

A Christian Understanding of Human Sexuality
Addendum Two: Healing Sexual Brokenness
ICCEC U.S. Theological Commission
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As with every dimension of life in this fallen world, our sexuality has been marred by the fall. Sexual brokenness is a problem prevalent in society, and the church is far from immune. Healing of emotional wounds, avoiding immoral behaviors, and involvement in a church community begin a transformational process. Transformation is not an easy task. How does one walk out this journey of transformation? The sexually broken person must begin by grasping the scope of the spiritual and psychological problems that need addressing.¹

There are two distinct sources of help for sexually broken people. One source is prayer ministry. When accompanied by the spiritual direction and absolution through the sacrament of penance, prayer ministry can help emotionally wounded people to acknowledge and to identify the true source of their inner emotional pain. This is a way that sexually broken people may find lasting peace through receiving personalized truth directly from the Holy Spirit. The second source is professional counseling. A professional therapist can offer a relationship and techniques that empower individuals, families, and groups to accomplish mental health, wellness, and career goals. Counselors and mental health professionals can work with clients, on strategies to overcome obstacles and personal challenges that they are facing due to the consequences of their sexual brokenness and sexual abuse.² Professional counseling for sexual brokenness can include one-on-one coaching, self study, group therapy, and support groups.

While recognizing the value and efficacy of professional counseling, this paper will discuss how clergy and churches are able to help people heal from the various forms of sexual brokenness. The church can help the sexually broken by a combination of prayer ministry and sacramental ministry through a cooperative effort between lay ministry and clergy.

How God Restores Sexually Broken People

The local church can help individuals to realize their lives are sexually broken and lead them to healing in the Lord. Psalm 23:3 says of the Lord our Shepherd: “He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.” God is the Restorer of broken people. To restore means to make as though new, and there are several ways that God restores sexually broken people:

1. He renews their minds through His Word (Romans 12:1–2). He replaces old thought patterns with His truth. Lies that once kept us in bondage are now recognized as lies and rejected (2 Corinthians 10:5). Destructive thinking that led to depression, addiction, or promiscuity can be replaced with godly thoughts and self-worth as biblical truth takes root and grows.

¹ Powlison, D. (2017). *Making all things new: restoring joy to the sexually broken*, pp.43-44 Wheaton, IL. Crossway.

² The American Counseling Association says that counseling is a collaborative effort between the counselor and client to help clients identify goals and potential solutions to problems which cause emotional turmoil; seek to improve communication and coping skills; strengthen self-esteem; and promote behavior change and optimal mental health. <https://www.counseling.org/aca-community/learn-about-counseling/what-is-counseling/overview>

2. He heals their attitudes about their bodies. A body that once brought shame becomes the temple of the Holy Spirit when we surrender our lives to Him (1 Corinthians 6:19–20). We learn to value our bodies, and we realize we were created for God’s purpose and pleasure (Colossians 1:16), not as a toy for someone else.

3. He restores relationships. Whereas in our sexual brokenness we may have defiled many relationships, we now learn how to treat others with all purity (1 Timothy 5:1–2). We make amends for any part we may have had in creating or sustaining the brokenness, asking forgiveness when appropriate and forgiving all who sinned against us (Matthew 18:21–35).

Once restored, people can set healthy boundaries for their own sexuality. Restored people are able to recognize that sex is a good gift from a loving Creator, and when used wrongly, wounds their souls. When restored people obey the command to “flee from sexual immorality” (1 Corinthians 6:18), then they can recommit themselves to purity in body and soul and set wise boundaries in order not to “make provision for the flesh and its lusts” (Romans 13:14). While there is no magical way to be healed from sexual brokenness, the church can help people walk through the healing process. There are some concrete, scripturally supported principles that can help individuals grow in their faith.³

Principle 1 – Confessing To God

Sexually broken people must start with confession and move toward transformation. It is important for all parties, who are sexually broken, to understand that the person who caused the hurt should be held accountable and must repent. By embracing their identity in Jesus Christ, both perpetrators and victims become able to understand the emotional and spiritual battles they face, and can be also be equipped to overcome any fear, worry, anger, and shame.⁴ Fortunately God can bring healing for sexually broken people regardless of whether their brokenness came from their own sin or from the sexual sin of others, where sexual brokenness has led to sexual abuse.

