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CHRISTIAN MARRIED MEN, SEXUAL INTEGRITY, AND  
THE SEA SERVICES

By

CRISTIANO DESOUSA

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE  
FACULTY OF COVENANT THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

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Graduation Date May 15, 2015

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The views expressed in this dissertation are those of the author, and the thoughts and opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the U.S. Government, Department of Defense, Department of the Navy, U.S. Coast Guard, or the Navy Chaplain Corps.

## **Abstract**

The Sea Services offer extraordinary vocational opportunities for Christian married men to earn a living while serving their neighbors, God, and the common good. The pursuit of professional excellence in this military context is rewarding, but not without difficulty. Christian married men in the Sea Services face massive challenges, some of which are related to the type of work they do. These men also face universal challenges like the pursuit of sexual integrity. This pursuit is faced by all men, regardless of their profession, but it is no less important and relevant if one aims to pursue a military career in the long run. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore how Christian married men sustain sexual integrity in the Sea Services.

The study utilized a qualitative design, including semi-structured interviews with eight Christian senior active duty Sea Service leaders serving around the country. Three research questions guided the study: What motivates Christian married men to sustain sexual integrity in the Sea Services? What challenges do Christian married men face in sustaining sexual integrity in the Sea Services? What practices help Christian married men sustain sexual integrity in the Sea Services?

The research revealed five broad categories of issues related to motivations for sexual integrity: Christian faith content, Christian marriage vows, Christian community, Christian character and conscience, and faithfulness to military institutions. Concerning challenges to sexual integrity, the research uncovered six broad categories of issues: unexpected advances of the opposite sex, pornography, peer pressure, loneliness, unfulfilled marital needs, and abuse of media technology. With respect to best practices for sexual integrity, the research exposed four broad categories

of issues: disciplines of grace, Christian community, appropriate use of media technology, and marital life.

The study concluded with takeaways for chaplains, prospective chaplains, and other concerned Christians. Whereas chaplains and prospective chaplains must grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, in knowing their spouses better, and acquire a better understanding of human sexuality, other concerned Christians must also listen attentively to the findings of the research, especially Christian married and single men in the Sea Services. Compassion must be the start for anyone following the recommendations of this research.

*...And these winds blew first one way, then the other, pushing my heart to and fro. Time passed by. I delayed turning to the Lord and postponed from day to day finding life in you. I did not postpone the fact that every day I was dying within myself. I longed for the happy life, but was afraid of the place where it has its seat, and fled from it at the same time as I was seeking for it. I thought I would become very miserable if I were deprived of the embraces of a woman. I did not think the medicine of your mercy could heal that infirmity because I had not tried it. I believed continence to be achieved by personal resources which I was not aware of possessing. I was so stupid as not to know that, as it is written, 'no one can be continent unless you grant it.' You would surely have granted it if my inward groaning had struck your ears and with firm faith I had cast my care on you.*

Saint Augustine,  
Confessions, Book VI



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Scripture taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION.  
Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan.

## **Abbreviations**

CAPT	Captain (0-6)
CDR	Commander (0-5)
CHC	Chaplain Corps
DOD	Department of Defense
DODD	Department of Defense Directive
DODI	Department of Defense Instruction
DON	Department of the Navy
LCDR	Lieutenant Commander (0-4)
OPNAV	Chief of Naval Operations
PNC	Professional Naval Chaplaincy
PRJCCMP	Presbyterian and Reformed Joint Commission on Chaplains and Military Personnel
SECNAV	Secretary of the Navy
SECNAVINST	Secretary of the Navy Instruction
SGT MAJ	Sergeant Major (E-9)
UCMJ	Uniform Code of Military Justice
USCG	United States Coast Guard
USMC	United States Marine Corps
USN	United States Navy

## Chapter One

### Introduction

Working professionals face various kinds of challenges as they pursue fulfilling but demanding careers. Modern-age professionals encounter enormous pressures to succeed in their working lives. Without appropriately preparing for genuine bonding in peer relationships with spouses, friends, and family, this pressure can cause professionals to break down or end their careers in scandal. Cultural analyst and New York Times columnist, David Brooks, makes an insightful statement about a class of high achievers when he writes,

They realize in middle age that their grandeur is not enough and that they are lonely...And so the crisis comes...They seek to heal the hurt. Maybe they frequent prostitutes because transactional relationships are something they understand. But in other cases, they just act like complete idiots...There's no self-control, no dignity. [T]hey are completely unprepared. And in the middle of some perfectly enjoyable dinner party, a woman will suddenly find a tongue in her ear.<sup>1</sup>

This reveals that some married men in places of higher authority have social skills only for hierarchical, professional relationships with bosses and subordinates. In addition, some married men are willing to sacrifice the health and well-being of their marriages on the altar of what Ernest Becker, author and Pulitzer Prize winning anthropologist, calls “apocalyptic romance.”<sup>2</sup> The modern man, lacking a transcendental reference of a divine

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<sup>1</sup> David Brooks, “The Rank-Link Imbalance,” *New York Times*, March 14, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death* (New York: Free Press, 1973), 160.

being, has built an entire life on the search for his one, true soul mate. This search for the perfect soul mate not only has brought bitter disillusionment but also elevated romance and sex to cosmic proportions in the minds of men and women.<sup>3</sup>

Regrettably, powerful married men in the military have also struggled to relate intimately and appropriately within and outside the covenant of marriage while pursuing professional excellence. Examples throughout history include King David's<sup>4</sup> (1000 B.C.) affair with Bathsheba and subsequent cover-up, and more recently, condecorated Army General David Petraeus, who wrote his resignation letter<sup>5</sup> soon after his extramarital affair was brought to light by non-related activities of the Federal Bureau of Investigations.

