



Understanding
ADDICTIONS



Understanding
ADDICTIONS

to

WORK, ALCOHOL,
SEXUAL HABITS
And ...
PEOPLE

By

Lee Bee Teik

A Reconre Publication



Title: Understanding Addictions
(Adapted from Chapter 14 of
"Friends of the Bridegroom",
A Reconre Publication,
used with permission.)

Author: Lee Bee Teik © 2004

Publisher: Reconre Sdn Bhd
P.O.Box 91
70710 Seremban
Negeri Sembilan
Malaysia



1st Printing 2004
2nd Printing 2005

www.reconre.org

Design: Cornerstone Corporation Sdn Bhd
(455936X)
27 SS20/14 Damansara Utama,
47400 PJ, MALAYSIA
Tel: 603-7726 6335
Fax: 603-7728 5335
www.cornerstone-msc.com
inquiry@cornerstone-msc.com

Printer: Akitiara Corporation Sdn Bhd
(390199-U)
1 & 3, Jalan TPP 1/3,
Taman Industri Puchong,
Batu 12, 47100 Puchong,
Selangor Darul Ehsan, MALAYSIA
Tel: 603-8061 9988
Fax: 603-8061 9933
www.akitiara.com
akitiara@po.jaring.my

No part of this booklet may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission from the author except in the case of brief quotations embodied in articles and reviews.

Booklets in this series:

- The Gift of Feeling
- Your Soul Print and You
- Understanding Burnout
- Understanding and Managing Stress
- Understanding the 8 Stages of Human Life
- Understanding Nervous Breakdown
- Mind Your Language - Everyday Uses & Misuses
- Lay Marital Counselling
- Tips on Family and Marriage

- A letter to youths (parents may peep if they wish)
- Understanding Adolescents
- Understanding Human Sexuality, BGR Issues and Sexual Trauma - why hurt so much and so long
- Understanding 21st Century Singles
 - Its Implications and Our Responses
- Freedom & Morality
 - Privileges and Responsibilities
- Guidance for Knowing & Doing God's Will
 - Careers and vocations
 - what's the difference?
- Understanding Addictions to work, alcohol, sexual habits & PEOPLE!
- Global Kids
- The Forgotten Teenagers - Christian Kids

Ordering more copies and further information:

Online Orders:

<http://www.ReconRe.org>

<http://www.Cornerstone.com.my/reconre>

Postal Order:

Cornerstone Corporation Sdn Bhd
27 SS20/14 Damansara Utama,
47400 PJ, MALAYSIA
Tel: 603-7726 6335
Fax: 603-7728 5335

UNDERSTANDING ADDICTIONS

Unraveling Some Mysteries

Paul the apostle agonised in Romans
7:15-25 ...

*“I do not understand what I do.
For what I want to do I do not do,
but what I hate I do
For I have the desire to do what is good,
but I cannot carry it out
For in my inner being I delight in God’s law;
but I see another law at work in
the members of my body, waging war against
the law of my mind and
making me a prisoner of the law of sin
at work within my members.
What a wretched man I am!
Who will rescue me from this body of death?
Thanks be to God
- through Jesus Christ our Lord!”*

The writer to the Hebrews concluded in Hebrews 4:14-16 ...

*“Therefore,
since we have a great high priest
who has gone through the heavens,
Jesus the Son of God,
let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.
For we do not have a high priest
who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses,
but we have one who has been tempted
in every way,
just as we are - yet was without sin.
Let us then approach the throne of grace
with confidence,
so that we may receive mercy and
find grace to help us in
our time of need.”*

Dr. Gary Collins, a psychologist and writer, defines an addiction as

“any thinking or behavior that is habitual, repetitious and difficult or impossible to control ... ” (unless by the grace of God).¹

We shall briefly discuss the nature of four of these addictions, the possible therapies and resources available for repentance, healing and restoration.

Workaholism

Case History

"74-year-old James is married with two children. James believes that personal sacrifices have to be made in order to succeed in a job. He once told his wife that when he reaches a certain respectable position in his career, he will take it easier.

Today, James has made it in his career and has received much recognition and honour in his field of work. He has never missed a day of work in over 50 years. Although retired, he still remains on the board of directors for a number of companies and organizations which continue to demand time away from his family.