The primary principle in healing from sexual brokenness is the ultimate form of unburdening: confessing one’s sins and hurts to God. One of the great ways of cleansing a person’s conscience is to confess it to the person that they have offended, but then also to confess it to God through the Rite of Reconciliation with a priest. The power of the cross of Jesus Christ is that it leads a person to say to God, “I was immoral. I did things that I was ashamed of. Lord, I made mistakes. Forgive me.” At the cross, there is forgiveness for any person who is willing to ask for it in an attitude of repentance. Christians can do this through the sacrament of Confession, also known as the Rite of Reconciliation.⁵ God always forgives those who truly repent. When people encounter mercy, they will begin to know and love Jesus Christ in a more fruitful and real way.⁶

³ Some of the following principles originated from unpublished material in the manual of C.A.D.R. (Christian Alternative Dispute Resolution) developed by Attorney and Minister of Reconciliation Peter J. Vallenga. The information, included is used with his permission. These points may be confirmed by many other resources.

⁴ “Healing the Victim-Perpetrator” and “Violence Cycles in Your Heart” from <https://www.windowstotheheart.net/healing-the-victim-perpetrator-and-violence-cycles>.

⁵ *Book of Common Prayer* (1979 edition), pp. 447-452; also see the ICCEC Catechism questions 187-191 on the Sacrament of Reconciliation or Confession or Penance.

⁶ For further information and resources on sexual healing see: www.MasteringLife.org or contact Dr. David Foster at mlifem@aol.com

Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your loving kindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions. Psalm 51:1 (NKJV)

He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy. Proverbs 28:13 (NKJV)

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. 1 John 1:8–10 (NKJV)

Principle 2 – Replacing Shame with Honor

Sexual intimacy impacts the human soul in such a way that when it leads to sexual brokenness, people carry a deep sense of shame. Shame is not only about their mistakes, but also about sexual abuses they did not choose. Often victims of sexual abuse develop a false sense of guilt and shame, wrongly blaming themselves for the act of another person. Other times the guilt and shame results from persons knowing that they have willfully sinned. In either case, the church's prayer and sacramental ministry can cut the cords that have bound shame around a person's behavior due to harmful or traumatic sexual experiences.

Those who operate in prayer ministry must not be judgmental, showing instead compassion and unconditional love.⁷ If a person has experienced rape, incest, or forms of sexual perversion the assistance of other believers may be needed. *Shame* will often keep a person from seeking outside help. Shame is both sin's root and fruit—its cause and consequence.⁸ Sexual intimacy outside of God's intent impacts the human soul in such a way that many people carry a deep sense of shame about their mistakes and about sexual abuses they have experienced. Sex is far more than just a physical act. It is also emotional and spiritual. Restoring people who have been damaged through misused sexuality can be one of the most challenging journeys in life. Then people may try to hide their guilt. God's intent is to free people from shame and guilt. A person must allow that shame and guilt to be replaced with dignity.⁹ Christians sometimes refer to this as being clothed in righteousness. Objectively, God takes away our shame by granting us honor by declaring us to be righteous through the imputed righteousness of Christ.

When Christians acknowledge the presence of the God who is really there, “the eyes and ears of our hearts are opened to receive the word He is always speaking. We enter into a path of obedience.”¹⁰ This leads to the dignity of being children of God, where there is the joyfully acknowledgement that “Jesus is Lord”. While acknowledging and believing that God is continually present may not always be easy, it is an important step in removing one's sense of guilt and shame.

⁷ Eckhardt, J. (2014). *Deliverance and Spiritual Warfare Manual* p. 38, Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House.

