



Understanding the Cycle of Sexual Addiction

Part III – Rituals

By Bob Honeysett

“When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.” (James 1:13-15 NIV)

In the previous articles, we’ve touched on the first two parts of the addictive cycle; *Red Flags* and *Reflex*. In this final installment, we will discuss the third and last part of the addictive cycle known as *Ritualization*.

This phase of the cycle is pretty much cut-and-dried. When we pass into the ritualization phase, a fog rolls in. The decision we made to act out in the Reflex stage releases us into an emotional, physical and spiritual anesthesia. We become totally numb to right and wrong, totally numb to the aspect of consequences, and oblivious to anything the Holy Spirit is trying to work in us. All that matters is the physical release we will bring to our bodies. Once we mentally cross over the line into ritualization, there is no turning back. Regardless of the danger or consequences of our actions, we will seek release. Nothing else (spouse, children, job, reputation, ministry position...etc.) matters.

Author Andy Comiskey writes; *“Spiritual darkness sets in, and one’s whole being pulsates with carnal anticipation. At this point of the cycle, one is usually unable to slow down and break out of the cycle. All that matters is the object of desire. Like an animal stealthily and instinctively pursuing its prey, so the addict pursues the object of desire in the ritualization phase of the cycle.”*¹

When the dust settles after the ritualization stage, the short lived euphoria fades, and there is only remorse, shame and self-hatred. Beyond ritualization, there is nothing left except the passage of time until the cycle begins again. The next trip through the cycle will require more acting out (and/or a greater level of deviance) in order to reach the desired euphoric mountain-top experience.

I am going to once again reiterate a point that I made in the first two parts of this series. If a hard and fast decision to resist sin is not made in the Red Flag or Reflex stage, then there is little, to no hope, for breaking out of the cycle once it has progressed to the Ritual.

WHERE IS MY HOPE?

JESUS!

The first two articles on *Understanding the Cycle of Sexual Addiction* gave some practical steps that can empower the struggler to bring about change. I would be totally off base and pointless if I didn't mention the EMPOWERER. Jesus still has the power to change and touch us at our deepest level of need. It is clear to me from what the Word of God says about the subject of temptation that He has a plan and provision to help any of us facing this type of sin in our lives.

"No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it." (1 Corinthians 10:13)

Clearly, MY WAY is going to lead to some type of destructive action, but HIS WAY is going to lead me to the way of escape. Granted, MY WAY is the easy path to follow and the direction I'm naturally bent in. HIS WAY takes denying the flesh and dying to the thing that is striving to control me and propel me away from following God.

Just as an FYI reminder, DENYING and DYING are painful by nature, so it's reasonable to believe that walking through the process of healing and moving toward freedom will not give off a warm, fuzzy, "Jesus loves me" vibe. It is painful to grow in Christ, but it is pain with a purpose.

MOVING BEYOND SELF-HELP AND BARGAINING WITH GOD

DISCLAIMER: As I say what I am about to say, please don't write to me and refer me to scriptures related to judging others. Truth is truth and I believe there is a tremendous deception facing God's people today and it needs to be dragged into the light, especially for those of us who face long-standing battles with sexuality issues and sexual addiction.

MY POINT: There is no amount of self-help preaching or self-help books that will move you into a place of healing from sexual addiction. It is going to take the power of the resurrected Christ dwelling within you to bring you where God wants you to be. I AM DONE with a lot of the books that are being peddled today in the name of Jesus. Formula books I call them. You DO this and God will do that. You DO this and you will find more of God's blessing and breakthrough. I heard a sermon recently that stated "the only way you can Live Your Best Life Now is if you are going to hell," and I wholeheartedly agree. If this is the BEST, point me toward the Returns Desk so I can get the balance of my life on a gift card.

The truth is, there is no formula that will bring you closer to God or any of His blessings. For a very short time, I worked for a Christian television network as a prayer counselor. It was very short lived and it ended the day a very well known (seminary trained) preacher "heard from God" while he was reading Psalm 150, verse 12. God told him that if people watching the show gave \$150.00 a month for 12 months to his television ministry, then God would move in their lives, bless them, and set them free. I thought about my struggles and the struggles of the people I've ministered to and how we would have gladly paid \$150.00 in monthly installments (what a bargain) for God to move in our lives, change us and take away the pain we felt. What utter nonsense!