Though he is seen as a model in the eyes of society and his peers, his family sees him through very different lenses. James has always spent more time at work or away on business trips than at home. Even during family vacations, James is unable to relax and enjoy himself. He usually cuts his holidays short to get back to work.

However, the overall consequences of such behavior that led him to a swift and successful climb up the corporate ladder has resulted in alienation from his wife and children.

In fact, he acknowledges that his family life has suffered much because of his attitude to his career. He confesses that he had missed watching his children grow up and has failed to provide parental guidance for them.

Questions

- *What does work really mean to someone like James?*
- *Does God, who ordained work, have any specific instruction on attitudes to daily work?*

“The notion that a job should bring fulfillment is a dangerous half-truth, in that the Bible never indicates that our jobs should be ‘fun’ or make us ‘happy’. Fulfillment is more correctly understood in the sense of service, taking pleasure in the contribution that our work is making to the community.

This implies that whenever possible, we should choose work that benefits those in need and this should head the list of criteria by which a Christian chooses a career.

If we view decisions about our careers through the lens of self-satisfaction or self interest, we are not being biblical people.

Disciples of Jesus Christ must view career decisions not through the lens of self-fulfillment but through the lens of the needs of God’s people - indeed, of human needs wherever they are found.”²

I could not agree with the above writers more. Many of us work to earn a living for ourselves and our families. That is right and good. But, more than that, we need to consider work from God's overall purpose for mankind in creation. Then shall our hearts rejoice that we are walking in the Creator's will for us! Everything that we do becomes an offering of praise to Him!!

Our God is the God who works:

- *Genesis 1:24-2:20* - in creation
- *Psalms 121:3,4* - in providence
- *Matthew 25:15* - in judgement
- *Revelations 19:8* - in redemption

God ordains work for those made in His image. After the fall of man and woman, work has become a burden, especially to men. However, Jesus Christ has redeemed work from the curse. Until thirty years of age, He worked as a carpenter willingly. He probably had to be the breadwinner too as tradition has it that Joseph had died when the children were young. His was probably a home-based carpentry business. Work is to be done as a service to God through serving others, to be seen as primarily pleasing to the Lord, not employers, and with sincerity of heart (*Ephesians 6:5-8*).

Our mandate to work comes from Genesis 1:28-30 where we were commanded to govern the earth responsibly under God's sovereign rule. From then on, *our work is but an expression of our faith in and gratitude to the Master of all creation. Jesus Himself was the Master craftsman. Creating the world was a joyful task because it was performed with God the Father (Proverbs 8:27-31)!*

Thus, as work is being redeemed once more (i.e. done according to His sovereign purposes), hours and pain put into our work become recreative again.

Our dignity *no* longer comes from what we have done but from whose we are.

The steward's call to work becomes a response whereby:

Duty has been changed to gratitude to the faithful God!

Therefore, to habitually allow our sense of duty to be the smouldering motivation of our lives is to succumb to the imprisonment of the law rather than to rejoice in the freedom of God's grace.

However, lest we fall into sloth, one must clarify that:

To live in the freedom of grace does not exclude the pursuit of excellence through diligence for our Master. It simply enables us to be and to do our personal best for Him.

However, to live under the tyranny of the pursuit for the *humanly unattainable* ideal of this world, even if done in His Name, will only alienate us from the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. If we could achieve the perfect state of anything on our own, then there would be no good news to proclaim, for we would have no need of the perfect Lamb of God. Though we regularly tell ourselves that salvation from God is by grace, more often than not:

We forget that sanctification and the whole of our Christian life is made possible also by grace alone.

Where Then Did the Workaholic Attitude Start?

Read *Genesis 3:17-19* slowly, noting each word, each phrase, each sentence ...

To Adam He said,

“Because you have listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat of it,’

Cursed is the ground because of you; Through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life.

It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it your were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return”
(spacing rearranged by author)

No wonder that men, after the fall, find their worth and status in their work. No wonder that men are admired even if they spend so much time on work that they neglect their health and their families. They are somehow given permission to slog and slog in the name of being good fathers who bring lots of money home. What God called a curse, we have called a blessing! Yes, we must work, whether paid or not, as God has




created us for good works for His glory. However, if work has taken over His priorities in daily life, then, perhaps, we need to stop-ponder-listen-pray to seek His wisdom and discernment to restructure our routines, believe and obey Him above all else, including our selfish ambitions for church, family and self.