The Naval Inspector General conducted a Commanding Officer Detach for Cause study in 2010 and found that there is a low commanding officer (CO) detach for cause rate of approximately one percent per year.<sup>6</sup> Thus, during an average year, the Navy fires one CO out of one hundred for various reasons. The study also reveals that there was a preponderance of Navy-wide CO reliefs for personal misconduct. Within this category of personal misconduct, most of the reliefs were for adultery, inappropriate relationships, harassment, or sexual assault. In 2010, the adultery, inappropriate relationship,

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<sup>3</sup> Timothy Keller, *Counterfeit Gods: The Empty Promises of Money, Sex, and Power, and the Only Hope that Matters* (New York: Penguin, 2009), 31.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Sam. 11-12.

<sup>5</sup> David H. Petraeus, "David H. Petraeus Resignation Letter," *nytimes.com*, November 9, 2012, accessed February 26, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/10/us/politics/david-h-petraeus-cia-resignation-letter.html>.

<sup>6</sup> The Office of Inspector General, "DFC 2010 Study," *secnav.navy.mil*, accessed February 26, 2014, <http://www.secnav.navy.mil/ig/FOIA%20Reading%20Room/DFC%202010%20Study.pdf>.

harassment, and sexual assault subcategory accounted for nine of the ten cases.<sup>7</sup>

Additionally, the study gives detailed examples of personal misconduct. It explains,

Many cases involved acceptable behavior with other service members which changed over time into inappropriate behavior. For example, one CO went periodically to the officer's club on-base to build camaraderie with the junior officers and ended up in an adulterous relationship. In another example a CO who talked periodically with one of his crew members about each other's children ended up in an inappropriate relationship with that crew member. In some other cases, COs were knowingly conducting themselves inappropriately; having affairs with other spouses in their neighborhoods, with other officers' wives or with other service members.<sup>8</sup>

Notwithstanding the low commanding officer detach for cause rate in the Navy, the impact of even one incident can negatively affect one's military career, the unit crew morale, marriages, families, and indeed entire neighborhoods. The news media routinely scrutinizes incidents involving personal misconduct and may quickly publicize current cases with their corresponding punishment.<sup>9</sup> Sometimes military branches of service willingly disclose legal action taken in response to sexual misconduct. The punishment in certain cases includes several years of confinement, financial fines, reduction in rank, dishonorable discharge, and a permanent requirement to register as a sexual offender.<sup>10</sup>

The challenge for men seeking sexual integrity while pursuing professional excellence in the military may grow if one considers the upward trend of military marriages in the past decades. A nationwide survey on social demographics trends in the

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Navy Times Staff Report, "Verdicts Released for January 2013 Courts-Martial," navytimes.com, February 26, 2014, accessed February 26, 2014, <http://www.navytimes.com/article/20140226/NEWS06/302260028/Verdicts-released-January-courts-martial..>

<sup>10</sup> DoD Inspector General, "Semiannual Report to the Congress," dodig.mil, October 1, 2012, accessed February 27, 2014, [http://www.dodig.mil/pubs/sar/SAR\\_MAR\\_2013%20Book-06102013-small.pdf..](http://www.dodig.mil/pubs/sar/SAR_MAR_2013%20Book-06102013-small.pdf..)

military conducted in 2011 by the Pew Research Center found that 53.1 percent of enlisted personnel are married today compared to 40.1 percent in 1973. Overall “those in the military are significantly more likely to be married than are civilians of a comparable age.”<sup>11</sup> Therefore, the likelihood of a transition from singleness to married life should compel young men to pursue sexual integrity if they choose to enter military service. The countless examples of sexual misconduct from ancient to modern times by married military men also should raise a flag of caution and humility to the wise and foolish alike,<sup>12</sup> Christian married men included.

Military branches of service do not disclose the religious preferences of those charged or convicted of some type of sexual misconduct. For example, the Marine Corps goes only as far as date, unit, and a brief description of the special or general court martial disposition.<sup>13</sup> However, the description will include rank, name, and the specific convictions. Therefore, Christian or religious demographics are usually anecdotally, not scientifically, obtained. However, this does not make the challenge to sustain sexual integrity among Christian married men less true. Douglas E. Lee, Army retired chaplain and Executive Director for the Presbyterian and Reformed Commission on Chaplains and Military Personnel, explains,

Chaplains can never divulge the private details of their personal interactions, but, they will affirm that sexual issues are a primary concern of their Christian counselees. The temptations of internet porn, sexually-focused entertainment,

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<sup>11</sup> Pew Research Center, “War and Sacrifice in the Post-9/11 Era,” [pewsocialtrends.org](http://pewsocialtrends.org), October 5, 2011, accessed February 27, 2014, <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2011/10/05/war-and-sacrifice-in-the-post-911-era/>.

