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A Measure of Grace

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Self Care ~ An Antidote to Addiction Part 1 *by Roger Jones*

Addiction is often fueled by self neglect. In the midst of our busy lives, we tend to let the little things that we need to do in order to take better care of ourselves slip away.

We neglect our needs for a variety of reasons. "I am too busy," or "It takes too much effort to pamper myself. I feel guilty when I spend time and energy on me." We all have excuses; however, we must make the effort to care of ourselves, because the consequences of not doing so can be dire.

When I was growing up, my mom would sometimes make a pot of beans in the pressure cooker. Everyone was warned to stay away from the pot, because it might explode. The pressure regulator on top of the pot would shake and hiss as it released steam, warning everyone to stay away. We called it the "jiggler." I envisioned the pot explod-

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ing, spraying beans skyward as the entire roof of the house was blown off. (I had an active imagination.)

Far too many of us live in a pressure cooker, but we don't regulate ourselves and release the excess pressure. We neglect ourselves to the extreme, which can lead to an explosion of addictive behavior. We act out sexually, we overeat, and we max out our credit cards, to name a few of our addictions. Self care is our "jiggler," the best way to release the pressure build-up inside.

There are three major areas in which we fail to care for ourselves – our spiritual lives, our physical bodies, and our emotional health. For the rest of this article, I will discuss the spiritual aspect of self care. The other two areas, physical and emotional, will be addressed in the coming months.

Often, our cravings for connection with God are ethereal and indefinable. We want something tangible to connect with, so we turn to sex or food or some other material item instead of the Creator of the Universe, who can meet our every need.

As a young Christian growing up, I learned many of the tools to maintain a healthy, spiritual life. I was to read my Bible, go to church, pray regu-

larly, and serve others. It was not too difficult to accomplish each of these tasks, but I found it challenging to actually involve my heart and my soul with them. Mostly, the activities were merely "going through the motions."

In his workbook, *Facing the Shadow*, Patrick Carnes has a list of 8 areas to consider when attempting to resist addictive cravings. First, under the heading, "Develop Spiritual Strategies" he says, "Number one on almost

everyone's list is the development of a spiritual base—a calm center, which helps you resist turmoil on the periphery." When we are at peace with ourselves and with God, we are more likely to turn to Him when we are in need, rather than to our addictions.

When we have kept God at a distance, it can be challenging to reconnect with Him. Personally, when I am struggling with temptation or have given in to whatever the temptation is, I find it more difficult to connect with God. When I am in sin, I am also usually dealing with self hatred and feelings of unworthiness. I struggle with feeling like I need to clean myself up before I can go to God with my pain and sin.

In *James 5:16*, we are encouraged to bring others into our struggle. "Therefore confess your sins to each

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There are three major areas in which we fail to care for ourselves – our spiritual lives, our physical bodies, and our emotional health.



Addicted to Despair

By Scott Kingry

Ever notice how your sexuality is like a big reflective mirror that shines light on every other facet of your life? When we pause from our frantic pace in life, when we interrupt the busy, consuming routine of our day, when we step away from the many masks, possessions, and distractions that give us our identity, we sit in the presence of God. His light uncovers the deeper parts of our heart. Our weakness, brokenness and loneliness are revealed. We feel naked, vulnerable and exposed. Our hunger, longings and great need come screaming to the surface. We want and demand relief, and in our impatience we insist that it happen instantly.

The powerful paragraphs from Patrick Carnes (see page 8) are profound illustrations of a couple of possible responses to harsh reality. In moments when our true inner poverty is revealed, we begin to battle between despair and hope. It's at these times when we are faced with such decisions that we realize our behaviors are attached to a much larger, universal conflict.

To despair is to give in to hopelessness. It is to surrender to the anxiety and desperation that causes us to throw ourselves into rash acts for relief, with no thought to the damaging consequences. We do seductively abuse, control and exploit others in a million different ways to meet our needs safely, medicate our pain and keep up our false image. As Patrick Carnes so eloquently expresses, we get burdened down with this double, perfec-

tionist life. Smiling on the outside, we search for answers in all the wrong places and only increase our shame. This is addiction, and to settle for addiction feels so easy.

To hope means that something great might be required of us. Hope acknowledges that if our hunger and longings aren't promptly addressed, they may still be fulfilled in slow developing intimacy. When we hope we begin to define our brokenness as God does, as something blessed that readies us for our inheritance in His kingdom. We start to trust and feel comfortable in our imperfection, and we might even be able to give out of this lack. We risk to become vulnerable and experience the opportunity of possible disappointment and suffering, but also the fruit of great joy. Hope takes faith and real guts.

As usual, we never do anything perfectly. Our despair and hope waiver from hour to hour, minute to minute. What kind of provision is there for us as we struggle through this sanctification process? God gives extravagantly of Himself always. We also have the privilege of being in on His work as we pursue abundant relationships in various environments. We encourage and exhort one another "to look for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus." ☆

Reflections: Thoughts From a WGA Leader

By Nancy Hicks

Hypothetically speaking

As a multi-tasking business partner, mother, husband-manager, I find my mind in a continual whirl of planning, calculating and projecting: How should I approach the next sales campaign? How many calls per week do I need to make over the next 8 weeks of summer to cover my calling lists? How do I work business calling around swimming lessons and the kids' camps in July? What can I pull out of the freezer to thaw for dinner? Did I remember to tell my husband that the swamp cooler has a leak? Did he pack his swimming trunks for our vacation? This busy mind is a good gift. Tracking the pieces and planning ahead are important activities for smoothing the tracks in daily life. However, like most of us, I can use this power for evil instead of good.