“Lord, please forgive us, we pray!”

Description of a Workaholic

Here are certain characteristics that workaholics commonly present. Basically, they are ordinary people like us except that:

-  their desire to work is compulsive and extreme. They are intense, energetic, competitive and driven. In other words, *they cannot stop working because if they do, they'll feel more anxious!*
-  they fill their leisure with *thoughts about their work and the fear of failure, boredom and laziness.*
-  they are identified with their work so that *they judge the success and failure of their own worth as persons on the basis of performance at work.*

 though they are usually satisfied and contented with their lives, *they cause a significant amount of tension and conflict among people that are closest to them, especially family members.*

 they use work to fill the God-shaped vacuum in their souls. To them, *the God of truth and grace has become the “Pharaohs” of their lives.*

Common Problems Encountered by Workaholics

- Excessive Stress - resulting in a multitude of psychosomatic illnesses including hypertension, cardiovascular disorders and peptic ulcers.
- Burnout - in people helpers who suffer from emotional exhaustion accompanied by loss of personal ideals, goals and aspirations due to the lack of sufficient rest in between prolonged periods of hard work. They certainly need time to recover from intensive interactions with fellow fallen human beings.
- Anxiety - unhealthy chronic worry over the past or future resulting in forgetting to focus on the present

good they can do, in some. This results, therefore, in a waste of opportunities which produce more anxiety ³.

- Fatigue and loss of creativity.
- Relationship conflicts.
- The lost art of correspondence, conversation and contemplation, a necessity for the human soul made in the image of the creative God of the universe!
- If, for any reason, they have to stop work, life becomes meaningless as few/no close friendships have been developed in earlier days.

A Suggested Response

There remains a need to balance work and leisure within a biblical framework:

- ✓ Jesus had busy days (*Matthew 14:13-14*) but He also taught and demonstrated the need for contemplation and prayer that God has made for a balanced distribution of energy for the different areas of our lives to develop into His likeness (*Matthew 14:23-24; Mark 6:31*).

- ✓ Jesus had priorities but was flexible in (Matthew 15:21-28).
- ✓ Jesus taught the difference between the fatigue of obedience and the fatigue of perfectionism bordering on disobedience (*Contrast Matthew 11:28-30 with Luke 10:38-42*).
- ✓ The writer of Ecclesiastes teaches that, somehow, *the toil of work*, in some sense, is meant to exist in a *balanced tension with the joy of work* (*Ecclesiastes. 2:17-26, 9:7-9*).
- ✓ The Bible gives no sanction to the workaholic. Work is to be interspersed with rest. God rested after creating the world and ensured our well-being by the reminder in the 4th of the Ten Commandments given at Mount Sinai.

If God can rest, so can we mere creatures. This may be a humbling thought for us. But we need not fear because to be real is to be humble; before God, we cannot be otherwise.

Further more, many sincere Christian workers have turned Sabbaths into work as well e.g. Christian activities. True, Jesus has explained that, as Lord of the

Sabbath, He now proclaims that the Sabbath is made for man, and not man for the Sabbath (*Mark 2:27-28*). However, note that He uses examples such as the need for basic food and healing (*Matthew 12:1-13*).

The Sabbath is never meant to become a legalistic ritual to add on to the burden of the law (Colossians 2:16-17). It is another means of grace like fasting, to remind us that the holy Creator God is the One who holds up the world, not us. And the experience of grace is restful! O how we long for the coming fullness of the experience of resting in God (Hebrews 4)!

We need to take stock of our lives by following God's physical laws by reflecting in His presence, receiving His renewed strength and returning to laugh and to work again.

Chemical Addiction

We will not elaborate on drug addiction as the Christian based NGO, MCARE (4) will be able to provide much information on the need to understand, accept and help those addicted to chemicals/drugs/*dadah*, as we commonly call them. However, we will discuss the more widespread addiction to alcohol, also a chemical.

Alcohol Addiction

As alcohol is a more socially accepted chemical than drugs, many people may not be aware of the trauma experienced by those affected by alcohol addiction. We hope that the information given below may enable those who need help to look for someone to lead them out of the dark path of family and self destruction.

Biblical Principles Related to Alcohol Addictions

Let us allow God's word to act as a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path.

