, CA: 2002), 41.

<sup>4</sup> Shraga Fisherman, “Identity and Intimacy in Religiously Observant and Non-religiously Observant Adolescents and Young Adults in Israel,” *Religious Education* Vol. 103, no. 5:544 (Fisherman n.d.).

The young girls are in a double bind and lack education on sexual activity. The social perception of young girls who are active sexually is negative compared to boys within the same age range. The problem is that in a bid to be liked and popular, the young girls allow themselves to experiment and engage in sexual activity before they are mature enough to isolate the intense feelings that accompany sexual activity from the changes that come with age. Mundy and Jarrell in their work with adolescent girls have discovered that these girls hate themselves after engaging in the sexual act. Some of them even consider it as dirty, while others lose control. They are unable to stop and thus just continue the act and become addicted. They find that the sexual act occupies their way of life including falling grades and find it shameful with self-contempt or are scared to talk with their parents. Society influences their belligerent attitudes towards early sexual activity. Most of them just think it is pleasurable and fun but feel bad after engaging in it.<sup>5</sup>

The age of transition from childhood to adulthood is turbulent for many young girls. The stage is marked with new found thought processes and physical changes that might spark a thrilling and yet perturbed anticipation of adulthood. The young girl experiences powerful exhilarating sexual desires towards the opposite sex. The young girl's body has awakened on its journey to womanhood through menarche and thus procreation. These desires awaken in a world that breathes sexual undertones. To be beautiful is to be sexy. Thus the young girl is thrust in the environment that dangles the liberating but perverse expression of sex. At this juncture, if the girl is not properly educated, the good feeling may turn deadly, culminating in sexual addiction. It is imperative that counselors develop an awareness of the development age of young girls between 12- 18 years. Several theorists have posited the developmental needs and challenges of this age group. The girls are still growing and forming the self. This group is still in the process of identity formation as they experience a crisis from individuating from the nuclear family. The counselors are to take this stage seriously as sexual addiction

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<sup>5</sup> Jarrell, 33-38; Mundy, 39-59. (Roleff 2002).

interferes with the normal development of the young girl and later formation of intimacy in relationships, ‘marriage and family life.’<sup>6</sup>

Sexual addiction is a learned habit. As such, cognitive and behavioral approaches can be employed to counter their addictive underpinnings. During the transition stage, the expression of sex is internalized as the young girl interacts with environmental sociological factors and the view towards sex. The young girl may become desensitized to the deviant expression of her new -found sexual desire. This desire is heightened by an eroticized culture that introduces young girls with revealing fashions that are suitable for adults. The sexual undertones that are emphasized and are readily available to young girls pave the way towards sexual addiction.<sup>7</sup> Educating a young child in the healthy, timely, and proper expression of sex is crucial for a young girl to view sex in a positive realm and to foster a realistic medium for its expression.<sup>8</sup> Such a positive effect is that God intended sex to express a high intimate relationship and not just as a physical act for procreation or release of raging hormones.

The young girls who attend church have a chance of learning the proper expression of sex. They also learn that sexual immorality is sin and thus detestable in God’s sight. But sadly the young girls are not shielded from the permissiveness of society towards distorted sexual ideas; as a result, they lose control over sexual expression. The purpose of this article is to offer the vast expanse of God’s reconciling power through the identity in Christ for young girls addicted to sex.

The paper also offers a journaling- empower(JE) group setting as a medium through which young girls can be nurtured through counseling to cope with ramifications of sexual addiction and avoid recidivism. Such a group setting introduces the young girls to the truth of the gospel and God’s everlasting love for them. These girls

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<sup>6</sup> Alex Kwee and Others, “Sexual Addiction and Christian College Men: Conceptual, Assessment, and Treatment Challenges,” *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* Vol. 26, no. 1 (2007):10.

<sup>7</sup> Rob Jackson, “Pure Intimacy-Help for Female Sex Addicts,” Available from <http://www.pureintimacy.org/piArticles/A000000574.cfm>; Internet; accessed 23 September 2011; (Jackson n.d.) Diane E. Levin and Jean Kilbourne, *So Sexy So Soon: The New Sexualized Childhood and What Parents Ca do to Protect Their Kids*, (New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 2008), (Levin 2008) 16-17; Silver Johnson Ellen and Laurie J. Bauman, “The Association of SEXUAL Experience with Attitudes, Beliefs, and Risk Behaviors of Inner-City Adolescents,” *Journal of Research on Adolescence* Vol. 16, NO. 1 (2006): 31. (Silver and Laurie 2006).

<sup>8</sup> Armelle Le Gall, “Age, Religious Beliefs, and Sexual Attitudes,” *The Journal of Sex Research* Vol 39, no. 3 (Aug 2002): 207.

are empowered to face the realities of a sexually charged environment and how to cope to avoid relapse. The journaling will help the young girls to face their authentic selves in the knowledge that God cares and observes their every moment. The journey to sexual purity and an internal sense of self-worth is not an extrinsic performance but intrinsic motivation and growth. The journal details cognitions, strength, weaknesses, and growth. The act of journaling provides a launching point for some group discussions and story telling.

Group counseling has been found to be an effective mode to counter sexual compulsivity. The group setting is cost effective and offers an environment for confrontation that leads to growth. Kwee and others have reported an affirmation that group counseling has been positive in treating both “paraphilic and nonparaphilic sexual compulsions.”<sup>9</sup> The group setting is instrumental in exposing the defense systems that are associated with sex addicts. The benefits of group that Kwee and others highlight are “improving functioning within a social unit; decreasing shame; secrecy, and isolation; increasing self-understanding through development of mutual empathic identification.” Kwee did his study with mostly evangelical Christian men and further recommends that counseling be cognizant of “(1) the nature of sexual behavior and stage of addiction, (2) developmental stage, (3) Christian beliefs and values.”<sup>10</sup> The study of Kwee and others attest to the fact that Christians are not immune to various stages and forms of sexual addiction. But for a Christian, there is hope in the identification of Christ to receive forgiveness to work through sexual addiction. The counselor for the young girls has to take into account the stage of development of these girls and how they apply their new found identification with Christ so as to navigate through life and cope with the challenge of sexual addiction.

## **I. Development Stage of Adolescent Girls**

### **A. Theoretical Issues**

The theory about girls is based on the work experience of Mary Pipher. In her work with adolescents, Dr. Pipher found that traditional psychotherapy theories were not helpful, especially with girls. She

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<sup>9</sup> Kwee and others, 10.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

proposes that most problems with girls in their growth are in trying to reconcile paradoxical views from societal and even nuclear family orientations and expectations. The messages that are conveyed from authority figures form a paradox with the authentic development of the young girl. She has written that some of these messages are: <sup>11</sup>

Be beautiful, but beauty is only skin deep. Be sexy, but not sexual. Be honest, but don't hurt anyone's feelings. Be independent, but be nice. Be smart, but not so smart that you threaten the boys.

Early messages are embedded into a young girl's recesses as she makes a life of her own. The girls who have been socialized to negate the true self during their childhood develop a sense of a false self. This false self is dependent on external approval, and in many cases, it is the approval from the opposite sex- boys. Pipher found that in most cases, girls felt overwhelmed to sort through mixed feelings towards sexuality, romance, and intimacy. She goes on to say that, this spills over to relationships where the effect is dichotomized reality. For example, as girls internalize a sense of the self, they exhibit feelings of being "obligated and resentful, loving and angry, close and distant." These occurrences happen simultaneously with the same people. Nay, in many cases, the parents and those close to them are the recipients of this defiant behavior. <sup>12</sup>

### **B. Parental Influence**

An eroded authenticity is a function of early socializations that encouraged wholeness in exchange for approval. A girl learns that to be accepted, she has to express only those thoughts, emotions, intellectual acuties, and behaviors that would win her approval from adults. From an early age, the girl learns to negate the parts of the self that may result in abandonment from parents and thus she elevates a smaller range of the self that would be validated by parents. This split self spills over into adulthood. As an adult, those girls who were encouraged to be authentic learned to accept themselves rather than wait for extrinsic validation while others feel betrayed, empty, and

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<sup>11</sup> Mary Pipher, *Reviving Ophelia: Serving the Selves of Adolescent* (Pipher 2001) *Girls* (New York, NY: Ballantine Publishing Group, 2001), 35-36.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 35; Brenda Schaeffer, *Is it Love or Is It Addiction?* (Center City, MN: Hazelden Educational Materials, 1987), 119. (Schaeffer 1987).

devastated when they are criticized and not validated.<sup>13</sup> The girls with an external yearning for validity are at risk for sexual addiction. Such girls will seek to conform and sometimes join destructive group in order to fit in with the masses.

