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A Measure of *Grace*

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Self Care: An Antidote to Addiction

Part 2

By Roger Jones



In last month's article, we began discussing the concept of self care as an antidote to addiction. Addiction is often fueled by self neglect, whether in our spiritual life, our physical bodies, or our emotional health and relationships. We turn to unhealthy behaviors as a way to avoid pain, loneliness, boredom, conflict, and many other thoughts and feelings that make us feel bad. I wrote about how our spiritual health is a key component of self care and reviewed some tools we can use to address our relationship with God.

As Christians, we are taught to "buffet our bodies" and to "hate the flesh." I believe that we often take this further than God intended. We neglect

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our bodies and our senses (touch, taste, smell, sight, hearing) that God gave us to experience the world around us, because our spiritual life and our Christian service are “more important.” The result of starving ourselves of “sensual” experiences is that in the process, we are repressing legitimate needs. Our need explodes in front of us and we do our best to put out the fire, many times turning to the intensity of sin and addiction. We then feel ashamed, separated from God and unable to serve, disqualifying ourselves from the very things we were trying to do in the first place.

Most days, I am in “repressing” mode when it comes to experiencing the world around me, living on autopilot for much of the time. So many things are on my mind on my way to work, that I don’t remember anything about my morning commute. I eat a meal, but I don’t stop to think about the way it tastes. I listen to the radio, not for enjoyment but to keep my mind busy. I don’t stop and allow myself to be present to the world

around me.

Ignoring our bodies can have dire consequences, particularly when we are discussing addictions. Addictive behavior is often an over-indulgence of something good. When a person disregards their need for touch, for example, that need continues to build. Eventually, this need will be overwhelming and they may turn to inappropriate ways of meeting those needs, like sex outside of marriage or pornography.

The result of starving ourselves of “sensual” experiences is that in the process, we are repressing our legitimate needs.

If you are struggling with an addiction, there is likely a sensory experience attached to it. It may involve more than one of the five senses. Try to connect the dots between what you are struggling with and the legiti-

mate physical need you have. I believe God will provide a healthy way to meet that need.

Pornography has been a big struggle for me. Of course there are emotional, spiritual, and relational issues which are a part of the problem too, but I can also see a clear connection between my

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Excerpt from *Addiction and Grace* Gerald May

Director's Note: *The following is from Addiction and Grace by Gerald May. The selected paragraphs highlight the significance of accepting pain as a part of dealing with addiction.*

“The implications of accepting pain are significant in dealing with specific addictions, but they become massive in terms of our basic attitude toward life. In our society, we have come to believe that discomfort always means something is wrong with the way we are living our lives. Conversely, we are convinced that a rightly lived life must give us serenity, completion, and fulfillment. Comfort means “right” and distress means “wrong”. The influence of such convictions is stifling of the human spirit. Individually and collectively, we must somehow recover the truth. The truth is, we were never meant to be completely satisfied.

If God indeed created us in love, of love, and for love, then we are meant for a life of joy and freedom, not endless suffering and pain. But if God also creates us with an inborn longing for God, then Human life is also meant to contain yearning, incompleteness, and lack of fulfillment. To live as a child of God is to live with love and hope and growth,

but it also to live with longing, with aching for a fullness of love that is never quite within our grasp. As attachments lighten and idols fall, we will enjoy increasing freedom. But at the same time our hearts will feel an even greater, purer, deeper ache. This particular pain is on the never leaves us.”

“The specific struggles we undergo with our addictions are reflections of a blessed pain. To be deprived of a simple object of attachment is to taste the deep, holy deprivation of our souls. To struggle to transcend any idol is to touch the sacred hunger God has given us. In such light, what we have called asceticism is no longer a way of dealing with attachment, but an act of love. It is a willing, wanting, aching venture into the desert of our nature, loving the emptiness of that desert because of the sure knowledge that God’s rain will fall and the certainty that we are both heirs and cocreators of the wonder that is now and of the Eden that is yet to be.”

Gerald G. May, M.D., *Addiction and Grace* (New York: HarperCollins) pp. 179-181

Reflections: Thoughts From a WGA Leader

By Patrick Maschka (Reprinted from Vol 7 Issue 9)

*Be still and know that I am God.
(Psalm 46:10)*

I frequently enjoy an early-morning jog to start my day. During summers in Colorado, that time of day is often the only time when I can be outdoors without the intense hot sun beating down on me. Cars and other people only occasionally pass me by, and I can listen to the sounds of my neighborhood waking up as the dawn breaks. Sometimes I use this time and atmosphere to pray, but I am never surprised when I reach home again and realize that my thoughts were on everything except my intended conversation with God.