Read

*Proverbs 20:1 & 23:29-31; Isaiah 5:11;
1 Corinthians 5:11 & 6:10.*

Don't be mastered by anything
(1 Corinthians 6:12), or
anyone (Matthew 10:37-39).

Do uphold and submit to civil laws
(Romans 13:1-5).

Do keep the body pure
(1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

Do exercise temperance, self-discipline
and self-control (Titus 2:11-14).

Be filled with the Holy Spirit
(Ephesians 5:18).

Description of a Person under the Addiction of Alcohol

According to WHO, alcoholics are

‘those excessive drinkers whose dependence on alcohol has attained such a degree that it shows a noticeable mental disturbance or an interference with bodily or mental health, their inter-personal relations, and their smooth economic and social functioning.’

Many researchers claim that alcoholism is a disease. Others have challenged the disease concept, preferring instead to

see alcoholism as a social phenomenon, a behaviour disorder or clear evidence of sin ⁵.

It is both simplistic and extreme to conclude that alcoholism is **only** a disease and/or **only** a moral issue. From observing many patients with a long history of alcoholism in Melbourne and in Malaysia, I believe that the patient could better control himself before the body is damaged by alcohol. Once the body is affected, freedom from addiction is rare unless external help is received willingly. That is where pastoral counsellors and doctors may help, especially when organs like the liver and brain have been permanently damaged. In some ways, drug abuse functions the same way. Hence, our practical help for the addicted person must be given with discernment as to the stage of addiction.

By the time those addicted to alcohol look for help, we must assume that alcoholism is **both** a sickness and a moral irresponsibility. We need to take both into consideration when planning treatment, unless there is a miraculous cure, as in the case of one of my late friends.

Case History

Raj was driving his car to a high-rise building to commit suicide when he was casually stopped by a friend who invited him home for tea. In the midst of the depressive mood and conversation, he received Christ's offer of forgiveness and was instantly cured of alcohol addiction ⁶.

Tentative Diagnosis

The usual question posed by a doctor like:

'Do you have a problem with alcohol or drinking?'

will usually receive a negative response. Therefore, a people helper coined the acronym **C.A.G.E.** to help diagnose alcoholism in clients or patients:

Cut back: *'Have you tried cutting back (down) your drinking?'*

Anger: *'Do you get annoyed or angry when others tell you to stop drinking?'*

Guilt: *Do you feel guilty when you drink?'*

Eye-opener: *'Do you drink alcohol in the mornings?'*

According to a research conducted by specialists, "a positive response in three out of four questions above would signify a greater than ninety percent chance of alcoholism." ⁷

Problems Encountered by Alcoholics

Physical Effects

These may persist in late stage addiction even if they have kicked the habit as the body has been damaged by intake of poisonous chemicals.

- Impairment of balance (wide-based gait), motor skills, thinking and emotional responses.
- Liver cirrhosis with its symptoms and signs e.g. flushed facial skin and rashes on body.
- Increase in cardiac disorders e.g. alcoholic cardiomyopathy where the heart muscles have been weakened permanently.
- Increase in risks for cancer of liver, stomach, colon and breast.
- Vitamin deficiencies due to poor diet resulting in e.g. memory loss and other neurological symptoms.
- Impotence due to nerve damage.

Psychological Effects

- Dulled thinking, inappropriate behaviour such as confabulation (which is making up stories due to loss of memory and trying to cover up when he can still think clearly), self-neglect (e.g. in dressing), withdrawal from people when they feel that something has gone wrong, loss of social inhibition (e.g. in the form of verbal *diarrhoea* in that he keeps talking about non-essentials when in company).
- Psychological defense mechanisms including denial, rationalisation, repression and projection of problems to others. Many gradually learn to live the lie. Some women may even hide the alcohol in mouth freshener containers to fulfill their craving when the time has come for the next drink.

Family Effects

- The family of the person addicted to alcohol lives in fear, tension, insecurity and shame. These inner turmoil leads to loneliness and social isolation. I have seen one family with adult children talking to one another in soft tones most of the time, even after they are away from their parental home and independent. They are so used to keeping the peace at home and hiding in their rooms when Dad returned late at night. Superficially, it may be seen as gentleness, until the neurosis is recognised.
- Children in alcoholic families learn three rules for survival:

Don't talk

Don't trust

Don't feel.