### C. Cultural Influence

Pipher has also posited the effect of culture on adolescent girls' personality development . She says that parental influence is limited as girls become adolescents. Culture plays a big role through written media, television, music, sex education in schools, and peer pressure. A young girl's response to these factors will affect her authenticity. A girl can choose to remain true to self and thus be shunned or conform and be popular. Pipher contends that most girls will choose to conform. Thus begins a vicious incongruent circle of outward behavior and inner feelings. The young girls cease to exhibit conscious thoughtful decisions and adopt reactionary choices from peer pressure. Pipher recalls that most of her clients lost control over appropriate sexual behavior by succumbing to pressure from peers and society expectations and dictates of what a beautiful young girl should look like.<sup>14</sup>

The girls are imbued with a power within them that dictates how they react to cultural expectations to negate the self. They can respond in one of the four ways. They can conform, withdraw, or be depressed or get angry. She says that those who blame themselves end up depressed, and those who blame their parents for the loss of the self, become angry. Pipher suggests that sexual undertones from society are responsible for engineering the young girls to conform to what culture dictates for 'young women and not what the girls want to become.'<sup>15</sup> In counseling, the young girls can be helped to explore how culture has influenced them and learn of the availability of a constant power to cope in a sexually charged environment. In the premise of a small group, they can vicariously debate, express themselves, and learn from other peers. The young girls will be encouraged to see themselves through the eyes of Christ and accept themselves as they internalize Christ's unconditional love for them.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 36-37.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 44.

#### **D. Physical Growth**

The teenage years are years of considerable physical change in girls. The major change is the onset of menarche and apparent physical attributes. It is a time of rapid growth. During this time, the girls' sexual organs also mature as estrogen in response to pituitary gland increases production of the female hormone. Menarche is a private occurrence, but bodily changes and size are public. The change may trigger anxiety feelings as girls learn the new role of differences with their looks. Their bodies have suddenly morphed from that of children to budding women. They may feel awkward as they work through the bodily changes and all the extra grooming and discomfort that are part of a maturing child-bearing woman.

#### **E. Cognitive Growth**

The rapid change in adolescence affects the development of the brain. The adolescent is able to make complex decisions. As adolescents employ formal operations in their abstract reasoning, they begin to question what has been accepted conventionally. The world is suddenly perceived in a different sense from their parents. The adolescent is thus faced with a dilemma of individuation. She is suddenly placed in the middle of finding a unique identity that is separate from that of her parents. This new awareness embodies an important chapter relating to one's identity in Christ. In addition to overt changes, the counselor needs to be aware of the developmental stages of faith in adolescents. The work of J.W. Fowler sheds light on how faith develops in the youth as opposed to adults.

#### **G. Faith**

Fowler placed the adolescent's faith in stages three and four. In stage three, he called it "Synthetic –Conventional Faith." In this stage, Fowler recognized the importance of the abstract world of the youth. He confirmed the youth's concept of the self as it was tied to outside influence and the production of self-consciousness awareness. The adolescent is suddenly thrust into the realm of how she is perceived outwardly by others. Fowler has claimed that this agitation is essential to the young girl's formation of a conscious identity. The youth in this stage draws her own comprehension of God and expectations. The youth longs for a God who can be a confidante, who knows her thoughts, loves her unconditionally, who accepts her,



confirms her, finds her attractive, gives her answers, and supports her in a deeper sense. At this stage, the foundation of this longing had been drawn from outside teachings, especially from parents<sup>16</sup> and other important religious leaders.<sup>17</sup> (Matteson 2008).

Other theorists on spiritual development have focused on rewards and punishment. The work of Vicky Genia and Fritz Oser posit that adolescents obey church rules so as to gain approval and blessing from the members of the congregation. Thus, it is easy for these young people to adopt ritualistic practices of good deeds if they perceive that such actions will result in favor and reward from God.<sup>18</sup> But for the most part, this stage is also a time of spiritual crisis. Ritualistic beliefs that were idealized from parents as children are held against the rigors of reality. The reality that touches existential matters( purpose of life and suffering) comes into play. Thus the girls are left to squeeze out a life that is authentically meaningful. The girls may question the unpalatable reality against the Biblical values instilled in them as children with worldly popular values.

This spiritual crisis will be authentic if a girl's awaking cognition is moved towards the holistic relationship with the Savior. If her questioning is condemned, the girl may respond with a false self so as to remain the good girl. But without a deeply tested spirituality and intrinsic knowledge of the Jesus Christ, the rules will fall apart when overcome by existing popular pressure for sexual activity.

Fowler posited one other stage that builds on stage three. This he called stage four and named it Individuative -Reflective Faith. In this stage, Fowler highlighted the importance of transformative faith. This faith is intrinsically motivated. The youth is able to form tacit decisions based on the values that she has internalized by herself. This period is crucial to the choice of the groups and ideals the youth chooses for her and how she expresses her identity in Christ.

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<sup>16</sup> Gisela Konopka, *Young girls: A Portrait of Adolescence* (The Haworth Press, NY:1983), 30-55. And George Barna, *Real Teens* (Regal Books, CA: 2001), 73.

<sup>17</sup> David R. Matteson, *Exploring the Spiritual: Paths for Counselors and Psychotherapists* (New York, NY: Taylor & Francis Group, 2008), 50-60.

<sup>18</sup> Joshua M. Gold, *Counseling and Spirituality: Integrating Spiritual and Clinical Orientations* (Upper Saddle River, NJ :Pearson Education), 64-65. (Gold 2010).

## H. Sociological Growth – Community Support

Most societies have acceptable norms concerning expression of sexual activities for girls. The Tumbuka of Malawi have celebratory and instructional rules for the onset of menarche. The rules are taken upon as a responsibility for elderly women. The young mothers were shy or embarrassed and might not tell the girl the hard facts especially of menarche and sex. The instructions inform the girl on how to relate with boys, her responsibility as a woman, and the proper medium for sexual activity. The celebration affirms the young girl of her identity as a girl and that she has transitioned to womanhood. The young girls learn the normalcy of sex as part and parcel of growing up and how to control the sexual drive. The support of the community helps girls to feel valued as human beings. The teachings helped a girl to remain chaste for the wedding day.

Many girls, though, do not have a village community to celebrate with their onset of menarche and how to relate to boys. Koopka surveyed young girls between the ages of 12-17 who had begun menarche. He found that most girls were unprepared for its onset and were further traumatized by it. He goes on to say that the occurrence eroded the girl's self-respect as the girls perceived menarche as disturbing, fearful, embarrassing, and something to be hidden. The girls that were instructed by their parents on the onset of menarche were mostly given what is needed to contain the onset and not how the maturation of sexual organs relates to sexual drive and a new way of life. For the young girl, this is a time when her body is equipped for sexual activity and carrying a baby. If the girl is not instructed properly in how to care for her body as the temple of God, other less desirable sources will inform her on how to express her sexuality.

The young girl at this stage is capable of experiencing arousal and may not comprehend how to express these normal feelings. This stage of the young girl is marked with an overwhelming change in the physical attributes of the body. It is a stage whereby the sexual organs of the young girls begin to mature. The girls also experience psychological and intellectual changes. Pertinent to this study, the girls experience menarche. This phenomenon signifies the possibility of conception when a young girl engages in sexual activity. At the initial stage, a young girl may confuse sexual arousal for love and

based on the source of information, (say movies, advertising, peer pressure) may act on it.

They may not conceive the notion that sexual activity outside marriage may produce guilt, confusion, and frustration since this is outside God's plan (1Thessalonians 4:3-7).<sup>19</sup> The young girl is at the stage where she might feel invincible and as such, she may feel that she can control her sexual behavior once aroused. And she may engage in this action incessantly, and that may lead to addiction. A young girl needs to be socialized to differentiate between healthy and unhealthy ways of sexual expression. Basically, she should internalize the process that God invented sexual intercourse, not that it is an evil process. He invented sexual intercourse for "pleasure, for communication, for reproduction," (Cannon 1993) and for expression of human intimacy within a marriage relation.