<sup>12</sup> Jacey Eckhart, “Semper Fi, Honey?” [nytimes.com](http://nytimes.com), November 16, 2011, accessed March 1, 2014, [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/16/opinion/the-petraeus-effect-on-military-marriage.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/16/opinion/the-petraeus-effect-on-military-marriage.html?_r=0).

<sup>13</sup> For an example, see <http://www.hqmc.marines.mil/Portals/61/Docs/Courtsmartial1501-03.pdf> (accessed August 19, 2014).



general confusion about gender roles, and deployment separation, all tax marriage fidelity. Christians experience sexual temptation with no less intensity. However, allegiance to Christ, and taking one's vows before God seriously, go a long way towards marital faithfulness. A famous Christian creedal statement provides perspective to live by: "The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever." If one lives to glorify God, succumbing to temptation becomes harder to do!<sup>14</sup>

In addition, a random sampling of Christians surveyed on an internet site indicated that fifty percent of Christian men are addicted to pornography.<sup>15</sup> This statistic may well be a starting point for reflection on the challenge to sustain sexual integrity for Christian men within the military.

### **Problem and Purpose Statements**

If these studies, surveys, and testimonies paint even a faintly accurate picture of the growing challenge to sustain sexual integrity in the military in the twenty-first century, the church has an important mandate – to thoughtfully prepare Christians to sustain sexual integrity while serving in the military. One of the ways the church can make headway is by starting with the military chaplains that it sends as religious leaders into the military. Navy Chaplain Brian Haley's study substantiates this necessity, with forty percent of military chaplains showing strong signs of sexually addictive behavior in a random sampling. His call for awareness of and healing in the lives of Christian military chaplains may be a good indicator of where the church should aim its strengthening work.<sup>16</sup> However, the church should not end there. It needs not only a

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<sup>14</sup> Lee, Douglas E., Retired Brigadier General. Interviewed by Cristiano DeSousa, personal interview on Skype. Washington, D.C., August 20, 2014.

<sup>15</sup> Pure Life Ministries, "Pornography and Sexual Sin," [purelifeministries.org](http://www.purelifeministries.org), accessed August 20, 2014, <http://www.purelifeministries.org/filerequest/2150>.

<sup>16</sup> Brian Haley, "Sexual Addiction, Military Chaplains, and the Church" (D. Min. diss., Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 2007), Abstract.

greater engagement with military chaplains, but also with Christian married men in the military.

In fact the available research provides little guidance on how Christian married men work to sustain sexual integrity in the military, specifically in the Sea Services. The majority of available literature focuses on how military couples or spouses can enrich their own marriages while in the Sea Services, with sexuality being hardly explored.<sup>17</sup> This is insufficient. Christians could gain much by intentionally listening to one another in this area. Sometimes listening can be of greater service than speaking.<sup>18</sup>

In addition, the benefits of exploring how to sustain sexual integrity in the Sea Services would be incredibly significant to Christian married men. Such men usually have careers that do not fit the traditional “forty hours a week with weekends off” pattern. They are required to deploy overseas several times and often have changes of residence. Consequently, Christian married men in the Sea Services are confronted with ongoing discouragement, temptation, and ethical conundrums in their professions. Sexual integrity does not come easily or naturally, and some of them may doubt their callings if they fail to receive specific encouragement and support in this area.<sup>19</sup> The church could see great benefits in helping Christian married men sustain sexual integrity in the Sea Services, such that it could devise creative ways to provide critical shepherding and discipleship in this area.

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<sup>17</sup> Lewis Dolan, “Enriching Marriages of Sea Service Couples through Communication Enhancement” (D.Min. diss., Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, 1998) and Edward Tanner, “A Strategy for Increasing Marital Health among the Sailors and Spouses of United States Navy Region Southeast” (D.Min. diss., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 2008).

<sup>18</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (New York: Harper, 1954), 97-98.

<sup>19</sup> Lee, Douglas E., Retired Brigadier General. Interviewed by Cristiano DeSousa, personal interview, Greenville, SC, June 17, 2013.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore how Christian married men sustain sexual integrity in the Sea Services. To that end, the following research questions guided this qualitative research.

### **Research Questions**

1. What motivates Christian married men to sustain sexual integrity in the Sea Services?
2. What challenges do Christian married men face in sustaining sexual integrity in the Sea Services?
3. What practices help Christian married men sustain sexual integrity in the Sea Services?

### **Significance of the Study**

This study has significance for many who desire to pursue sexual integrity within a military environment and those affected by the outcome of such a worthy pursuit. This study is significant for Christian married men, single servicemen, military spouses, military families, church leaders, and church members at large.

First, there is significance for Christian married men. The conclusions of the qualitative research identify the challenges, motivations, and practices involved in sustaining sexual integrity in the Sea Services. The researcher desires that this conclusion will renew Christian married men's hope and give them practical guidance to live deeper and more coherent lives of devotion to Christ in this volatile area. Hopefully, they would learn from the lives and examples of fellow experienced Christians who faced similar challenges in the past and sustained sexual integrity amidst the constant change and fast pace of military life. Sexual integrity can strengthen vocational faithfulness and

stewardship. Sexual integrity is critical for Christians to solidify credibility for their faith in the workplace. If Christians lack sexual integrity in the workplace, their verbal witness tends to increase indifference or hostility towards their beliefs. The gospel informs the integration of faith and work as it informs the integration of faith and sex.