⁸ Wu, J. (2018). “Have Theologians No Sense of Shame? How the Bible Reconciles Objective and Subjective Shame”, *Themelios International Evangelical Peer Reviewed Theological Journal*, 43(2) p. 212

⁹ 2 Corinthians 5:21

¹⁰ Payne, L. (1995). *The healing presence: curing the soul through union with Christ*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker.

Principle 3 – Breaking Ungodly Soul Ties

Sexual intimacy has a spiritual impact of connecting two people together, resulting in soul ties. While good soul ties can help with a person's walk with God, ungodly soul ties hinder one's walk with the Lord. Ungodly soul ties lead to relationships that are based on lust, witchcraft, domination, and bondage.¹¹ On the other hand, Godly soul ties are relationships that edify and are based on love (Col. 2:2). The damaged soul must be renewed by God's Word and Sacraments so that on the inside a miracle takes place. There must be diligence in identifying and eradicating the areas of life that were out of control. Certain relationships, habits, sins, and attitudes need to be renounced. To renounce means to give up, to refuse to follow, or obey, or recognize any further, to repudiate. Ungodly soul ties need to be renounced, broken, and any evil spirits cast out.

Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For "the two, He says, shall become one flesh. 1 Corinthians 6:16 (NKJV)

Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? 2 Corinthians 6:14 (NKJV)

Self-control is a key to maintaining deliverance after soul ties are broken. People must avoid future relationships that may cause a return to being disorderly, rebellious, uncontrollable, ungovernable, unmanageable, unruly, or undisciplined. Forming ungodly soul ties and living an undisciplined lifestyle can bring one right back into the bondage of sexual brokenness. There is no lasting deliverance and freedom without discipline.

"Whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down, without walls." Proverbs 25:28 (NKJV)¹²

Principle 4 – Forgiving Those Who Have Caused Hurt

Any time a person has been attacked, hurt, or slighted it is important to acknowledge the hurt caused. Abusive sin should not be covered up.

The natural man responds to a hurt with anger contrary to God's word (Psalms 37: 8). Anger should not be focused on one who caused the offense, because it is counterproductive and does not lead to healing. The offender has given place to the enemy and should be forgiven, but not necessarily pardoned.¹³ It must be understood that there is a difference between forgiveness and pardon.¹⁴ Forgiveness comes from the spirit and is freely given, whereas pardon can only be given by someone in authority. Like most other things in the Christian life, forgiveness has to be done by faith. The victim of sexual abuse must stand in the assurance and faith of victory.¹⁵

¹¹ See: "A Christian Understanding of Human Sexuality Addendum One: Sexual Brokenness and Gender Issues" by the CEC U.S. Theological Commission, Spring 2021, p.3

¹² Op. cit., Eckhardt, J, p. 46.

¹³ See Ephesians 4:27 and 1 Peter 5:8

¹⁴ Vallenga, Peter, C.A.D.R. Manual, (1994). The author discusses the idea of forgiveness of spousal abuse.

¹⁵ See Luke 10:18-20 and 1 John 4:4

When Jesus went to the cross, he bore our condemnation and purchased our healing. His sacrifice provides for us healing and transformation, experienced through faith. Repentant Christians must learn to forgive others, as Christ has forgiven them. When it comes to sexual mistreatment and damage, forgiveness does not come easily, because mistreatment leaves a deep sense of violation. Yet forgiveness is an essential and powerful principle towards healing.

Forgiveness revolves around the fact that God is willing to forgive. It is not about overlooking someone's sin. Finding a reason to forgive is a helpful first step (I've got a reason, I found a way of forgiving). For victims of sexual abuse, forgiving others requires facing the hurt and harm done, acknowledging it, and then letting go of it, in the same way that God forgives. We forgive because we have been forgiven, and God expects us to forgive because forgiveness allows us to heal. St. Paul admonishes Christians at Ephesus to forgive the sinner.

Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you. Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. Ephesians 4:31–5:2 (NKJV)

For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. Matthew 6:14–15 (NKJV)

Principle 5– Living a Repentant Life and Resolving to Avoid Sexual Sin

Another Principle towards healing from sexual brokenness is to focus on a life of repentance—a change of direction in life. The Greek word for repentance is *metanoia*, the turning of the mind. Repentance is not just “feeling sorry”, it is also changing the way one thinks and acts. It is about changing direction in life and learning how to live in faith, according to the Word of God.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Romans 12:1-2 (NKJV)

John Chrysostom saw an element of transformation in repentance when he said: “Repentance is not what is spoken in words but what is confirmed by deeds, the repentance that obliterates the filth of impiety from the heart...”¹⁶ However, Christians tend to use the word repentance in its more narrow meaning, for decisive moments of realization, conviction of sin, confession, seeking mercy. But we can understand repentance in its wider, more inclusive meaning. Transformation, growth, maturation, and renewal of mind and lifestyle involve a continual process of *metanoia*, an ever-developing wisdom. A person must turn from sinful behavior and turn to the faith, love, and joy that are found in knowing Jesus Christ. Here is what St. Paul told the Colossians.

¹⁶ McKinion, S. A. (Ed.). (2004). *Isaiah 1-39* p.16 Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all. Colossians 3:5–11 (NKJV)

John Calvin put emphasis on the process of transformation: “This restoration does not take place in one moment or one day or one year.... In order that believers may reach this goal, God assigns to them a race of repentance, which they are to run throughout their lives.”¹⁷ As Pope St. John Paul once said, all sinners in need of transformation “must go to Jesus Christ and ask for his mercy.”¹⁸ God’s response is to be “faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”¹⁹

Principle 6- Developing Healthy Attitudes and Relationships by Immersion in the Life of the Church²⁰

Sexually broken people must be taught to take the focus away from their self-will, learning to become part of a Christian Community that is focused on helping others and serving Christ. Intimacy with God can develop through participating in sacramental worship, praise, Bible study, prayer, service, and Christian fellowship. Dr. David Foster says that “they need to spend time alone with the Lord, listening to Him, and receive His health and wholeness.”²¹

Our technological society pulls people away from each other and does not foster deep friendships or promote non-sexual intimacy. Many people in our society suffer from a severe lack of genuine friendship. They may seem to have great numbers of social contacts and acquaintances; they belong to numerous organizations or clubs; they participate in many social engagements and group activities. However, people do not always experience opportunities for constructive intimacy or depth in non-sexual personal relationships. Churches, as Christian communities, must be places where people care for each other deeply and support each other’s gifts and personhood. It is important that our churches foster and model honorable friendships across age, gender, social class, and racial lines. The friendships of the Christian community will also be a source of healing and strength for those who have been broken by sin. The love of Christ at work in the members of his Body should enfold and encourage all sexually broken people who suffer profoundly in their loneliness or confusion.

¹⁷ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), p.339

¹⁸ Percy, A. (2006). *Theology of the Body Made Simple* (p. 86). Boston, MA: Pauline Books & Media.

¹⁹ 1 John 1:8 (ESV)

²⁰This point was discussed in *Sexual Healing Reference Edition*, by Dr. David Kyle Foster (2018), Laurus Books; available through www.MasteringLife.org, pp. 292-302

²¹ Ibid. p. 292

Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. Colossians 3:12–17 (NKJV)

And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. Hebrews 10:24–25 (NKJV)

As members of the Church display love and compassion, people outside the community will begin to understand God’s design and be invited into the delight of obedience. Then, when sexually broken people repent, the Christian community needs to help them with sexual identity problems, forgive their failures, support their personhood, and help them resist the cultural notion that we are not complete without genital fulfillment. Christians should help others to view themselves in relation to God, in whose image they are created, rather than in relation to their sexuality. While the Church should show love and compassion to hurting people and repentant sinners, it cannot condone any sexual sin.