- Marriages are strained and many end in divorce or separation.
- Lost promotions due to poor performance, threats of termination and loss of job add to family insecurities."

Spiritual Effects

Greater alienation from friendship with God as alcohol becomes the idol of worship - the object that matters most in life.

However, we must believe that the God of truth and grace views them with sorrow and compassion rather than condemnation. He waits for them to return to His open arms of forgiveness and reconciliation. His Son died for their sins, weaknesses and diseases.

General Response to Alcoholics

- ✓ Get the addicted person to admit the need for help. This may be the most difficult part of the whole process because he usually denies that he has a problem. It is not unusual for the alcoholic to hit rock-bottom before he or she seeks help. It must be made clear that they cannot abstain from alcohol on their own. They need external community support.
- ✓ Give general medical treatment of physical diseases wrought by alcohol.

- ✓ Seek out those familiar with such caring, be they qualified doctors or intercessors to carefully monitor and treat withdrawal symptoms.

- ✓ Provide information and encourage participation in support groups like rehabilitation centers and Alcoholic Anonymous. Although not specifically Christian, these groups use principles that in general are consistent with biblical teaching. If supportive help can come from within the church, that would be ideal. However, the sad reality is that most church members are still critical and unwilling to understand and help. Others are ignorant regarding the facts of alcoholism.

Some people's bodies can take alcohol without becoming addicted to it. They can stop its intake any time. Some must not touch one drop or they will become hooked again. Each must know his own limits. Whatever type of body one has, if taken in large enough quantities and long enough, the body will usually be damaged. The main reason, therefore, for Christians to abstain from alcohol as much as possible is that we are to take care of the temple of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

One loses nothing by total abstinence either.

- ✓ Provide counsel for the family. Often, family members must see how they might be contributing to the addiction problem and change their ways too. For example, a negligent-nagging-spendthrift spouse might have initially caused the other spouse to find solace in alcohol.
- ✓ Be prepared for relapses. If they have tried their best to abstain, encourage them to try again and ask God for strength to abstain a longer period each time. We would also pray for healing of the whole person where the willingness to change exists.
- ✓ Recognise that evangelism and discipleship are basic needs. If the counsellee is to find new meaning and purpose in life, he or she must find the everlasting life and fulfillment in Christ and Christ alone.

*Unless the delivered person is
filled with the Holy Spirit through obedience to
God,
the enemy will seek to return.*

Matthew 12:45

In all of this, communication with God through prayer is a daily requirement. They may pray by themselves or with friends. Through the availability of intercessors and the availability of concerned human helpers, God works to deliver those who are controlled by alcohol ⁸.

Case History

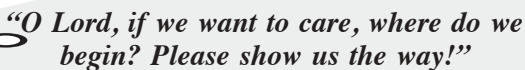
“I have three uncles who struggle with alcohol abuse. Throughout my years of growing up, I have witnessed the havoc that alcohol caused in these families, especially in the lives of my cousins.

Today, one of them is dead. He hanged himself when his son was only thirteen. Another separated from his wife after living a promiscuous lifestyle. We have lost touch with him for almost 12 years.

The third uncle continues to drink and to cause havoc in the lives of his wife and two adult children.

The irony of their lives is that when sober, they were some of the friendliest people on earth. The Dr. Jackal and Mr. Hyde character describes them well. Though well-educated with good career potential, all three of them had difficulties with their jobs and ended up unemployed because of their drinking habits.

Today, my cousins continue to have problems with the issues of trust, dependencies, self-control and the identification and expression of feelings. One of them continues to be academically poor, suffers from asthma and is so disgusted with his father that he no longer associates with him. He, in turn, has serious marital problems and is separated from his wife of 6 months. My other cousin, a young physician, appears to be doing well in marriage but is showing signs of alcohol dependence.”



“O Lord, if we want to care, where do we begin? Please show us the way!”

The above case history vividly portrays the generational effects of dysfunctional homes, if left untouched by the truth and grace of God. Sometimes, it is not so much the devil’s fault but our fault in not appropriating the Holy Spirit’s life-giving power to grow in intimacy with the Lord Jesus. Only then will the vacuum in us be filled and our lives have no place for other gods.

If ever we are said to be addicted, let us be addicted to the true God.