Second, there is significance for single Christian service men and women.

Although the research questions will gather answers from Christian married men, such questions may reveal areas of interest for both single men and women. Single men and women may be better prepared to evaluate potential marriage partners, looking beyond physical appearance and first-time impressions. Single men and women will find no better allies in the pursuit of sexual integrity than future spouses.

Third, there is significance for the spouses and family members of Christian married men. Spouses and children are the primary recipients of either glory or shame in the pursuit of (or neglect of) sexual integrity in the military. Their lives are forever affected if Christian married men fall into sexual disgrace or fail to invest intentionally and emotionally in this area. Divorce is clearly one of the worst scenarios, benefitting nobody. Fifty percent of marriages end in divorce, and the rate of divorces only tends to increase into the second and third marriages.<sup>20</sup>

Fourth, there is significance for church leadership. Christian married men in the military often find it difficult to access the normal venues for spiritual nurture, such as worship services, weeknight community groups, and Sunday school. Some are so spiritually weakened by past failures or present work preoccupations that they may prefer

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<sup>20</sup> Mark Banschick, "The High Failure Rate of Second and Third Marriages," *Psychology Today Blog*, entry posted February 16, 2012, accessed March 1, 2014, <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-intelligent-divorce/201202/the-high-failure-rate-second-and-third-marriages>.

to hide the pain and live secret lives with no Christian accountability and fellowship. These people are hard to reach because of constant moves of residence (and churches) every two to three years. They may also demonstrate a pattern of overwork that helps them avoid life at home with their family, blocking diagnosis of their heart's condition and emotional stability. It is the hope of the researcher that church leaders would greatly enhance their readiness to welcome and embrace these men with the love of Christ and with much-needed intentional community. Church leaders can learn about these men and practice creative ways to assist them in sustaining sexual integrity at every point of their military careers.

Fifth, there is significance for church members at large. Church leaders can only do so much. True Christian community goes beyond its leaders. Awareness of the challenges, motivations, and practices involved in sustaining sexual integrity in the military should be a resource shared with the whole church. Doing so will better equip the church to grow in the knowledge of the Lord and in the service of all the saints, namely Christian married men.

### **Definition of Terms**

In the context of this study, terms are defined as follows:

Church – Unless noted otherwise, a local assembly of Christians overseen by affirmed or ordained leadership (e.g., pastors, elders) that observes as a congregation the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Commanding Officer – The senior officer in charge of a military unit and absolutely responsible for all personnel, equipment, facilities, and activity within that command.

Community – The mental and spiritual condition of knowing that the place is shared and that the people who share the place define and limit the possibilities of each other's lives; combined memberships.<sup>21</sup>

Denominations – Distinct religious bodies that fall under the same broad religion. These bodies are separated by doctrine and religious authority. Examples of Christian denominations would be Roman Catholic, Southern Baptist, and the Presbyterian Church in America. Similar divisions are found in Islamic, Jewish, Buddhist, and other faiths.

Department of the Navy – Armed services division that includes the Navy and the Marine Corps. Navy chaplains serve both branches of the Department of the Navy as well as the Coast Guard.

Deployment – The temporary transfer of a military unit with support infrastructure from its home base of operations to anywhere in the world to fulfill mission tasking.

Intimacy (as in the psychology literature, used interchangeably with emotional intimacy) – A bond of emotional closeness, constituted by unity, sharing, trust, dependence, feeling supported, companionship, and identity formation.

Marriage – Marriage is the voluntary sexual and public social union of one man and one woman from different families. This union is patterned upon the union of God with his people: the Christ with his bride, the church. Intrinsic to this union is God's calling to lifelong exclusive sexual faithfulness.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Wendell Berry, *The Long-Legged House* (New York: Harcourt, 1969), 61.

<sup>22</sup> Christopher Ash, *Marriage: Sex in the Service of God* (Leicester: IVP, 2003), 73.

Military Environment – A general description of any setting under the jurisdiction of the Uniform Code of Military Justice. This includes military installations, combat zones, other deployment areas, and ships at sea.

Navy Chaplain Corps – Ordained clergy serving as commissioned officers in the United States Navy. Chaplains represent a wide range of religious organizations and provide religious ministry and pastoral care to Department of the Navy and Coast Guard personnel as well as their families.

Sea Services – An all-encompassing term to include the Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and merchant marine communities.

Sexual Integrity – A process by which Christians consistently seek to live out their sexuality as an expression of covenantal fidelity to the triune God of the Christian holy scriptures.<sup>23</sup>

Spiritual Formation – The process of spiritual growth in the individual Christian whereby a “progressive patterning of a person’s inner and outer life” increases according to the image of Christ through intentional means of spiritual growth.<sup>24</sup>

Work – Everything that brings people into relation with other people; “vocation” contains people’s actions that become events in other people’s lives;<sup>25</sup> the function of completing a process or carrying out a task; labor.

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<sup>23</sup>Ex. 20:14; Prov. 5-7; Song; Mal.2:14-15; Rom. 1; 1 Cor. 5-7; 1 Thes.4:1-8; Heb. 13:4.

<sup>24</sup>Mel Lawrenz, *The Dynamics of Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 15.