## II. The Concept of New Identity in Christ

### A. Christ the Basis

Christ is the basis for humanity to conceive themselves as human. In His walk as a human being, Christ epitomized the source conception of what the human nature is in God's creation. Christ showed humanity what it means to possess a pure human nature.. Through His nature, humans are able to partake of God's grace which propels us to have meaningful relationships with God and others. Jesus "Christ is the full image of God."<sup>20</sup> The image of God in us that we obtain by grace through Jesus Christ allows human beings to (1) See our neighbor as ourselves; (2) speak to and hear one another; (3) to render assistance to one another; and (4) to perform these functions with a glad heart.<sup>21</sup>

The image of God is internal. Humans are given a glimpse of it through the behaviors exhibited by the individual. This common ground as human beings gives another an avenue to offer counsel. This counsel seeks to restore another person to fully embrace the image of God within as epitomized by Jesus Christ. The importance

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<sup>19</sup> Ann Cannon, *Sexuality: God's Gift for Adolescence* (Family Touch, Nashville:TN, 1993), 16-24.

<sup>20</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1985), 506.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 507.

of Jesus Christ as the Son empowers the counselor and counselee in that they are imbued with the force of the one who created them and knows their problems.

### **B. Jesus as a Divine Being**

Jesus Christ as divine gives credence to the knowledge of God. Jesus Christ himself testifies that “He was with God in the beginning;” (John 1:1) and that those who had “seen Him had seen the Father” (John 14:9). His declaration is empowering to a recovering sex addict in that Jesus, as the son of God, has power to love and forgive. He has power to restore and maintain the repentant life of the sex addict. Thus as Christ is Holy, the sex addict can claim for herself the purity and Holiness of her life dependent on Jesus Christ.

The sacrifice on the cross is inclusive. The redemption through grace is made available to all sinners. Thus the sex addict will not be discriminated against from the love of God. She can come as she is, and the love of God will restore her to a new person. The young girl will need to be led to internalize that this love is not a one time deal. Jesus Christ is “life, the giver, and sustainer of life.”<sup>22</sup> Jesus is a friend who loved her so much as to suffer the death on the cross so that she can be freed from sexual addiction. The young girl will need to be reminded of the constancy of Christ’s love for her. God understands her predicament but still loves her. This love is unfathomable, and the counselor will need to sensibly explain it to the young girls in the group. The young girls will need to be comfortable with the realness of God’s presence and how He plays a part in their lives.<sup>23</sup> (S. A. Timothy 2003)

It is easy to explain the unconditional love of God for His creation. The young girls are at an age where they believe justice should prevail. They understand that if you do something wrong, you face the consequences. Thus, they may welcomingly wrestle with the fact that God reconciled a sexual addict to Himself. It is imperative to point out that God’s reconciliation is not easy. It cost the life of Jesus. But the good news is that they are forgiven. God has erased their

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 703.

<sup>23</sup> Timothy A. Sisemore, “Christian Counseling for Children: The Five Domains Model,” *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* Vol. 22, no. 2, 2003:121.

sexual sins. He will not remember them anymore. At this juncture, the young girls are to be equipped with the knowledge on how to keep this slate clean. In the group of peers, they can learn how to build their relationship with God through “worship, praise, adoration, obedience.”<sup>24</sup> They can be encouraged in an open medium to question, internalize, and imitate Christ.

### **C. New Identity in Christ**

Identification is a process that begins at the time a human being is created. A human being is not just a product of human parents. A human being came into the world as a result of God’s design and plan. Thus the identity of man is to fulfill through obedience the divine plan. Since a human has been brought into the world by a higher source, only that source can fulfill him and give him meaning in this life. Thus for humanity to find meaning, satisfaction, and fulfillment, she must be committed, serve, and love this higher power. This knowledge gives man importance. The Bible teaches that in Christ, Man is a valuable creature, and God knows him personally to the minute detail of his hair.(Matt. 10: 28-31). The young girl who is working through the ravages of sexual addiction finds this revelation particularly comforting. In Luke 15: 3-7, Jesus referred to a loving shepherd who left ninety-nine sheep that were secure or obedient in search of the one that was absent or had strayed.<sup>25</sup> Thus, there is security for a young girl to know that even though she had been involved in sexual addiction, God still cares for her and knows her name. That God has a personal relationship with her is comforting in a world that might ostracize her for having been labeled as a sex addict.

Saussure has posited that identification involves a psychological process whereby an individual “assimilates an aspect, property, attribute of others and transforms herself, wholly or in part, by modeling herself on others.” In continuation, he proposes that the personality is formed as a process of differentiated identifications that are formed over time. This identification is made up of “sympathy,

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<sup>24</sup> Erickson., 704.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 408, 488.

more or less conscious imitation, empathy, mental contagion.”<sup>26</sup> The stages of “heteropathic and idiopathic” are basic to the formation of an individual and the capacity to identify with another or group.<sup>27</sup> In the population of this study, the girls incorporate this identity within themselves for same sex relationships and heretosexual relationships. The girls might embrace their identity with Christ as they experience the yearning for connection and fulfillment of what they lack through Christ.

The new identity in Christ does not occur in a vacuum. The young girls experience this identification in a secularized world that poses a threat to their traditional Christian values. From their infancy, parents have taught them the Bible and taken them to Church. But at this juncture, the young girls face a world that has grown indifferent to the Christ and at times even denies His existence. Thus the young girl is forced to traverse this world to articulate her new identity in Christ and draw upon it to deal with sexual addiction. Buller suggests that it is difficult for an individual to easily live her Christian life. He bemoans the loss of assurance of Christian identification through attachment to a church, loss of a precise body of Christian doctrine for intellectual assent, and invalid expression of Christian identity in an expression of “certain type of moral behavior, or practical attitude.”<sup>28</sup> His main contention is that Christianity is progressively losing its context as a basis for a frame of reference in Christian identity. For the most part, the Christian faith is compartmentally expressed by its claimants. Such ambiguity fuels the antagonism in young girls. Thus in their book on *Every Young Woman’s Battle*, Ethridge and Arterburn show that Christian young girls are not immune to sexual addiction. In this book, they offer a solution to gain sexual integrity by identification with Christ. They suggest that a young girl falls in love with Jesus and delight herself in Him (Matt. 6:33; Psalm 37: 4). Their premise is that such an example will spur a young girl

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<sup>26</sup> Thierry de Saussure, “The Self-Identification Process,” in *Christian Identity*, Ed., by Christian Duquoc and Casiano Floristan (Edinburgh, UK: t. & T. Clark Ltd., 1988), 3-4. (Duquoc 1988).

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>28</sup> Pierre Buhler, “Christian Identity: Between Objectivity and Subjectivity,” in *Christian Identity* ed. By Christian Duquoc and Casiano Floristan (Edinburgh, UK: T & T Clark Ltd, 1988), 17-19.

towards healthy relationships.<sup>29</sup> This healthy relationship is embedded in a lasting, dynamic identification with Christ.

A Christian takes on this identity in Christ when she receives the Lord Christ as Lord of her life. At the time of the new birth, the Holy Spirit transforms the new believer beyond human experiences towards identity with Jesus Christ. Such a transformation imbues the young girl with inner strength and a continuous source of power through Jesus Christ. In the EJ group, she will be encouraged to have Jesus Christ as Lord of her life and behavior. In her writings in the journal, she will be able to evaluate her behavior, motivation, and thought processes through the lens of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the only one that searches and knows the heart of a person including her thought processes (1 Cor. 2:10-11; Rom. 8:27; Ps. 94:11; Ps. 139:1). God knows every moment of the young girl's dealings (Ps. 139:20; 2 Tim. 2:19), and when this is internalized and consumes her whole being, she would have acquired a long-lasting way of life for empowerment (Phil. 3:10).

Buhler contends that identity is a central factor to Christianity spirituality. He says that a truly spiritual life is "lived by one who knows who she is and knows herself, accepts and comes to terms with herself as she is, who knows that she is at one with herself, in harmony with herself, and knows that the strength and lasting nature of this identity will carry her through the vicissitudes of her existence."<sup>30</sup> Such confidence underlies the use of the concept in counseling young girls who have engaged in sexual addiction and encouraging others towards sexual purity. A comprehension of the self and a quest for harmony and dependence on a higher power confers confidence on the counselor and counselee in the process of a meaningful and lasting relationship. The transformation brought about by identification with Jesus does not only imply simple change in moral behavior. It involves a complete overhaul of the human being i.e. spirit, souls, and body.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Shannon Ethridge and Stephen Arterburn, *Every Young Woman's Battle: Guarding Your Mind, Heart, and Body in a Sex-Saturated World* (Colorado Springs, CO: Water Brook Press, 2004), 209-221.