I suppose every minister has preached it, and every Christian has believed it: we must have our "quiet time" with God. Why is it so difficult? Living with noise and activity has become a way of life for many of us. Truly, we even seek or create much of the dreaded noise we want to escape. I admit I am among the many who have complained that I just can't

seem to get in touch with God, and I've asked Him to be bigger and noisier than everything else around me. It hasn't worked. I can learn a lesson from Elijah, and wait for the quiet whisper of the Lord (1 Kings 19:12), but I still want God to keep up with me rather than slow down myself. Even when I want to slow down, living in seemingly perpetual whitewater prevents me from being still and calm.

I am imagining that when the psalmist was still, everything else was still also. No radios, no traffic, no hum of a million volts of electricity, just the sounds of the world as God created it. Sounds wonderful? That's why ministers preach it and Christians want it. Somehow, in some way, we must take the time to be with and listen to our God. It is only through Him and with Him that we will ever experience healing and peace. ☩

Charles Spurgeon, Morning and Evening

July 9-Evening

"And the evening and the morning were the first day." {#Ge 1:5}

The evening was "darkness" and the morning was "light," and yet the two together are called by the name that is given to the light alone! This is somewhat remarkable, but it has an exact analogy in spiritual experience. In every believer there is darkness and light, and yet he is not to be named a sinner because there is sin in him, but he is to be named a saint because he possesses some degree of holiness. This will be a most comforting thought to those who are mourning their infirmities, and who ask, "Can I be a child of God while there is so much darkness in me?" Yes; for you, like the day, take not your name from the evening, but from the morning; and you are spoken of in the word of God as if you were even now perfectly holy as you will be soon. You are called the child of light, though there is darkness in you still. You are named after what is the predominating quality in the sight of God, which will one day be the only principle remaining. Observe that the evening comes first. Naturally we are darkness first in order of time, and the gloom is often first in our mournful apprehension, driving us to cry out in deep humiliation, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." The place of the morning is second, it dawns when grace overcomes nature. It is a blessed aphorism of John Bunyan, "That which is last, lasts for ever." That which is first, yields in due season to the last; but nothing comes after the last. So that though you are naturally darkness, when once you become light in the Lord, there is no evening to follow; "thy sun shall no more go down." The first day in this life is an evening and a morning; but the second day, when we shall be with God, for ever, shall be a day with no evening, but one, sacred, high, eternal noon.



<http://www.spurgeon.org/daily.htm>

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temptation for porn and neglecting my physical needs. When my body is starving for touch, masturbation is a really intense way to get it. Seeing other people touching in intimate ways gives me a false sense meeting my need for connection.

Food is another thing I use additively. Regardless of what I eat, my stomach eventually feels full. If I have filled up on junk, I may still be hungry, because I haven't given my body what it really needs. My body is telling me it needs something nourishing, but I keep giving it the unhealthy. I need something simple like an apple, but I turn to the intense flavors of a hamburger!

Here are a few things to try which may help you connect with your body and avert the desire to turn to addiction:

1. Think about how it feels when you are washing your hands. How does the soap smell? What does the towel feel like when you are drying your hands?
2. Try and be aware of the world around you on your drive to work or when you are out running errands. Who is walking down the street? What stores am I driving by? Try turning off the radio and

driving with the window down.

3. Think about what your food tastes like. What does it smell like? What does it feel like in my mouth?

Go for a walk. What does the wind feel like on my face? What does the grass feel like on my bare feet?

All of this may seem very basic, but a surprising amount of our discipleship counseling sessions involve discussions about this type of information. Getting enough rest, eating well, and exercising are recurring themes in those appointments. Regular visits to the doctor and the dentist are also simple



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things we can do to take care of ourselves.

God gave us the gift of our bodies. He created us in His image and said that “it was very good.” I challenge you to enjoy the body God has given you, and feed all five of your senses daily. Caring for your physical needs will help you in your battle with addiction.

Next month, I will continue this series about self care as a way to fight addiction. In it, we will discuss how dealing appropriately with our emotions and our relationships will help us to battle addictive behaviors. ✝

Mary Heathman has returned from a 3 month sabbatical. Look for an article from her in next month’s newsletter!





July At a Glance

July 17th and 24th: WGA presented at the Rocky Mountain Yearly Meeting Youth Camp

Thursday Night Group

July 5th: 45 People
July 12th: 44 People
July 19th: 35 People
July 26th: 49 People

Orientation meeting - 10 new people

August And Beyond

August 16th: WGA Orientation Meeting

August 30th: WGA Open Meeting—please call the office if you are interested in attending

September 1st: 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

October 19-21: WGA Leadership Retreat

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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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