<sup>25</sup>Lee Hardy, *The Fabric of this World* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 112.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Literature Review**

The purpose of this study was to explore how Christian married men can sustain sexual integrity in the Sea Services. Even though much has been written on sexual integrity, the military, and Christian marriage as separate topics, very little literature explicitly connects them. Even less, if any, addresses these topics within the particular context of Sea Services, United States Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard. In order to understand the degrees, implications, and interplay of the study's purposes, three prominent theme areas of literature were considered: biblical view of sex, sexual addiction and recovery, and Calvin's view of God the Son's role in sanctification. The literature review begins with a focused study on the biblical view of sex. Then, the other relevant literature was reviewed to provide a foundation for the qualitative research.

### **Biblical View of Sex**

The quest to understand what the Bible says about sex is a noble and necessary one for Christians and anyone with ears to hear. However, how do Christians use the scripture to light their way when attempting to understand any topic, much less one so important, controversial, volatile, and practical as human sexuality? The main biblical themes of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration inform the Bible's teaching on sexuality.<sup>26</sup> This biblical framework, with its corresponding themes, guides Christians in rightly understanding the word of God. In other words, as D.A. Carson writes in his book

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<sup>26</sup> R. Michael Allen, *Reformed Theology*, Doing Theology (London: T & T Clark, 2010), 157-169.



*Christ and Culture Revisited*, the fullness of the biblical story line through the broader realities of biblical theology serves to “control our thinking simultaneously and all the time.”<sup>27</sup> This framework provides Christians with theological balance, sharpened clarity, and critical skills to understand what the Bible says on different topics, including sexuality. The following will briefly examine each main biblical theme along with their respective implications for human sexuality. It is important to note that the term “fall” and “rebellion” will be used interchangeably as the discussion continues.

### *Creation’s Implications*

The biblical theme of creation teaches that God created the material world out of nothing, formed man in his own image, and brought forth the necessary conditions for human flourishing through the cultural mandate. The Bible opens with the words, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”<sup>28</sup> God is the creator of the matter in its various forms and shapes. The Psalms echo this theme in this way, “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.”<sup>29</sup> The New Testament continues to proclaim this theme as it shows that God has made his role as the creator plain to mankind through “the things that have been made.”<sup>30</sup> God is not just the creator. He is the sustainer of all things; he sustains and cultivates his creation, as the Psalms<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>D. A. Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, paperback ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 59.

<sup>28</sup>Gen. 1:1.

<sup>29</sup>Ps. 19:1.

<sup>30</sup>Rom. 1:20.

<sup>31</sup>Ps. 65:9-13; 145:21; 147:15-20; Heb. 1:3. The prophets also witness to it. One can see Isa. 40:28.

and the book of Hebrews testify. The sixteenth-century theologian John Calvin sums up the doctrine of creation:

[God] daily discloses himself in the whole workmanship of the universe. As a consequence, men cannot open their eyes without being compelled to see him... There are innumerable evidences both in heaven and on earth that declare his wonderful wisdom; not only those more recondite matters for the closer examination of which astronomy, medicine, and all natural science are intended, but also those which thrust themselves upon the sight of even the most untutored and ignorant persons, so that they cannot open their eyes without being compelled to witness them.<sup>32</sup>

Calvin maintains that the creation speaks volumes about who God is as the creator and sustainer of all things. Therefore, the Bible witnesses that God is eternal, but matter is created. The distinction between creator and creation is established. Only God is eternal: the source of all things. Christian theologian Donald Bloesch explains,

The biblical view of creation stands in marked contrast to the ancient view prevalent in the Middle East and in Platonism that God formed the world out of a preexistent chaos or matter. God in this sense is a demiurge who fashions the world out of existing materials rather than the One who calls the world into being by his creative word.<sup>33</sup>

Moreover, God, the creator and sustainer of all things, stamps his work of art several times with the seal, “and it was good.”<sup>34</sup> God created the world “good.” Thus, the goodness of creation is settled from the beginning of the biblical corpus.<sup>35</sup> This means

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<sup>32</sup>John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, The Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 52-53.

<sup>33</sup>Donald G. Bloesch, *God, the Almighty: Power, Wisdom, Holiness, Love* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 109.

<sup>34</sup>Gen. 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25.

<sup>35</sup>Other Old Testament and New Testament Scriptures attest to this such as Ecclesiastes 7:29 and 1Timothy 4:4.

that the material world was created good.<sup>36</sup> God's intentions for the cosmos are also good. Therefore, the world does not come from the power struggle between forces of good and evil or between deities. Instead, the world is a work of art and love by one creator.<sup>37</sup>

The goodness of creation points ultimately to God's goodness. It also points to God's purposes. God is intentional about his creation; his good intentions lead him to create for a good purpose. God's shaping intent and activities in his creation are not arbitrary. His word of seal, "it was good," points back to his purposeful creativity and forward as promised quality assurance. His divine imprint is his seal of guarantee.

The story of creation continues. God creates human beings with bearing-image qualities.<sup>38</sup> At creation's climax, and only here, God confers with himself before bringing human beings into existence by saying, "Let us" and "in our image." Much has been said<sup>39</sup> about what it means to be created into the image of God.<sup>40</sup> However, one must not forget two important parts of this biblical teaching: God created mankind out of the dust<sup>41</sup> and with sexual differences, male and female.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>Dutch theologian Herman Bavinck put it this way, "Creation is neither to be deified nor despoiled but as the 'theater of God's glory' to be delighted in and used in a stewardly manner. It is God's good creation." Herman Bavinck, *In the Beginning: Foundations of Creation Theology*, ed. John Bolt (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 1.