<sup>30</sup> Buhler, 17.

<sup>31</sup> Armand Veilleux Oco, "Identity with Christ: Modeling Our Lives On RB 72," *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* Vol. 45, no. 1(2010):17. (Oco 2010).

The confidence to pragmatically express the new identity in Christ is considered an adventure by Buhler. Buhler posits that the identity with Christ is the “adventure of meeting with Jesus Christ, of a life shared with Him on the path which leads to Him on the Cross.”<sup>32</sup> What happened on the Cross is beyond comprehension, and yet it is existentially plausible to a Christian girl. The occurrence moves a young girl to a life beyond herself to rediscover true identity in God through Christ before she got entangled in sexual addiction. The identity enables her to lose herself in her Savior Jesus Christ. In fact, Christ Himself said that total immersion in him leads to eternal life. The events of the Cross expressed the unfathomableness of the grace of God for sinners. This grace is sufficient to imbue confidence in the counselor and counselee to overcome crises that come with adolescence and the unhealthy expression of God’s wonders of sexuality. This confidence in total identity with Christ when internalized and accepted will enable a young girl to withstand opposing forces that attempt to negate the power that Christ gives. To embrace such an identity will lead the recovering sex addict to many opportunities in group counseling to grow in identity with Christ.<sup>33</sup>

#### **D. Rationality in Counseling**

The new identity in Christ received after Godly repentance (2 Cor. 7:10) gives the new believer a new freedom of conceiving herself and her predicament. She is a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17), no longer an enemy (Rom. 5:22), included (2 Cor. 5:18-19), and blameless (Col. 1:22). As a new creation, the young girl finds new ways of relating to others and members of the opposite sex. Counseling will help her to overcome the discrepancy between the “claim of having a new identity and day-to-day life in the real world.”<sup>34</sup> She will be able to find authenticity as she relates with other young girls in the group without negating her important identity in Christ. This identity offers solace from other global identities that

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Christopher H. Grundmann, “Reconciliation and the New Identity in Christ: Pneumatological Perspectives of Christian Mission in its Third Millenium,” *International Review of Mission* Vol. 97, no. 386/387 July/October 2008, 257-259. (Grundmann 2008).



sometimes have negative connotations. In Christ, she is assured of an ever present, impartial, and generous God.

The concept of new identity in Christ provides a young girl with a higher realm of knowledge about who she is in Christ. This knowledge affirms the girls' quest to know who she is as she begins to understand her own faith apart from her parents or other authority figures in a secularized world. This identity promises victory for a girl who is recovering or working through sexual addiction. This image goes beyond worldly attributes of values in defining a girl's self-worth.

The new identity in Christ is transformational. It works inside out. The new identity in Christ does not topple the girls' confidence. She is the same and will live in the same world. The good news is that God has altered her mind and heart so that she can experience life fully "in accordance with the creator's intentions."<sup>35</sup> Such an act gives the young girl impetus to consider her intrinsic growth as part of her and prevents her from compartmentalizing her new life. God sees the heart, and He has said of all the sinful acts, sexual immorality comes from the heart and defiles a person. Thus as the young girl is assimilating and carving out her identity, God is also intrinsically transforming her thoughts, attitudes, imagination, and will towards spiritual growth. This transformation will be apparent in outward expression of her new found Godly and liberated new life.<sup>36</sup>

The young girl with a new identity in Christ has received a different way of being from what her family and others have been subjected to or may have labeled her with as well. Her intrinsic transformation will be have to find an outward expression. To keep her transformation alive, she will verbally or nonverbally tell others about it. What a better way to tell her experience than through interactions with her similar peers in a group setting? In the group, she has an avenue to share her transformational experience and entreat and beseech others to be reconciled to God (2Co, 5:20). In the group facilitated by a mature believer, the young girls will cultivated

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 261.

<sup>36</sup> D. Guthrie and J.A. Motyer, eds. *The New Bible Commentary* 3rd ed., (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 836. (Guthrie 1993).

a sense that “faith is beyond mere action and pious reflection.”<sup>37</sup> Through self-expression and feedback from other group members, the young girl will find that faith in Christ is living in confident trust that Christ is not only present with her momentarily but that He is with her forever. The life in Jesus is not just as a precaution against sexual immorality and maintaining rules but an everlasting relationship.

### III. Sexuality in the Bible

God invented the wonderful world of sex. He has provided for mankind the right and proper enjoyment of this beautiful wonderful world of sex. God even sealed the sexual expression with His blessing (Genesis 1:28). But alas, humankind messed up this wonderful world of bliss. The Bible is replete with stories of misuse of sex and also shows how others resisted sexual temptation. One part of sexual abuse is the premarital sex by young girls who are themselves still growing and exploring the world of sex. Unhealthy expression of sex may lead to sexual addiction.

In the New Testament, Paul writes to a great length about the proper place of sex for humanity. Paul talks to new Christians about the importance of sexual expression. He considers sex as a high and intimate expression of human relationships. The problems of sexual behavior that was apparent in Paul’s days are still present in this modern world. Paul warns the believers of the wrath from God for sexual immorality. In the sexual immorality, Paul includes any kind of ‘Illegitimate - extramarital and unnatural sexual intercourse or relationship.’ The individuals were reminded to abstain from succumbing to their sexual desires like people who do not know God.<sup>38</sup>

Paul’s concern is that sex is an expression of the whole human self. An individual who abuses the body for uncontrolled sexual appetites harms his own body which is a temple of the Holy Spirit. (1 Cor. 6: 13,18-19). He says all other sins are outside the body, but sexual immorality is against the whole self. Needless to say, when a girl loses her virginity, she cannot take it back, even if permissive society teaches that if she stops immorality, she is “technically a

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<sup>37</sup> Grundman., 260. (Hawthorne F. Gerald and Ralph P. Martin 1993).

<sup>38</sup> D. F. Wright, “Sexuality, Sexual Ethics,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, eds. Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1993), 871.

virgin.” Nope, virginity cannot be diluted. It is absurd to conceive that an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ can be equated to a sexual relationship that is devoid of that high intimacy by the uncanny merging of sexual organs as it normally happens in young girls. The girls are not able to distinguish between using their bodies as mere instrument for temporary sexual gratification and remaining pure to God.. They regard their bodies as belonging completely to themselves. Wright’s comment on the apostle Paul’s concern is that a person has an authentic self that lays a foundation for the essence of humanity. It can be understood that a “Christian is both as a sexual being and as a being ‘in Christ,’ a member of His church-body.”<sup>39</sup> Thus sexual sins defiles the Christian’s relationship with Christ. When the concept of new identity in Christ is employed in counseling for sexual sins, it is hoped that the outcome will bring reconciliation between the Christian and Christ.

According to Wright, Paul was very concerned with sexual sins. The acts were regarded as improper for people who were Holy to God. He was irate especially when he wrote to the Corinthian church that they would even tolerate such sexual immorality for believers without any kind of discipline. Such living was considered as inconsistent with them as “New Creations in Christ.’ He felt the freedom in Christ where it says that “everything is permissible for me” (1 Cor. 6:12) does not allude to sexual immorality.<sup>40</sup>

Paul’s teachings are so relevant in the modern world where it seems like young girls are defined by sexual appearance. The church, as the body of Christ, and parents have a mandate to pragmatically teach scripture in its entirety to young girls. The girls need to know proper expression of their budding sexuality. As children of God, they are empowered to grow in His love. The love Christ has for them is unconditional, but it is not one way. The teaching should spill over to their relationships in schools and their friends. As they model their lives on Christ, they will learn to distinguish between the types of love(Greek) such as <sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 872.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 872-874.

<sup>41</sup> Cleveland McDonald and Philip M. McDonald, *Creating a Successful Christian Marriage* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001), 94-95. (McDonald 2001).

**Storge-** family love i.e. parents, siblings, and extended family members, characterized by family members who care and support one another;

**Philio-** between friends, e.g Jonathan and David in the Old Testament; love, intense affection between humans, such as between girls without any sexual undertones.

**Eros-** heterogenous love between a boy and a girl. It is characterized by intense emotional attachment and powerful sexual feelings and desires. This love may be portrayed and acted upon by media, novels, and in some songs. It is destructive and can mislead a young girl to sexual activity as soon as her heart beats on first attraction. This love goes with infatuation. It is short lived. It is the love as indicated earlier where young girls feel bad after the sexual activity.