Sexual Addictions

Such addictions are surfacing in our churches as we become more secularised in our philosophy of daily life. Many feel it is all right to be involved in activities clearly prohibited in Scriptures. The "ME-FIRST-ISM" influence, though not new, seems to be getting stronger, especially through the multimedia. Therefore, churches need to teach human sexuality from a biblical view point and seek to prevent problems at the root cause. The place to start with is in Sunday school classes and youth groups.

Case History

"Sean (pseudonym) is a 25 year old Asian male. He leads a double life only a handful of people know about. On the one hand, he is a highly regarded college graduate with a respectable job and position. He is highly esteemed by his peers at work and friends in church. On the other darker side, he struggles with erotic lustful thinking, pornography, sexually explicit movies and sex clubs. The spiraling need for greater risk and more intense relationships inevitably has led to sexual involvement with multiple anonymous partners. Some of these repeated affairs lasted several months

and cost Sean much time away from work and his family. In addition, he wastes money on trips and expensive presents.

For people like Sean, sex has become an addiction. Like most drugs, in the beginning, it was used to deaden the pain of rejection, loneliness, fears, anxiety, childhood abuse or any of many hurts. But later, it became a willful act to please himself or herself at all cost.

The initial pain of rejection remains. Sex masks the pain for the moment but is ultimately unfulfilling because now the person is caught in the trap of double sins: that of the wrong sexual conduct and the sin of cover up while the original problem of rejection is still unresolved. The addict experiences deepening humiliation and loss of control over his or her life.”

In his book, “Addicted Love”, Stephen Arterburn ⁹ talks about sexual addiction in no uncertain terms:

“Addiction is never cheap. It is a thief. It robs its victims of everything. Many will pay the price for years without stopping to realize just how much it is really costing them. But facing the cost of addiction squarely can be the first step from the prison of obsession and compulsion back to

freedom. The altar of addiction requires tremendous sacrifice. In the worship of romance, relationship or sex - which is ultimately the worship of self - the addict will pay a dear price. God, family, time, reputation, job, self-respect, in time ... all of these ... are over to the addiction idol. The search for instant gratification is all that matters. Nothing else matters.”

Marks of Sexual Addiction (Arteburn)

Note

A person who has a stronger than the normally accepted sexual appetite is not necessarily a sex addict if he/she satisfies his/her appetite within a happy marriage. Such a person need not use this as an excuse to become addicted. If single, then the faster one seeks help from reliable counselors, the better for him/her.

- Addictive sexual activity is performed in isolation inwardly. The addict is mentally-cum-emotionally detached from human relationships and contacts even though he may not be physically alone.
- It is secretive. Sex addicts lead double lives. Sometimes it is hard, even for the addict, to know what the real person is like. The mask has been worn so long that he cannot see his real self any more.

- It is devoid of intimacy. The sex addict is utterly self-focused. He cannot achieve intimacy because his self-obsession leaves no room for giving to others.
- It is devoid of true relationship. It is merely "sex for the sake of sex". The other partner is treated as an object.
- It is victimising. The overwhelming obsession with self-gratification blinds sex addicts to the harmful effects their behavior is having on others and even on themselves.
- It ends in despair. It leaves the participants feeling guilty, regretting the experience, leaving the addicts even more empty.
- It is used to escape pain and/or problems by adding another one to the existing list in his/her life.
- It is dangerous. Long after it has become unhealthy and immoral, sex addiction progresses to the point where it crosses criminal lines in extreme selfishness. If not checked, child molestation, incest, rape and even murder can occur at the ultimate level of sex addiction.


The Addiction Cycle ¹⁰

"Obsession"


- Personal Pain - self mortification "poor me" syndrome

becomes the 

- Emotional or Sexual Trigger through looking at pictures in books or on television, for example. This causes self-hatred and anger,


leading to 

- Mind saturated with sexual thoughts

leading to 

The Hunt

- Search for sex "object"

leading to 

- Pornography and/or a Sexual Partner - past or new contacts. This search is often highly ritualised - built on years of practised behaviour and experience.