<sup>37</sup>Timothy J. Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 226.

<sup>38</sup>Gen. 1:26-27.

<sup>39</sup>Jack Collins, *Science & Faith: Friends or Foes?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), 111-134.

<sup>40</sup>Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, paperback ed. (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 1994), 11-32.

<sup>41</sup>Gen. 2:7; 3:19; Ps. 103:14; Ecc. 3:20.

<sup>42</sup>Gen. 1:27; 5:2.

Genesis 2:7 shows that God's creative intention for human beings was a physical existence. God makes man out of the dust of the earth and then gives to him the breath of life. Man and woman, thus, shared—with the rest of the material world—a God-given physical existence. They also shared—with God—a God-given unique life and holy character.<sup>43</sup> The material world and the human body are not incidental to personhood. Because of the God-given cultural mandate,<sup>44</sup> the commission to multiply, and the command to subdue the material world, God also gave physical bodies to Adam and Eve, allowing them to fulfill these purposes.<sup>45</sup>

Genesis 1:27 presents human sexuality<sup>46</sup> as a basic fact of creation. Readers discover that sexual differentiation is presented as God's creation, separate from the divine essence itself. The original hearers, the Israelites led by Moses, would easily perceive the subtle polemics against the gods of the surrounding nations since these gods had assumed mythical, sexual, male, and female identities.<sup>47</sup> This sexual, structural differentiation does not generate an ontological superiority or inferiority between male and female. Both sexes are endowed with the "image of God." In other words, sexual differentiation does not mean sexual subordination or inequality.

Furthermore, there is purpose for the distinction of sexes. Adam's needs were not merely for food and water but for companionship. God fulfilled this particular need as he

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<sup>43</sup>Lev. and 1 Pet. 1:15.

<sup>44</sup>Gen.1:28-31.

<sup>45</sup>Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, paperback ed. (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 1994), 14.

<sup>46</sup>Mark Laaser, *Healing the Wounds of Sexual Addiction* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 27.

<sup>47</sup>Victor P. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1982), 35-42.

gave Adam a wife, Eve. Together, through the covenant of marriage,<sup>48</sup> both Adam and Eve were called to represent God in the totality of his image and fulfill the cultural mandate. Adam and Eve were to multiply and fill the earth with God's image-bearers by using their bodies' reproductive functions. This does not mean that human sexuality is totally subordinated to the need of child bearing. There is pleasure of sight and intercourse.<sup>49</sup> Both male and female, through the covenant of marriage,<sup>50</sup> have access to this bodily, erotic pleasure as the two became one flesh and one body. Old Testament scholar Tremper Longman explains,

The role of the woman throughout the Song of Solomon is truly astounding, especially in light of its ancient origins. It is the woman, not the man, who is the dominant voice throughout the poems that make up the Song. She is the one who seeks, pursues, initiates. In Song 5:10-16 she boldly exclaims her physical attraction...The Hebrew is quite erotic, and most translators cannot bring themselves to bring out the obvious meaning...This is prelude to their love-making. There is no shy, shamed, mechanical movement under the sheets. Rather, the two stand before each other, aroused, feeling no shame, but only joy in each other's sexuality.<sup>51</sup>

Other scriptures also elaborate about sexual pleasure.<sup>52</sup>

Finally, God's plan in creation takes shape as he commands his image-bearers to multiply and harvest Eden's potential. The cultural mandate is set into motion. There is work to be done, in and out of Eden. Both Adam and Eve have a responsibility to

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<sup>48</sup>Gen. 2:24.

<sup>49</sup>Song

<sup>50</sup>John Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 102.

<sup>51</sup>Dan B. Allender and Tremper Longman, III, *Intimate Allies: Rediscovering God's Design for Marriage and Becoming Soul Mates for Life* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1999), 254.

<sup>52</sup>Prov. 5:15-20. "...Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth. As a loving hind and a graceful doe, let her breasts satisfy you at all times; be exhilarated always with her love..."

cultivate and sustain the earth.<sup>53</sup> There is a command, and thus a duty to God, to one another, and to the rest of creation. The necessary ingredients for human flourishing are present.

The doctrine of creation has many implications for sex. The biblical narrative includes sex and gender within the goodness<sup>54</sup> of God's creation. Sex and gender are not just a sociological phenomena imposed upon human beings, and people are not free to design sex and gender as they see fit. Genesis teaches that God created sex and gender for human beings' good and for his own glory. The purpose of sex and gender is for human flourishing in its many aspects—such as procreation and pleasure, and the creator's determination and infinite goodness assigned their purpose. Christian scholar Oliver O'Donovan explains,

[I]n the ordinance of marriage there was given an end for human relationships, a teleological structure which was a fact of creation and therefore not negotiable. The dimorphic organization of human sexuality, the particular attraction of two adults of the opposite sex and of different parents, the setting up of a home distinct from the parental home and the uniting of their lives in a shared life . . . these form a pattern of human fulfillment which serves the wider end of enabling procreation to occur in a context of affection and loyalty. Whatever happens in history, Christians have wished to say, this is what marriage really is. Particular cultures may have distorted it; individuals may fall short of it. It is to their cost in either case; for it reasserts itself as God's creative intention for human relationships on earth; and it will be with us, in one form or another, as our natural good until (but not after) the kingdom of God shall appear.<sup>55</sup>

God's purpose for sex has many applications. First, sex is not dirty in itself. Sex is wholesome, beautiful, and good. God intends spouses to experience sex without fear,

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<sup>53</sup>Gerard van Groningen, *From Creation to Consummation* (Sioux Center, IA: Dordt College Press, 1996), 67, 119, 265-66, 338-39, 440-41.