There is nothing you and I can do to garner more of God's favor or blessing in our lives. Any message that tells you otherwise is just a whitewashing of a lie called SALVATION BY WORKS. Giving, whether it

be tithing or giving to the aforementioned ministry, does not guarantee anything. We can't buy God's blessings! GOD FORBID our lives are ever reduced to a Bowling for Blessings mentality as though God is some genie in a bottle waiting to fulfill our wishes and commands.

Equally impotent in its ability to save and transform us are the MAN centered messages being preached in a staggering number of churches. "DIETING GOD'S WAY", "REVOLUTIONIZE YOUR ROMANCE", "JESUS DIED TO MAKE YOUR DREAMS COME TRUE" Really? Was Jesus crucified to let us know that God had developed a weight loss program? Did Paul and Silas spend time in prison because they were teaching people how to revolutionize their romance? Could someone point me to the scriptural references that detail these concepts? Clearly, if you are sexually addicted or struggle with sexual confusion, a man centered, self-help message is not going to fill the aching void inside.

Let's just get back to basics. The scripture is very clear on a few issues;

- We are saved by grace, not works (or by what we do or give, monetary or otherwise) (Ephesians 2:8,9)
- We already have everything of God. There is no more to gain through works or any other means. *"His divine power has given us **everything** we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness."* (2 Peter 1:3) If we are not experiencing ALL of God then we have to continue to bring ourselves and our issues/addictions into the light. As we release those hurts and habits, more of Jesus moves into those vacant places, thus filling us and releasing power and victory into our lives.
- The Cross of Jesus Christ is where we find our God given destiny. Our destiny is to follow HIM, plain and simple. That destiny may lead to places of influence, or it may lead to places of brokenness and humility. Jesus didn't die on the cross to give me the ability to "see my dreams become reality", He died to set me free from sin.
- We are called to arm and equip ourselves against sin and the enemy of our soul. When we've done that, WE ARE CALLED TO STAND.

"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." (Ephesians 6:9-17)

Self-help can't help you because self has nothing to offer in the battle against sin and the flesh. If self could help, then all of our self-based efforts would have been successful and we wouldn't find ourselves in the midst of the same struggle over and over again. We don't need to change our minds about ourselves and our sin, we need our minds to be transformed by the power of God in Jesus Christ.

SPEAKING OF TRANSFORMATION...

You can't transform yourself! In 14 years of producing monthly newsletters and articles, I've made the point on several occasions that healing happens by evolution rather than revolution. It is often a slow, tedious, painful process, but when patiently followed leads us into a life we never thought possible. A new life is possible, because through the struggle and pain, Christ has the power to transform us.

Our hope is that He has the power to transform anyone, anywhere and all He requires of us is that we come to Him with a repentant heart. If we fall into sin again, we "have an advocate with the Father" and He is always interceding for us. One of the most freeing aspects of my walk with the Lord was when I realized that while He disciplines us, he is not punitive in the way He goes about it. All of the punishment that was ours was laid on Christ when He died on the Cross, there is nothing left to punish us for. We don't need to fear God in our "fall". We need to get up, repent and start following Him again, trusting the Blood of Christ to avail for us in our times of weakness. It goes without saying that we don't use this knowledge as a license for sin; "*Oh, I can just go ahead and sin. God will forgive me!*" That mindset/justification just tramples on the Grace of God and makes the death of Christ like some insignificant event.

I'm at the place in my walk with the Lord where I believe I will never find total peace and contentment in this life. I will always fight against passions, addictions and sin. Don't get me wrong, I have peace and contentment. I have been blessed by degrees of victory in Christ as I've pursued Him, but I don't think I'll ever feel totally satisfied or fulfilled in this life. I don't think any of us are meant to;

"For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Now the one who has fashioned us for this very purpose is God, who has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come." (2 Corinthians 5:4-5)

My joy and peace in this life comes from what He has done to transform me as I've submitted my heart and life to Him. In exchange, He has given me a deposit, GUARANTEEING what is to come. Yes, you and I may battle through cycles now, but the day is coming when we will live with Him and find every true desire satisfied and fulfilled in His presence.

¹ Andrew Comiskey, *Living Waters (manual)*, (International Copyright: Desert Stream Publishing, 1996), 196-197