Recruitment

- Purchase or friendly proposition

Gratification

- Orgasm by whatever means, even such as ritualistic sexual activity

Then he appears to 

Return to "Normal"

- These are brief interludes when addicts feel "normal" again. The lifting of obsession is short lasting. He recalls the wrong behavior as

Self-Justification

- "It wasn't so bad"
- "Everyone does it"
- "I needed/ deserved it"

He then



Blame

- Seeks a scapegoat - An addict will blame almost anyone except himself.
- Anyone can be target - parents, spouse, society, counsellor, and even God.
- Shirks personal responsibility.

This brings more



Shame

- Guilt and remorse
- He feels like he is at the bottom rung of society

Despair

- Greater pain than before acting out
- Hopelessness - suicide a distinct possibility especially in a person suffering from mood swings and he commits sexual addictive activity while in the maniac stage but swings to the depressive mood after that.

Promises himself or God

- “Never again!” without seeking external help.
- Promises trigger obsessive thinking with emotional trigger and the hunt begins again, repeating the whole cycle.”

What a tragedy!

Somehow, the more the addict wants to quit, the more he does not. Maybe it is the low value placed on the self that tells the self that he/she cannot make it anyway so who cares do it again! *This is where the enemy of God places lies in the person's thoughts about himself/ herself. Those who have the Holy Spirit can, by His power, reject the false value placed on them and pronounce to the enemy and themselves that the temptation can be rejected in Christ's Name, the Name which is above all names. The forgiven recovering child of God has to do the hard work of Scripture memorising and obedience to the holy and yet gracious Father God.*

Response to Sexual Addiction

“Many sexual addictions will yield to a three part solution:

Determination

Addictive behaviour will persist unless the individual determines to change. This is unlikely to be a one-time-only decision. Addictive behaviour is pleasurable and relapse may be common even after repeated decisions to quit. It is prudent and wise to have a support group whom the addict can trust and to whom he can also be accountable to.”

Thought Replacement

It is not hard to stop and throw away our unhealthy thoughts or behaviour but it is difficult to keep them from returning unless we bring in replacement thinking and actions. Recovery is not amnesia and the addict should realize that *old thoughts will continue to come back but these should not be entertained. Instead, think about “ ... whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy ... ”*
(*Philippians 4:8*)

“Yes, think, think and think about such things.”

Need Fulfillment

As we have seen, addictions often arise because some need is not being met in healthy ways. In sexual addictions these could be the lack of love and affirmation and/or sexual abuse early in life, separation or abandonment while growing up and other dysfunctional backgrounds. These are associated with feelings of hopelessness, anger, worthlessness, craving for intimacy (which they often mistake for sexual pleasure) and detachment. A professional counsellor may help the counsellee ponder what needs are being met by the addiction and suggest alternate means of dealing with these unmet needs. They need to be able to work through their resentment, anger, bitterness and guilt. Sexual addictions are less common and less needed when people feel accepted, secure, loved and capable of maturing as an independent adult. They are dependent on God and Him alone, although God's community is His channel of His healing grace.

Two of the commonest root causes of rejection I have encountered are:



Womb rejection and/or lack of maternal bonding as in the case of early maternal-child separation due to e.g. death, insanity, divorce. This is sometimes discovered on hindsight in womanisers and female homosexuals.



Having a detached absentee father and a possessive mother. This is found to be a common feature in the history of male homosexuals and male celibates.

People Addiction (Emotional Dependency) ¹¹

I have added this part because of the recognition of the possessive syndrome in many *people helpers* these last few years. This is an over-attachment to someone or to a type of people e.g. male or female authority figures. Many help out of the deep need to be needed. This results in the *inability to perceive the thin line between ministry and personal life and their separate needs* (in terms of the use of resources and relinquishment of people and fruits of ministry).

For example, sometimes people workers have great difficulty in differentiating between helping personal friends and those the group they represent are trying to reach. Consequently, the objectives of the work, to which they have been assigned, are not achieved, while they feel they have done their job well because they have been with people (personal friends) most of the time. They fail to see and accept that they will help their friends any way, even if these friends were not a part of their assignment to do so.

Our motive for ministry is to be love for Christ and Him alone, not because we have to respond to someone in order to meet our own needs. If we are not careful, something like what Mr. Brown once said in the television series, *'Mind Your Language'*, may happen: *"You scratch my back, I scratch yours."*

Four Signs of Those with People Addiction

- They often stay away from or are strongly reluctant to help those to whom they are not attracted or when the person in need cannot reciprocate their attention and/or gifts.
- They repeatedly tell you how helpful they have been to others they meet.
- They often talk about themselves quite a lot with or without realising it and cannot take objective feedback about their behaviour e.g. they will be reluctant to detach from those they want to be attached to. Whether of the same or opposite gender.
- They like being the centre of attraction to the extreme, sometimes causing their friends to feel embarrassed.

