

SEXUAL ADDICTIONS



ADDICTIONS FILLING THE GOD-SHAPED HOLE?

One out of every four Presbyterian families struggles with continuing alcohol abuse, reports the Presbyterian Network on Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse (PNAODA). Whereas 33% in the general population indicate that alcohol or drugs has adversely affected their family, the percentage is 39 in the PCUSA. Among students and their spouses surveyed at one of the Presbyterian seminaries in 1995 that figure more than doubled. These statistics are unusual only because PNAODA dared to release them publicly – other denominations might well discover their members and clergy face substance abuse problems in the same, or maybe even higher, numbers.

Unfortunately substance abuse is not the only behavior fueling addictions. Religious families can be troubled by many "process addictions" involving food, gambling, religiosity, inappropriate sex, or spending. Though preachers may rail from the pulpit about these addictions as *moral* decay, those tormented by addictions internally curse themselves. Their recovery might better be encouraged if we understand the root of these addictions.

Empty spaces in our emotional and spiritual experience are where addictions tend to sneak in -- spaces in one's soul gnawed vacant by wounds from the past. As many folks in recovery will tell you, addictions are spiritual yearning gone awry – looking for the right things in the wrong places, seeking something *outside* ourselves to make us feel good *inside*.

Sound, healthy spiritual growth and development satisfies the longings of our souls, confirms the ultimate source of that satisfaction, and incarnates in us an inner strength and grace centered in God. Against such power, the forces toward addiction -- both individual and cultural -- can lose much of their potency. Like the sequence of Holy Week, in recovery

we escape the *delusions of what will save us*
(give up the Palm Sunday fantasy that Jesus will conquer our Romans/demons by external force,
rather than an internal change in ourselves)

by moving through the *liberating escape from bondage*
(celebrated symbolically on Passover or Maundy Thursday),

into the *deep darkness of pain and stark dependence on God*
(for there is nothing else left in the blackness of "Good" Friday),

at last to the *bursting of life* in the Resurrection in Christ.

Kibbie S. Ruth

RECOVERY GROUPS

Congregations are known as safe meeting places for spiritually-based recovery groups like AA and Al-anon, but few churches venture out to host groups working on other addictions like food, material consumption, or gambling. Oakhurst Baptist in Hayward, California, realizes that past victimization and current addictions often are inter-related. Rather than morally judge those who are acting out sexually, Oakhurst courageously offers recovery groups for sex addicts. Incest and other childhood abuse cause profound soul damage. What better place than the church to heal the whole person -- body, mind and spirit?

SEX ADDICTION RESOURCES

International Service Organization of Sex Addicts Anonymous (for referrals)	(800) 477-8191
Codependents of Sex Addicts	(763) 537-6904
Co-dependents of Sex Addicts	www.cosa-recovery.org
National Council on Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity	www.ncsaxc.org
S-Anon (for partners of sex addicts)	www.sanon.org
Sex Addicts Anonymous (SAA)	www.saa-recovery.org
Sex Addicts Anonymous (SAA) _{EX}	www.sexaa.org
Sexaholics Anonymous (SA)	www.sabayarea.org