**Agape-** it is a word that exemplifies God's word. This love can be applied to the young girl's quest for a love that is chaste, patient, not arduous, and not expect to be reciprocated. This is important for a young girl in that it frees her to herself. She is not obligated to respond by engaging in a sexual activity because the boy has offered her affection. This love preserves the dignity of those in a relationship. It can spill over and find its proper expression in a relationship. It gives young girls the freedom to pursue meaningful interests or vocation of their choice.

What is so pertinent is that this learning will offer a positive medium at a time when these young girls are forming an authentic self. The young girls will learn skills that will help them to distinguish that if someone says "I love you," that person may not be referring to a long, respectful relationship. Some boys will say anything to get a girl to bed and may even pretend to have the new identity in Christ. But a girl who is transformed by Christ and has taken on this new identity has the Holy Spirit to filter out false love. This is so because Christ who has transformed the sexual addicted girl has also created in her the values and longing that belong to Christ. Thus, the only one who can satisfy that longing for meaning and growth is Christ. The young girl, the transformed girl, has a future by associating with companions who share her new identity.

This stage is ripe for internalizing the values of their Christian faith with their lives. It is best to be preventive than reactionary after a child is already addicted to sex. But if the latter happens, there is hope. A Christ centered group can be a medium where young girls can observe, practice interpersonal skills, and learn to express their new identities in Christ towards an internal growth that will enable them to resist the devil.

## IV. Sexual Addiction

### A. Intense Emotions

The intense emotions from sexual attraction are a common phenomenon between human beings of all ages. In the young girls, these feelings towards the opposite sex begin as the girl begins to mature; her hormones begin to affect her whole being. The girl may react normally as she first sets eyes on a particular boy. This mystery of attraction between the opposite sexes is God ordained. It is His wonderful creation to bring a man and woman together. God created the sexual drive and all the hormonal feelings of excitement. He set in motion and designed an appropriate manner to handle them. The onset of such sexual drives sets the stage for the formation of a family and procreation. The young girl who is experiencing an intense emotional attraction to the beloved may have “difficulty eating, sleeping, and be consumed by thoughts of the beloved that study and works are affected.”<sup>42</sup>

The feelings are intense. The young girl may not be able to articulate these powerful emotions from the changes that are generally happening to her body. Her entire being may be concentrated on this particular special someone. She may find that she is aroused at his mere touch. Her life may evolve around the loved one for whom there is “total emotional, psychological, and social involvement.”<sup>43</sup> Her cognition may be consumed by the ideation of the beloved. She is in love. But when does this become sexual addiction?

### B. Sexual Addiction Defined

It is difficult to give sexual addiction an unequivocally absolute definition. Those who have attempted its definition are in agreement. Sussman and Kwee are in agreement that addiction as a concept does not have a definite and clear distinction that is meaningful. The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders(DSM-IV-TR)(APA, 2000)* has substantially classified addiction and not as a process or behavior.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 96-97.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Steve Sussman, “Teen Sexual Addiction,” in *Adolescent Addiction Epidemiology: Assessment and Treatment* ed. by Cecilia A. Essau,( London: UK, 2008), 272; (Sussman 2008) Alex W. Kwee and others, “Sexual Addiction and Christian College Men: Conceptual, Assessment, an Treatment [Footnote continued on next page ... ]

### C. Addiction

Traditionally, addiction is identified through overt physiological, personal, and social consequences emanating from the behaviors without considering the internal stimuli. Kwee and others cite the example of alcohol addiction which they say is measured by the consequences of “excessive alcohol use (i.e. intoxication, dependence, withdrawal, abuse) and not on the emotional and behavioral dynamics that underlie problem drinking.”<sup>45</sup> They go on to say that a behavior can be considered as an addiction if includes the following conspicuous components: “the activity in question dominates thinking, feeling, and behavior; mood modification, tolerance, withdrawal, conflict (including intrapsychic, interpersonal and role conflict), and relapse.”<sup>46</sup> The addicted individual exhibits compulsive behaviors, dependency, repetition and continuation of the act despite harmful results. The goal of the act is to suppress internal pain even if it is for a short period of time. Thus addiction is defined as<sup>47</sup>

A disorder in which a behavior that can function both to produce pleasure and to provide escape from internal discomfort is employed in a pattern characterized by (1) recurrent failure to control the behavior, and (2) continuation of the behavior despite significant harmful consequences.

The general definition of addiction has both diagnostic and process-oriented criteria. It takes into account the recognizable symptoms of addiction as well as patterns of behavior to bring peace to internal emotional disequilibrium. The process orientation of addiction refers to “compulsive dependence on external actions as a means of regulating one’s internal feelings and sense of the self.” Thus the addict tries to maintain the behavior by engaging in the activities that calm down overwhelming emotional states. Learned overtime, these behaviors are internalized. The individual may conceive safety and pleasure only through acting out these behaviors.<sup>48</sup>

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Challenges”, *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, 26, no.1(2007): 7. (Kwee, Dominguez and Ferrell 2007).

<sup>45</sup> Kwee and others, 7.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.; “Teen Sex Addiction,” [http://www.teenpaths.org/teen\\_sex\\_addiction.htm](http://www.teenpaths.org/teen_sex_addiction.htm); internet. (TeenPaths 2009).

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

Some recent findings allude to addiction as a disease of the brain. The underlying thoughts are a result of perplexity from the disparity on how people react to the same stimuli. The disease factor is apparent in alcohol addiction but little research exists on other addictions. Urschel admits that it is not possible to explain with certainty the cause of addiction, say to alcohol or drug. He, however, suggests the availability of risk factors that differentiates the intensity of susceptibility to alcohol. He purports that the risks include “genetics, emotional state, psychological factors, social and cultural factors, age, gender, and family history.” In alcohol and drug addiction, Urschel has highlighted that age is also a factor in alcohol dependency. The earlier the age, the higher the risk of addiction to alcohol. Some of Urschels risk factors are pertinent to young girls who are prone to sexual addiction.<sup>49</sup>

As a disease, Urschel discusses the long term effects of addiction. He says that addiction is not a short term acute illness that can be treated with strategic short term therapy. He suggests a possibility of therapy only for prefrontal cortex damage”(i.e. part of the brain where planning, abstract thinking, regulation of impulse behavior, drives, and compulsive repetitive behaviors occur) but that such therapy is limited for the area that is deep inside the brain called the Limbic region. The Limbic region is responsible for powerful, primal drives such as hunger, thirst, the need to bond, and the need for sexual contact.” This region is extensive as it affects the the person’s essence of human dignity and selfhood.<sup>50</sup>According to Urschel, if this deep recess is not treated, the addict has a higher chance of relapse .<sup>51</sup> He proposes the use of medicines to balance the brain’s organic functions. The use of new anti-addiction medicines are used to rebalance the brain’s biochemistry by correcting the imbalances in dopamine and other neurotransmitters. Urschel asserts that once this is corrected, the addict finds it easier to learn, remember, and focus

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<sup>49</sup> Harold C. Urschel, *Healing the Addicted Brain: The Revolutionary, Science-Based Alcoholism and Addiction Recovery Program* (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, Inc, 2009), 10-11.

<sup>50</sup> Gerald G. May. *Addiction and Grace: Love and Spirituality in the Healing of Addictions* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991), 85. (Gerald 1991).

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 20-21.

on cognitive and behavioral changes necessary to combat addiction and avoid relapse.<sup>52</sup>

#### **D. Sexual Addiction**

Sussman defined sexual addiction as “a pattern of sexual behavior that is initially pleasurable but becomes unfulfilling and Self-destructive and that a person is unable to stop.”<sup>53</sup> Kwee and others add that sexual addiction is the out-of control and aimless searching for wholeness, happiness, and peace through a relationship with an object or event.<sup>54</sup>

The definition refers to the fact that an individual loses the ability to contain the expression of sexual behavior. The individual’s preoccupation with sexual behavior precludes her from healthy functioning as a social contributor to society. The loss of control over the sexually acting out may reach such desperate proportions that the individual may try to seek help from others. Sussman looks at the gravity of sexual addiction and how it affects the individual’s failure to engage in intimate relationships. He also highlights conflicting feelings that sexual addicts experience and the need to overcome these feelings that escalate the sexual behaviors even more. After the sexual activity, individuals may “(1) feel abnormal or sick; (2) feel degraded, guilty, shamed by the behavior; (3) feel regret, depression or discomfort over the behavior; (4) feel numb, hollow or empty; and (5) feel desperate about their chances of having a solid and healthy relationship.”<sup>55</sup> These individuals are at a crossroads. The sexual act has gone out –of- control, and they are unable to stop. For example, they may become dependent on the person they’re having sex with and yet want to run away as soon as possible. And sometimes they may feel lonely and yet yearn for love. As such, they may engage in sexual acts with people they do not know. For young girls, this is a matter of urgency as it may scar them for life. In which case, they may find it difficult to be emotionally connected with the significant other later.