To help these people in deep need, we need not only a compassionate heart but wisdom to know how to help them or else we will enter the vicious cycles of their lives as well. How we need the Holy Spirit's counsel, patience and power to walk with them (if God so wills), until they return to His unique everlasting embrace and feel the security of His eternal love.

May we identify with a prayer of those in need ...

Faithful One

*Faithful One, so unchanging,
Ageless One, You're my rock of peace.
Lord of all, I depend on You.
I call out to You again and again,
I call out to You again and again.
You are my rock in times of trouble,
You lift me up when I fall down,
All through the storm, Your love is
The anchor.
My hope is in You alone.*

Brain Doerksen

PAUSE TO REFLECT ON WHAT
YOU HAVE READ.

REMEMBER TO LISTEN TO THE
COUNSELLOR PAR EXCELLENCE.

Reflection

Think about the words of this song:

Fill My Cup, Lord

*Like the woman at the well I was seeking
For things that could not satisfy.
And then I heard my Saviour speaking:
“Draw from my well that never shall run dry.”*

*Chorus: Fill my cup, Lord - I lift it up, Lord,
Come and quench this thirsting of my soul.
Bread of heaven, feed me till I want no more,
Fill my cup, fill it up and make me whole.*

*There are millions in this world who are craving
The pleasure earthly things afford.
But none can match the wondrous treasure -
That I feel in Jesus Christ, my Lord.*

*So, my brother, if the things this world gave you
Leave hungers that won't pass away.
My blessed Lord will come and save you
If you kneel to Him and humbly pray.*

Richard Blanchard

Questions

What is my Saviour Jesus saying to me?

References

1. *Counselling for Drug Abuse and Addiction*
by Steven Van Cleave,
Walter Byrd & Kathy Revell,
Resources for Christian Counselling
Vol. 12, Word Publishing 1988
2. *Why Work? Careers and Employment in
Biblical Perspectives*
by J.A.Bernbaum & S.M.Steer,
Baker 1986
3. *Burnout*
by Lee Bee Teik,
A Reconre Publication 2004
4. *MCARE:*
Malaysian Christian Association for
Relief
5. A useful chart is sited in Figure 1 in
"Disease Concept of Alcoholism"
by E.M.Jellinek,
N.J.Hillhouse Press 1960.
Information may now be easily
obtained through the Internet and at
public and medical libraries.
6. *Deepening Joy*
by Lee Bee Teik, SU/FES 1993,
Pustaka SUFES 1994...p.34-35

7. *Counseling Adult Children of Alcoholics*, Sandra D.Wilson, Resources for Christian Counseling Vol.21, General Editor, Gary Collins, Word Publishing 1989 has vivid descriptions of the marks of alcoholism on those addicted and their family members.
8. *Ibid*
9. *Addicted to Love*
S.Arteburn, Ann Arbour,
Servant Publishers 1991 ... p.201
10. *Ibid* ... p.128
11. *Emotional Dependency*
by Lori Thorkelson Rentzel,
IVP This booklet gives a
comprehensive and excellent account
of emotional dependency. I know of
readers who have been freed of their
people addiction through reading it.



<http://www.reconre.org>

About the Author

Dr. Lee Bee Teik (MBBS, Monash University) practised medicine till she turned fulltime homemaker.

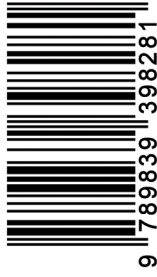
She is married to Dr. Hwa Yung and they have three adult children.

Having heard God's call for her to write in 1992, Bee Teik has penned books on prayer, pastoral counseling and her experiences as a Malaysian Christian woman.

This series of 18 titles, classified under the overall theme, *On Being Human*, is drawn from the positive feedback from her seminars.

She may be reached at lbt_reconre@hotmail.com

ISBN 978-983-9398-28-1



9 789839 398281



Understanding ADDICTIONS



<http://www.reconre.org>