I call it the "what if?" syndrome: What if the money doesn't come in on time? What if our business



fails? What if my kids make choices that limit their future options, or hurt them, or even kill them? What if my husband has an affair? What if I have an affair? What if I never get to pursue my dream? What if life never gets any better? (To protect those I love, I'm with-holding the really juicy "what ifs"! Don't think mine are any less strange and horrifying than yours are! We all have them.)

God has been patiently but persistently pressing this verse from the

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Beatitudes into my head and heart:

“Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now, and don’t get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow.

God will help you deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes.”

(Matthew 6:34 The Message)

I have been surprised at the difference it makes to focus my attention on what God is doing in the present moment. I’ve had a few brilliant moments of success in this endeavor (not many, but enough to keep me trying). And I’ve been surprised at how much difference it makes in what I choose to say and do. Without the full weight of an unknown future on my shoulders, I am much lighter on my feet, more flexible and adaptable. In those moments, I get a glimpse of what Jesus tries to offer me in Matthew 11:29-30:

“Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.”

I’m not naïve enough to imply that this is easy. It takes a radical leap of faith to throw my anxious thoughts on God and believe that it matters to Him, that He cares. But what do we have to lose in the experiment? At the very least, we might gain a few nights of sleep and a headache-free day. The people we live with might appreciate the benefits of the experiment as well! ☆

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other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.” I have found that the best, quickest way for me to work through my self-flagellation is to go to a trusted friend and tell him, or her what is going on.

To stay current and connected with God, through the good times and the bad, I was introduced to an exercise by a pastor whom I meet with regularly. It is called the Daily Examen and consists of four parts: Gratefulness, Confession, the Knock, and Sitting in the presence of God.

1. **Gratefulness** is a time of thanking God for the things He has done in our lives and for the blessings He has given. I find this exercise helpful because I seem to focus much time and energy on the things I am lacking. This raises my awareness of the good things that God has done for me and increases my trust that He will continue to bless me.
2. **Confession** is an opportunity to review our hearts and our motivations. We are used to confessing some sins (the most obvious ones), but sometimes we ignore the small stuff and miss out on a growth opportunity. When I confess my impure motives, my road rage, or being judgmental, I am giving God the chance to change my heart and asking Him to help me change my behavior.
3. In *Revelation 3:20* we read “Here I am! I stand at the door and

knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.” **The Knock** is a time to stop and listen to God’s call to us. What is He asking me to do today? Sometimes, He is reminding me to be present to Him throughout my day. Other times, He is asking me to go to someone and make right something that I have done wrong.

4. **Sitting in the presence of God** is not about doing anything. It is about “being.” God is beckoning us, “Be still and know that I am God...” (*Psalms 46:10*). This is the most difficult part of the Daily Examen for me, because when I still myself, my mind wants to take off in a thousand directions. We are blessed to have a patient God, who will wait there for us to return our thoughts to Him.

I encourage you to take care of your spiritual needs. God created each of us with a hunger to know Him. It is through Him that we shall find healing and our freedom from addiction.

Over the next few months, we will look into the ways we neglect our physical and emotional health, and the role such neglect can play in feeding our dependence on addictive behaviors. ☆

Addictive Sexuality

Healthy Sexuality

Addictive Sexuality feels shameful. Often it is illicit, stolen or exploitive. It compromises values and draws on fear to generate excitement...

Addictive Sexuality often reenacts childhood abuses, disconnects one from oneself. A world of unreality is created, allowing self destructive and dangerous behaviors. Based on conquest or power, it is seductive and dishonest...

Serving to medicate and kill pain, addictive sexuality becomes routine, grim and joyless. A tough taskmaster, the addiction requires a double life and demands perfection...

Patrick Carnes, *Don't Call it Love* (New York: Bantam Books) p. 254



Healthy sexuality adds to self-esteem. It has no victims. Healthy sexuality deepens life's meaning and uses vulnerability for excitement.



Furthering one's sense of self, healthy sexuality helps the individual become an adult who assumes responsibility for needs. It expands on reality by relying on safety. It is mutual and intimate.



Originating in integrity, healthy sexuality may include legitimate suffering; it dares to face pain. It presents challenges while integrating the most authentic parts of oneself. Healthy sexuality is fun and playful and allows for the imperfect.

June

At a Glance

June 23rd: WGA Men's Hike

June 26th—July 1st: Exodus
International Conference—Irvine, CA



Thursday Night Group

June 7th: 44 People
June 14th: 43 People
June 21st: 40 People
June 28th: No Group

Orientation meeting: 5 new
people

July

And Beyond

July 17th and 24th: WGA will be presenting at the
Rocky Mountain Yearly Meeting Youth Camp

August 4th: Intercessory Prayer: Join us from
7:00—9:00 am at the WGA offices

September 11th: WGA will be presenting at Save
Our Youth

September 20-22nd: Mary will be speaking at the
MOPS annual leadership training convention

September 25th: Scott will be speaking at
Tuesday Morning Joy

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A Measure of Grace
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Where Grace Abounds
exists to guide and support
men and women who seek to
understand sexuality and
relationship, and to inspire
all people to know and
personally appropriate
God's plan for their
sexuality and relationships.

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