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 22-23.

<sup>53</sup> Sussman, 270.

<sup>54</sup> Kwee and others. 8.

<sup>55</sup> Sussman, 272.



### **E. Problems in Defining Sexual Addiction in Adolescents**

Sussman declares that even though there are some similarities in the symptoms of sexual addiction with adults, the age of the teens and their developmental struggles makes it difficult to confidently identify a sexually addicted teen. Sussman lists five ways in which teen sexual addiction differs from adults. The differences are<sup>56</sup>

- Occasional sexual activity in teenagers causes concern in that it might interfere with their emotional development and adjustment. This is more apparent as the teen brain is still developing and most of them are still working through abstract thinking and might not be able to make decisions about love and sexuality. The teens are also considered as being at the peak of their sexuality which may cause them to have high frequency of sexual activity without it being an addiction. Thus, is sex just frequent or destructive? Others think that if the sexual act in teens is destructive, out-of-control, and thoughtless, then maybe it can be considered to be addictive.
- The sexual act may be selfish. Teens may not consider the feelings of others. It is irresponsible sex that is concerned with satisfying the arousal than the consequences on parents, sexually transmitted diseases, and parentage. Teens are not as sophisticated as adults in the variety of their sexual acts. Most use the internet and perform solitary sex.
- They may receive dual diagnosis. This is because sexual acting out is multifaceted. A teen dubbed as a sex addict may have the stimuli of substance abuse, sex abuse, parental neglect, and other mental health problems. Sussman gives an example that over half of the teens in substance abuse treatment have other psychopathic problems such as depressive and anxiety disorders, social phobia defiant disorder, and sexual acting out.
- There is limited information on dysfunctional teen sexual behavior because they are less likely to seek treatment, and they have a higher frequency of relapse than adults.
- Teens experience a higher severity of the social consequences resulting from sexual acting out. For example, falling grades may affect vocational choice, disturb normal development, etc.

These factors are crucial towards counseling adolescents who are recovering from sexual addiction. The counselor will have to be adept at the multifaceted nature of what precipitates sexual addiction in adolescents. The developmental factors and a lack of a definite

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 273-274.

definition of sexual addiction in adolescents have an effect in intervention. Sussman reports that in 2006, he consulted with 12 leading experts in the field of addiction. All these experts reported a lack of existence of empirical research on teen sexual addiction. Two of them were even unsure that teenagers can actually “develop such an addiction.” Others cautioned that addiction and adolescence are similar.<sup>57</sup>

Since there is a lack of empirical research to diagnose sexual addiction in teens, Sussman reports the possibility of using differential diagnosis. He further says that differential diagnosis seems to use assessment of the effects of the sexual behavior on the adolescent. Such an assessment negates the consideration that some adults may hold that any sexual behavior by a teen is abnormal. In counseling, the following comments shed light on teens’ sexual behavior that may be considered as an addiction. The one expert, M. Deborah Corley, as reported by Sussman, says:<sup>58</sup>

Since teens can become addicted to food, gambling, exercise and substances, it only makes logical sense that they can become addicted to sex as well. Most sex addicts report their acting out behavior started in preadolescence or adolescence as a way to self-soothe or self-injure and is related to trauma repetition/compulsion. A few female sex addicts also reported starting to act out in adolescence even though there is little research to substantiate for sure. These behaviors may be viewed as normal but for the most part they do not balance themselves out when raging hormones relax a bit and other distractions come along-and as the brain matures and values and impulse control is developed. Since it seems that normal sexual behavior is not perceived as shameful as sexual addiction, it is imperative to be sensitive not to look at frequency of sexual activity but more on what impact the sexual behaviors are having on the adolescent.

In a research of young girls who were addicted to sex, Tennant found that 14.4 percent of African American girls started having sex before they were thirteen years old, and 66.0 percent were sexually active before they finished high school. She says social factors such as drugs, alcohol, and smoking were some of the alluring factors.<sup>59</sup> She also points to the fact that these young girls witness the perversity of

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 275.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Agnieszka Tennant, “All They Need is the Love Clinic,” *Christianity Today* (December 3, 2001), 62. (Tennant 2001).

relaxed sexual attitudes of the grownups around them and imitate the behavior. She said most of the young girls (about 70 percent) are born from unwed mothers. The attempted solution to this addiction according to the founder of the "love clinic" is to teach the young girls to be strong in the Lord. Tennant writes that a girl who has received the love of Christ in her life will be empowered to feel good about herself. Such power will alleviate low esteem feelings, anxiety, stress, emotional pain,, depression, and a need to succumb to peer pressure.<sup>60</sup>

#### **V. Journaling-Empower Groups for Young Girls**

A Christ-centered group provides the young girls with a power without. The counselor and the counselee are empowered to know that help is coming from a power that is not limited by human thought processes. This power offers the young girls an endless, constant source that is available to them to protect them from temptation. The source will continue to be available to them even when the group ends. In the group, young girls are accorded an opportunity to develop and claim intrinsically their liberating worth in Christ. Since young girls learn through observational relationships than what they are told they ought to do by adults, the group becomes a positive source to give and learn new values from other group members.

Gerald Corey has affirmed the appropriateness of group counseling for individuals in this age. He has said that the group provides young people with a medium in which they have freedom to express and reconnoiter their conflicting feelings towards sexual discourse and new identity in Christ. The medium gives them assurance that they are among individuals that understand them in that they are not struggling alone. In such a group, Corey continues, adolescents are able to securely "experiment with reality, test their limits, express themselves, and be heard."<sup>61</sup> The girls can openly question and modify their thought processes as they feel accepted, unashamed, and valued. As the girls are still growing, they will also

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 62-63; Urschel., 10.

<sup>61</sup> Gerald Corey, *Theory and Practice of Group Counseling* (Monterey, CA: Brooks/Coel Publishing Company, 1981), 158.

gain competence in communication skills that will allow them to relate to adults and possibly members of the opposite sex.<sup>62</sup>

A group of peers is suggested when using the concept of “Identity in Christ.” The Journaling –Empower(JE) group is suggested by the author as an effective medium for counseling. The T-group gives instruction as well as discussion. Thus the young girls are able to glean information from other young girls. The young girls are provided with an environment that spurs them to learn vicariously from the life styles of others who are healing from sexual addiction and how they are avoiding a relapse. The study conducted by Timothy J. Woodroof on reference groups gives credence to group context regarding sexual issues for Christian girls. He defined a reference group as a “group which functions to set and enforce standards for the person by rewarding conformity to the group and punishing nonconformity.”<sup>63</sup> Woodroof asserted that the reference group is pertinent in that most adolescents; about 60% of his study group reported that the choice to remain chaste was influenced by their religious friends in a group, more so than parental figures.<sup>64</sup>

The group offers a safe environment to nurture pragmatic affiliation with others who are identified with Christ without being judged. The group medium provides a young girl with an array of valuable benefits that enhances her self-worth. Pedro has posited that therapeutic groups provide a recovering sex addict with “support, commonality (such as a sense of feeling that I am not alone and weird), empathic bonding, group cohesiveness, and a sense of bonding.”<sup>65</sup>

## VI. Counseling Young Girls

### A. Journal-Empower

Various theories inform the type of counseling that is suitable for adolescents. This paper will give an adapted suggestion of a group setting called Journaling- Empower (JE) as a possibility of counseling

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>63</sup> Timothy J. Woodroof, “Reference Groups, Religiosity, and Premarital Sexual Behavior.” *Journal for Scientific Study of Religion*, 1986, Vol. 25 No. 4: 436. (W. J. Timothy 1986).

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 457.