Though they know God’s righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them. Romans 1:32 (ESV)

Principle 7- Inner Healing and the Deliverance

Isaiah said: “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound.”²² Jesus read this in the synagogue in Nazareth and told those present that this had been fulfilled in their hearing.²³ Clearly Jesus wants to heal people inside and out, and this includes the inner healing of the mind and the heart. Through prayer ministry to the sexually broken, God can be asked to heal even the memories from the trauma of sexual abuse.

Inner healing is “the discipline of digging deep, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to discover whatever roots might be springing back to life, and to bring them to effective death on the cross.”²⁴ Inner healing involves allowing the Holy Spirit to speak through the scriptures, through prophetic ministry, and through prayer. It is part of the process of transformation, through which God heals the hurts, guilt, shame, and even the painful memories of broken

²² *English Standard Version Catholic Edition*. (2019). Is 61:1.

²³ Luke 4:18-21

²⁴ Sandford, J., & Sandford, M. (2008). *Deliverance and inner healing*. Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen.

people. Listening to God is one of the most effective tools we have in our “healing kit,” for by it we know how to collaborate with His Spirit. Hearing from God allows people to pass from immaturity to maturity (the walk with Christ in the Spirit), both as persons and as Christians.²⁵

Through prayer ministry and in the light of scripture, and guided by the Holy Spirit, the church can help the sexually broken person to face past hurts, trauma, and painful memories. The focus of this ministry is the exercise of faith in Christ while being clothed in the armor of God.²⁶

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. . . Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (Ephesians 6:10–12, 14–17)

Many sinful practices have to be dismantled one by one on the cross. Demons may be involved, especially where hatred or trauma is present. There are situations and experiences that open the door for the enemy to enter a person’s life. These experiences give demonic spirits a doorway to be there. But Christians have the authority to cast out evil spirits, to be filled with the Holy Spirit, and to shut the door on the enemy for good. In inner healing for sexual brokenness, the Holy Spirit can show what may have opened the door to some of the things being experienced by a sexually broken person.²⁷

Healing ministry involves repentance and renunciation of false gods and idols.²⁸ Both inner transformation and deliverance may be needed as the long process of healing continues. “Wise prayer ministers are amenable to the guidance of the Holy Spirit to know which is appropriate and when.”²⁹

Inner healing is based on the truths of the Incarnation and the crucifixion. According to the letter to the Hebrews a new and living way has been opened through the curtain, that is Christ’s body (Heb. 10:19).³⁰ He who is love, peace, truth, righteousness, and faithfulness gives Himself for us and to us. The person seeking inner healing must release to Christ the hurts, trauma, and painful memories that he might heal them. It is important for the person seeking healing to practice the

²⁵ Payne, L. (1995). *The Broken Image: Restoring Personal Wholeness through Healing Prayer*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker. P. 41

²⁶ Op. cit., Sandford, J., & Sandford, M. chapter 3

²⁷ Op. cit., Eckhardt, J. p. 20.

²⁸ Op. cit., Payne, L., chapter 5

²⁹ Payne, L. (1995). *The Healing Presence: Curing the Soul through Union with Christ*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker. Ch.14, p. 92

³⁰ Ibid., p.93

presence of Jesus Christ daily. This is the identity a person embraces while being healed of sexual brokenness.

Conclusion:

With the Lord's help and support of the Church, sexually broken people can be healed, and transformed. Shame can be replaced by honor, ungodly soul ties can be broken, hurts and memories can be healed, and sinful behavior can be forgiven and avoided, while healthy relationships and attitudes are being embraced. Prayer ministry and spiritual formation can help sexually broken people be transformed by the renewing of their minds in order to bring their bodies and desires into subjection to Christ (Romans 12:2). While this may not be an easy process, the Bible says that "we are more than conquerors through Him who loves us" (Romans 8:37).

RESOURCES FOR THE HEALING OF SEXUAL BROKENNESS

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