

# When Sex Requires Secrets . . .

by Janet Wheeler

Recent studies show that one out of every four Christian couples will experience the pain of an affair and an estimated 30-40% of Christian men (and a fair amount of women) struggle with some sort of sexual compulsion or addiction that is negatively affecting their life and their relationships.

Pornography is a multi-billion dollar business. Strip clubs, massage parlors and prostitution are thriving. It is estimated that over 60% of all internet activity is of a sexual nature.

It is very likely that you or someone in your close circle of friends is struggling with this issue in their life or marriage. Unfortunately, the awkwardness and shame that surrounds the subject, keeps people from talking about it . . . especially in the Christian community.

The good news is that there is a growing awareness that sexual immorality is an immense problem, even in our churches. Pioneering work by Dr. Patrick Carnes, Dr. Mark Laaser, Michael Dye and others are helping us gain a new understanding of the motivation behind these sinful sexual expressions.

Out of this insight new books, teaching and therapy groups are being created to help those that struggle with sexual sin. Programs such as those offered by Life More Abundant Network are helping strugglers and their spouses receive healing and reconciliation.

## **What makes this so prevalent?**

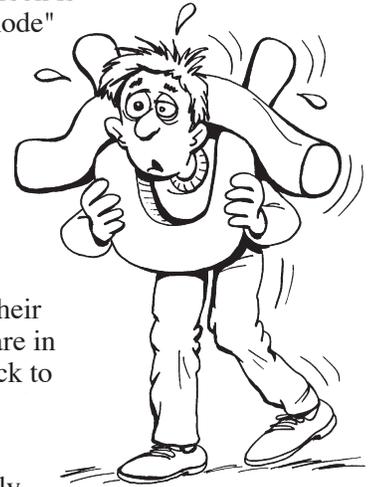
Sexual addiction is one of the most misunderstood of all compulsions. Even many professionals do not understand the root and treatment of sexual addiction. And, sadly, much of the popular teaching and advice on the subject does more harm than good.

Our brain is interesting. It has, built into it, a survival instinct. When something happens to make us feel afraid or uncomfortable it immediately seeks anything that will take those feelings away and make us feel right again. When our brain begins to associate a certain activity with helping us to regain "normalcy", the seeds of addiction are sown.

Events come through our senses to a part of our brain called the limbic system. This is where they are tagged as safe or dangerous. The limbic system has no sense of time, so if it experiences a familiar feeling associated with past trauma (like fear or rejection) the brain recognizes it as dangerous and immediately creates a craving for the thing that has helped us survive and feel normal before. For many people, compulsive masturbation, sexual fantasy or the rush of "winning" a new sexual partner becomes this normalizer.

## **How can Christians still struggle with this?**

Unfortunately, when a person is in this limbic "survival mode" it shuts off the cognitive thinking/reasoning part of the brain—the part that understands how much their actions will hurt their spouse; the part that knows right from wrong; the part that is moral and loving. All their brain knows is that they are in danger and need to be back to normal . . . now!



People can love the Lord and their families intensely, but when, because of past trauma, their brain tells them that they are in danger, they cease to be able to think and, instead, can only react in the way that their brain has been programmed. It is this continual shifting between the cognitive reasoning brain and the reactive limbic brain that produces

the Jekyll and Hyde double life indicative of a sex addict.

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***How do people get caught in sexual addiction in the first place and why don't they just stop their unacceptable behavior?***

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## **Is there any hope for freedom?**

Secular therapy has traditionally had only a 3-5% success rate in treating sexual addiction. Even Christian programs that focus on behavioral changes alone have limited permanent results. The only way to realize total healing is through the difficult process of allowing Jesus to replace the fears and lies that have ruled our lives with his truth. As this reality permeates our hearts and minds, we become increasingly able to trust both God and people and can begin to "reprogram" our limbic responses. This reduces and eventually eliminates the desire for the addictive behaviors.

## **How can I get help?**

Life More Abundant Network has a variety of programs and counseling resources for individuals and families struggling with the devastation of sexual addiction.

The leaders and counselors once struggled with addiction themselves and have found healing through Jesus Christ. They have also received specific training in addiction counseling. If you would like more information about current programs, call Bruce & Janet at 360-223-1862 or e-mail them at [info@lifemoreabundant.net](mailto:info@lifemoreabundant.net)