<sup>65</sup> Pedro Ruiz.

young girls. These girls as earlier reported are on the verge of leaving childhood and entering the adult world. The leader of the group will be enabled to learn the stage of each adolescent through sharing, storing, and journaling in a group. The goal of the sexually addicted girls' group is education, prevention, self-reflection, and empowerment. In the EJ group, the hope is that young girls with their new identity will learn to "accept themselves, forgive others and themselves, admit their shortcomings, accept personal responsibility, letting go of hurts and resentments, dealing with guilt, learn to let go of self-destructive patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting."<sup>66</sup> The journal gives a medium through which the young girl can somehow articulate the complexities of her morphing life. In it, she can learn to articulate her new way of being under the tutelage of the counselor and encouragement of other EJ group members.

### **B. Journaling**

The use of journaling as a technique in counseling is active. A research conducted by Nkhoma on the use of Journaling as one of the Christian counseling technique by Christian mental health practitioners found that Spiritual directors used it 76 % during counseling.<sup>67</sup> Journaling is versatile. It is not constrained by age. As long as someone is able to write and is motivated, she can keep the journal. Journaling is used to encourage members to keep in writing the expression of their emotions, thoughts, and experiences. An individual is able to reflectively express the depth of the soul's yearning and weakness at a particular time. In the journal, the writer is able to be authentic before the Almighty God. The self-reflection and means of coping can serve as an encouragement for the self and others in a group.<sup>68</sup>

The contents of the journal will reveal the struggles and triumphs of the writer, which, in this case will be understood by the other members in the group. Age can be a factor in sharing information. This author remembers a time when her evaluation of an eight year

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<sup>66</sup> Gerald Corey, *Theory and Practice of Counseling Psychotherapy*, 7th ed. (Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole, 2005), 467.

<sup>67</sup> Winnie E.M. Nkhoma, "A Study of the Difference in the Use of Spiritual Disciplines in Counseling by Spiritual Directors, Christians in Social Work, and Pastoral Counselors" (Ph. D. Diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2007), 91. (Nkhoma 2007).

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

old girl differed from that of another eight year old who understood the meanings of the writer. For example several years ago when my youngest daughter was eight,

I and other adults read a book of letters written by an eight year old. We were tickled and amazed as we read the contents. But, when my daughter read the same book. I was intrigued that she did not find the contents funny. She actually said “we did not understand”. She identified with the writings of the writer as they were the same age. Thus, in journal writing, the young girls will be able to understand and empathize with each other. This will enable the adult in the group to garner insight as to how to guide the sexually addicted young girls.

### **C. Journaling-Empower Group**

The Journaling-empower (JE) group is an eclectic amalgamation from different theoretical premises of counseling techniques. The underlying tenet is that there is an absence of one theory that can absolutely solve the dynamic complexity of human internal motivation for extrinsic behavior.<sup>69</sup> But the theories that are in existence offer some general insights into observed human behavior. The focus is not on the technique but participants. The group’s aim is to facilitate growth by emphasizing observed behavior, thought processes, emotions, and dissecting past experiences that are directly related to sexual addiction.

The beauty of employing the Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) is the versatility and expanse in a group setting with young girls. This theory takes into account the changing cultural demography. It is structured and based on a shared theme. It is useful with young girls because the leader need to provide structure and model proper behavior. The leader can also adapt the CBT to fit the prevailing communication style of the young girls. These young girls are still in school and under parental supervision. The EJ group makes this possible as it allows the leader to teach, guide, and allow storytelling. As the leader interacts with the young girls and guides journaling, the leader is able to assess the growth level and cognition

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<sup>69</sup> Nkhoma., 81.

of the young girls. The girls can also learn vicariously from those girls who mature earlier.<sup>70</sup>

Ivey and others suggest that the duration of group counseling for the young girls be shorter and focus on a single issue. Most teenagers are unlikely to sit still for a long duration in very structured sessions. A balance between information, discussion, and activity will be beneficial to keep this group interested. Homework<sup>71</sup> thorough journaling can be assigned and not necessarily the contents but just a framework to guide their thought processes. Ivey encourages leaders to include multicultural orientation and conscious-raising guidance.<sup>72</sup> This will create the vast expanse in which young girls can apply their new identity in Christ within their cultural identity and affiliation. The leaders' skills will be of paramount importance to ensure authentic expression and acceptance of one's cultural identity free of prejudice.

Since this group is focused on sexual addiction issues, it is of paramount importance that the young girls be encouraged to protect the information that is revealed in the group. Confidentiality will protect the integrity of the group as well as prevent anyone from being labeled as a sex addict. The leader will need to ethically ensure that discussions in the group is not privy to non- group members. These young girls risk when they share their sexual activity with the group; such information has a potential to backfire. But they share for the benefit of others. Thus, it is important such information remain with group members.

As these young girls are minors, parental consent will be needed. The leader can discuss with each parent in the presence of the young girls what help will be needed from the parent or guardian. The details will be adapted by each EJ group leader. The parents will need to give their consent as most of these girls are still at home. They will be living their new found way of life in the homes that were part of the onset of their sexual addiction. Some will have support while others may find the same sexual behaviors are blatantly or implicitly tolerated. This is where journaling is crucial. The girl can write her

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<sup>70</sup> Allen E. Ivey, et al, *Intentional Group Counseling: A Microskills Approach* (Belmont, (Allen and Pedersen B. Paul 2001; CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2001), 257-258.

<sup>71</sup> Gerald Corey, *Theory and Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy*, 7th ed., (Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole, 2005), 301.

<sup>72</sup> Ivey., 261-262.

triumphs and difficulties which will in turn inform the group leader to offer specific intervention. The leader can reach out to interdisciplinary leaders to help the young girl continue her new life in Christ.

The EJ has enough room to provide an atmosphere that allows for growth in interpersonal skills as well as inward growth as they each individually claim their identity in Christ. As they write, their ideas can soar as the only person present is God through Jesus Christ. It is between her and God. When this notion sinks in and the adolescent internalizes it for herself, there is no need to veil performance so as to please onlookers. The adolescent can wrestle with issues, write down feelings without fear of being judged or to please peers. She is free to share her story with God and as she develops confidence, with other group members.

One important skill to empower young girls is that of assertiveness and self-respect. Assertiveness is not a means to be rude or aggressive. Ivey and others view assertiveness as positive confidence. They say assertive people are those who have self-trust and are able to work through various situations. Such individuals are authentic and true to themselves while at the same time are sensitive to others.<sup>73</sup> In some forms, adolescent belligerence is equated with individuation and thus the struggle of a young girl is negated. This is the time to guide the budding adolescent on the boundaries and proper ways of self-respect as she learns to express her new found abstract reasoning. The young girl needs to exhibit this self-respect in the way she communicates, such as dressing and the company she follows. Assertive empowering is contingent upon cultural factors as well. Thus the leader will need to have a knowledge of the requirements of different cultures. For example, the traditional Hispanic families and some African families “are not allowed to argue with their parents”<sup>74</sup> but show respect to parents and elders.

Since sexual addiction is a learned behavior, it will take cognitive transformation, behavioral changes, and active empowerment to pragmatically conceptualize the new identity in Christ and avoid sexual addictive behaviors and limit their recurrence.

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 245-247.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 247.



The goal of counseling young girls is to spur them towards maturity and wholeness in interpersonal relationships and pragmatic conceptualization of their identity in Christ. The group ought to be inclusive so that other sexually addicted adolescents can vicariously learn through the group discussions.. Effective counseling is embedded in the knowledge of good counseling techniques that cultivate a healing atmosphere. Counseling can be formal and informal. In informal settings, young girls can belong to a group of their peers that is informational and preventative in nature. In formal groups, the young girls are together in a structured environment to correct a presenting problem.<sup>75</sup> Ivey and others agree that adolescents gain significantly from what others share in the group. They continue to instruct that this sharing should be guided by the counselor. The adolescents might share inappropriate information that may hurt others by demeaning their efforts.<sup>76</sup>

Counseling that employs the concept of “new identity in Christ”, while empathizing the unconditional regard and the power of reconciliation, must not negate the consequences of sinful behavior. The young girls are in the stage where they perceive the world through concrete lenses. In this stage, counseling according to Blees needs to incorporate the psychological concepts of “mutual rights, alternatives and consequences, and self-actualization.” Blees has further equated these concepts to biblical teachings of ‘Love your neighbor as yourself, a man reaps what he sows, and if you know the truth, the truth will set you free respectively.’<sup>77</sup>

To a young girl who is working through addiction, some of the concepts can be confusing. She is struggling with the fact that to conceptualize how the normalcy of her sexual development has reaped negative consequences. The counselor will need to be adept to distinguish the thin line on how normal sexual development became an addiction without thwarting normal and future expression of sex. Perhaps counseling can occur in a nurturing Christ centered teaching group.