<sup>54</sup>R C. Sproul, *The Intimate Marriage*, Living Books ed. (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1986), 90.

<sup>55</sup> Oliver O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order* (Leicester: IVP, 1994), 69.

without inhibitions, without shame,<sup>56</sup> and without embarrassment. Second, sex has boundaries. The marriage covenant between a man and a woman is the proper context for sex. According to the divine design, marriage between husband and wife is inextricably bound up with the spiritual unity of both man and woman with their creator. Sex affects more than just people's bodies. Therefore, sex does not merely point to physical union but to a spiritual one—with one another and with God. This covenantal perspective does not call forth a mere propagation of the race on demand, but of divine image bearers resembling their ultimate father and Lord and resembling his covenant-making holy nature.

Third, sex serves as an external sign of a permanent<sup>57</sup> and holy union (marriage) in all other dimensions of life. Thus, sex is not the end but a means.<sup>58</sup> It is a renewal ceremony for the marriage covenant. Sex unequivocally means, "I am yours, you are mine, and we are God's completely and forever." Thus, it goes beyond mere biological appetite.<sup>59</sup> The legal union allows for and produces deep intimacy<sup>60</sup> and emotion.

Fourth, sex and marriage are important in God's economy, but they are not ultimate.<sup>61</sup> Sex, as a part of creation, finds its rightful place only within God's creational

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<sup>56</sup>Clifford Penner and Joyce Penner, *The Gift of Sex: A Guide to Sexual Fulfillment* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 20.

<sup>57</sup>R. Laird Harris, Gleason Archer, and Bruce Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 39.

<sup>58</sup>David Jones, *Biblical Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1994), 158,161-63,180.

<sup>59</sup>Timothy Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage: Facing the Complexities of Commitment with the Wisdom of God* (New York: Dutton, 2011), 220.

<sup>60</sup>C J. Mahaney and Carolyn Mahaney, *Sex, Romance, and the Glory of God: What Every Christian Husband Needs to Know* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004),107.

<sup>61</sup>Timothy J. Keller, *Counterfeit Gods: The Empty Promises of Money, Sex, and Power, and the Only Hope that Matters* (New York: Dutton, 2009), 22-47.

good order. All creation must serve God. The harmony and balance of God's creation is a product of God's holy creativity; human sexuality reflects that when it stands within God's creational structures and reflects his holiness. Therefore, sexual acts have intrinsic meaning and purpose. Sex relates to a deeper natural order, which people must honor and not violate. The meaning of sex is God-given<sup>62</sup> and not merely constructed by society and the persons engaging in sex. Sexual relations between a man and a woman need to involve the natural significance of making them "one flesh," with all that entails. "Meaningless" sex is alienation from God and from the world as it was meant to be.

### *The Fall's Implications*

The doctrine of creation tells that God created all things good. However, Adam and Eve succumbed to the serpent's temptation and ate fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.<sup>63</sup> Thus, sin entered the world and affected everything, compromising God's creational order.<sup>64</sup> Evil is a deviation from the way God wants his world to be.<sup>65</sup> Genesis 3:17-19 recounts God's curse, following Adam's sinful revolt. The curse permeates the entirety of human life, from individual hearts to entire cultures. Christian philosopher Cornelius Plantinga explains, "Sin kills—by the kind of perverting, polluting, and dividing that breaks down persons and their vital relationships. Beyond this, sin breaks down great institutions and whole societies...like virtue, sin is a dynamic

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<sup>62</sup>Ibid., 110-111.

<sup>63</sup>Gen. 3.

<sup>64</sup>R Michael Allen, *Reformed Theology*, Doing Theology (London: T & T Clark, 2010), 160.

<sup>65</sup>Cornelius Plantinga, *Engaging God's World: A Christian Vision of Faith, Learning, and Living* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 51.



and progressive phenomenon...It's a polluted river that keeps branching and rebranching into tributaries."<sup>66</sup>

The fall corrupts God's good gifts, including the human body. Sin subverts God's good plans for human sexuality. The entrance of sin brings mortality to the body. The Bible reveals the development of deviant sexual practices, from polygamy to rape. These biblical accounts<sup>67</sup> also show the establishment of laws that are intended to reveal and restrain sinful sexual behavior. They regulate sexuality and expressions of gender, offering judgments on sexual morals, cross-dressing, marriage, divorce, and a host of other sexual matters.

The fall does not erase the image of God<sup>68</sup> or the goodness<sup>69</sup> of creation though. God continues to bless and sustain his creation,<sup>70</sup> despite the pervasive presence and ever growing power of sin.<sup>71</sup> Theologians call this common grace, that is, "every favour of whatever kind or degree, falling short of salvation, which this undeserving and sin-cursed

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<sup>66</sup>Cornelius Plantinga, *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 53.