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<sup>75</sup> Robert A. Blees, *Counseling with Teenagers* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1965), 24. (Robert 1965).

<sup>76</sup> Ivey, 261.

<sup>77</sup> Blees, 25.

## VII. The Counselor

The world view of Christians in the helping professions is centered on Jesus Christ as

the Creator and sustainer of the universe and source of life of His people; the head of His people, the church; the revealer of Himself and His purposes through the word of God; the final authority and King on all matter pertaining to His Kingdom and the giver of the Holy Spirit who will lead His people into God's truth.

The Christian helpers' frame of reference starts with the teachings of Christ in the Bible. The word of God offers encouragement,<sup>78</sup> guidance,<sup>79</sup> and correction.<sup>80</sup> Deinhardt argues that if counselors skip biblical methods and prematurely embrace other methods, they will find that the Bible has become inapplicable to people's problems. She further asserts that the power of God's Word "shapes character, thoughts, and actions" of the counselor.<sup>81</sup> God is the best counselor.<sup>82</sup> God's counsel is "immutable,"<sup>83</sup> and no one can counsel God.<sup>84</sup> A counselor who is empowered through the Word of God will develop authentic confidence necessary to impact the lives of others.<sup>85</sup> (Howard 1996)

The counselor has confidence due to the assurance of the presence of God. The presence of God knows all human thoughts and actions. It is impossible to escape the presence of God (Ps. 139:3, 7). The presence of God through the Holy Spirit (Jn. 14:15-21, 16:7-11) empowers the counselor with resources to meet the needs of the young girls.<sup>86</sup> (Ifill 1992)

Believers are responsible for counseling. Shields and Bredfeldt remind other believers of their responsibility to counsel others

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<sup>78</sup> Heb. 3:13; James. 1:2-4; 2 Cor. 1: 3-7, 8 -11

<sup>79</sup> Isa. 28:29; Isa. 58:11; John. 16:13.

<sup>80</sup> Jer. 46:28; 2 Tim. 2:25; 2 Tim.3:16-17; Prov. 3:12.

<sup>81</sup> Deinhardt, 21.

<sup>82</sup> Isa. 9:6.

<sup>83</sup> Deinhardt, 23; Heb. 6:17.

<sup>84</sup> Rom. 11.34.

<sup>85</sup> Howard Stone, *Theological Context for Pastoral Care Giving: Word in Deed* (New York, NY: The Haworth Pastoral Press, 1996, 58.

<sup>86</sup> Ifill, 47 and Ronald J. Sider, Philip N. Olson, and Heidi Rolland Unruh, *Churches that Make a Difference: Reaching Your Community with Good News and Good Works* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 50.

because and this applies to counseling young girls with sexual addiction:

The Bible teaches us that caring for the needs of people is the responsibility of the entire congregation. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians and exhorted them to “warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone” (1 Thess.5:14). Ministry was not isolated to a handful of theological or psychological experts. Every believer was responsible for ministering to other believers as problems occurred in the community of faith.<sup>87</sup> (Sheilds and Bredfeldt 2001).

The classic text for the ministry of all saints is found in Ephesians 4: 11-12. Paul wrote, “And He gave some as apostles, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.”<sup>88</sup> Paul repeats the same charge in 1 Corinthians 12: 7-11.

The believers have a mandate to counsel for the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of a person. The spiritual life is progressive, and it always shows signs of personal and relational victories. Shield and Bredfeldt further write that the life of a Christian is an experience of growing in an intimate relationship with the triune God. They assert that the Holy Spirit reveals the mind of God (1 Corinthians 2), and affirms individuals that they are the children of God (Rom. 8:14-16). However, God uses mature and caring people to encourage those who struggle to remain in the “will and ways” of God (Gal. 6:1-2; Jas. 5:19-20).<sup>89</sup>

It is imperative that the counselor is familiar and confident with their belief and values. The young girls are still growing and impressionable, as such they can easily emulate the counselors’ belief. Thus counselors are urged to have a comprehension on how their own religiosity and or spirituality informs the process of counseling young sexually addicted girls. Gold has listed some common themes that are helpful for the counselor to internalize and be well vested as these are pragmatically used in the counseling session. He listed the themes as ‘hope, virtue, sacred ground, polarities, facing one-self, compassion, love, meaning, and transcendence.’ He believed that these themes are

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<sup>87</sup> Harry Shields and Gary Bredfeldt, *Caring for Souls: Counseling Under the Authority of Scripture* (Chicago, IL: Moody Bible Institute, 2001), 299.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 305.

universal and are important to human existence. The counselor is urged to authentically articulate them as in the counseling environment in order to spur spiritual growth.<sup>90</sup>

### Conclusion

Sexual addiction is prevalent among young girls. The unthinkable is happening that these young girls are being exposed to sexual undertones at an earlier age. The age of innocence is progressively reducing. At a time when parents and society should be wrestling with the holistic growth of the girls, the girls are engaging in an act that is reserved for adults. The girls are becoming adult women too soon.

In as much as the home environment is crucial to the young girls socialization, it does not have complete control over what the girl is subjected to and what she chooses to internalize. This age group is still interacting with others at school and mass media of all forms surround her. A parent cannot shield and protect what a girl is subjected to. The girls is challenged with society's double standards in sexual expression. She sees all around her seductive ways of fulfilling the relational yearnings of the opposite sexes. And the platitudes are rewarded as the boys respond positively. It is not too late; parents can maintain an open environment and discuss with their young girl the changing physical body and how to relate with overtures from boys. The girls should be encouraged to be open.

It has been noted that even though church attendance reduces the inception of sexual activity, Christian girls none the less also fall prey to sexual addiction. The home and the church should play a role in forgiveness. In their study on forgiveness, Toussaint and others found that forgiveness in the home and church played a major role in fostering healthy and well balanced growth. This forgiveness will pave the way for the sexual addict child to seek help after a relapse and also share her journal entries with her family.<sup>91</sup> They may already have been stigmatized and are ashamed and are ridden by self-loathing, but a forgiving environment at home and church will provide a safe haven for them.

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<sup>90</sup> Gold, 89-91.

<sup>91</sup> Loren Toussaint, and others, "Inter-Parental Conflict, Parent-Child Relationship Quality, and Adjustment in Christian Adolescents: Forgiveness as a Mediating Variable," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, Vol. 27, No. 4(2008): 345. (Toussaint and Kimberly 2008)

Sexual addiction is learned and as such, healing is not a one-time deal and is not a one person show. The counselor will need to work with the community and the family in the treatment and prevention of relapse. The counselor will need to implement a multidisciplinary intervention that may involve sacred as well as secular entities. A study by Guilamo-Ramos and others discovered that by conducting a session with parents in a pediatric clinic as they waited for the girl to have physical examination played a tremendous role to reduce sexual risk behaviors among Latino and African American middle-school young adults.<sup>92</sup>

Treatment will not just be superficial; it is transformational of the total being. The expression of the new identity in Christ entails total transformation. The young girl is a new creation. She puts on new virtues and learns to articulate the authentic self (Eph. 4:24). The young girl's traits, characteristics, and thought processes that compelled her towards sexual addiction are replaced by intrinsic godly characteristics. When God transforms a person, it is a complete overhaul. As addiction is substitutionary, a transformed girl will need to replace the old behaviors with new found expression. Some of the thought patterns can be informed by memorizing Scripture and learning how to claim the promises from the power source as her own. And what a better environment to practice the new self as belonging to a Journaling-Empowering group.

The issue of young girls' sexual addiction is being recognized as a problem. The society cannot be ambivalent to the reality of young girls' early exposure to sex. More research is recommended to determine how to assess sexual addiction in young girls. The challenge is how is sexual addiction different from normal sexual growth for a young girl. What precipitates the sexual activity and what maintains it. What is the role of the church in preventing sexual inception?

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<sup>92</sup> Vincent Guilamo-Ramos, and others, "A Parent-based Intervention to Reduce Sexual Risk Behavior in Early Adolescence: Building Alliances between Physicians, Social Workers, and Parents," *Journal of Adolescence Health* Vol. 48, No.2 (2011) 159-163.

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**Testamentum Imperium – Volume 3 – 2011**

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