<sup>67</sup>Gen. 4:23, 19:4-7, 39:9; Exod. 20:14, 22:19; Lev. 18:6-18, 20:10-21; Deut. 5:18, 21, 22:25, 27:21-23; Judg. 19:22-23; Prov. 5:18-19, 6:32; Mal. 2:14-15; Matt. 5:32, 15:19, 19:9; Mark 7:21, 10:11; Acts 15:20, 21:25; Rom. 1:24-27; 1 Cor. 3:16-17, 5:9-11, 6:9, 18-20, 7:27-40; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:1-5; Col. 3:5-6; 1 Thess. 4:3-7; Heb. 13:4; Jude 1:7; Rev. 21:7-8, 22:14-16.

<sup>68</sup>Jas. 1:17, 3:9.

<sup>69</sup>1 Tim. 4:4.

<sup>70</sup>Matt. 5:45.

<sup>71</sup>Gen. 8-9.

world enjoys at the hand of God.”<sup>72</sup> Both Christians and non-Christians have received good gifts despite the presence of sin in the world.<sup>73</sup>

Understanding the biblical account of mankind’s fall helps people understand human sexuality. Sex is good but cursed. Therefore, human sexuality will have both sinful and holy tendencies in it. Non-Christians are not redeemed and saved; yet, they still have some sense of God’s design for sex. For example, eighteenth century German philosopher Immanuel Kant in “Duties Toward the Body in Respect of Sexual Impulse” argued that sex outside of marriage dishonors human dignity.<sup>74</sup> Kant deduced that when people have sex without giving themselves wholly to their partner in marriage, they make their partner into an object, merely a means to a selfish end. Kant’s “categorical imperative” was that human beings should always be treated as ends rather than means.

In addition, God accepts Christians on the merit of Jesus’ perfect death and obedience; yet, they are still filled with remaining sinful sexual desires working themselves out through thoughts and actions.<sup>75</sup> Sexual temptation is an ever-present reality for Christians in all generations.<sup>76</sup> Essentially, sexual sin involves loving sex above God<sup>77</sup> and may demonstrate addictive<sup>78</sup> tendencies. In fact, sexual addiction has

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<sup>72</sup>John Murray, *Collected Writings of John Murray* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1977), 2:96.

<sup>73</sup>Abraham Kuyper, *Christianity as a Life-System: The Witness of a World-View* (Lexington, KY: Christian Studies Center, 1980), 41-42.

<sup>74</sup>Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*, eds. Peter Heath and J B. Schneewind, trans. Peter Heath, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

<sup>75</sup>1 Cor.5:1-2.

<sup>76</sup>Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>77</sup>Timothy J. Keller, *Counterfeit Gods: The Empty Promises of Money, Sex, and Power, and the Only Hope that Matters* (New York: Dutton, 2009), 22-47.

become an area of concern and study for both Christian and non-Christian health professionals.<sup>79</sup>

Christian philosopher Cornelius Plantinga urges caution when attempting to understand the relationship between sin and addiction,

Addicts are sinners like everybody else, but they are also tragic figures whose fall is often owed to a combination of factors so numerous, complex, and elusive...In any case, we must reject both the typically judgmental and typically permissive accounts of the relation between sin and addiction...we must say neither that all addiction is simple sin nor that it is inculpable disease.<sup>80</sup>

Moreover, human sexuality is not merely a physical act, but one that engages the mind.<sup>81</sup>

Therefore, sexual lust, as it is propelled by pornography,<sup>82</sup> distorts God-given sexual thoughts and desires, enslaves the mind through an idolatrous<sup>83</sup> and compulsive cycle of self-deception, and results in pain, shame, and despair. In fact, the life of the mind must be addressed if one pursues sexual integrity in the world.<sup>84</sup>

### *Redemption's Implications*

Sin has stained the world and alienated mankind from God, neighbors, and the rest of creation. However, alienation is not the end of the story. The Bible points to the

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<sup>78</sup>Edward T. Welch, *Addictions: A Banquet in the Grave*, Resources for Changing Lives (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Pub., 2001), 52-60.

<sup>79</sup>One can look for the writings of Dr. Patrick Carnes and Mark Laaser for example. This area will be explored next.

<sup>80</sup>Cornelius Plantinga, *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 140.

<sup>81</sup>Matt. 5:27-30.

<sup>82</sup>Mark Laaser, *Healing the Wounds of Sexual Addiction* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 28-35.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., 157.

<sup>84</sup>Mark R. Laaser, *Taking Every Thought Captive*, Men of Valor Series (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2011), 67-106.

promise of the seed:<sup>85</sup> a messiah who would come to redeem all things through his incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension.<sup>86</sup> The work of salvation is not just about forgiveness of sins but about substantially<sup>87</sup> restoring and remaking what sin has defaced. Sinners find this restored relationship and world by faith alone in Jesus Christ.<sup>88</sup> His saving work is already reconciling and restoring all things unto the triune God and the original purposes of creation.<sup>89</sup>

One of the most important truths of redemption is that it came by way of a savior with a body. Salvation involved incarnation of the Son,<sup>90</sup> who will be incarnate forever. Therefore, the Apostle Paul indicates that this salvation includes not merely people's souls but also their bodies. Sanctification now means Christians present their bodies as living sacrifices to God in worship.<sup>91</sup> Sanctification is the work of God's grace in us that allows us to receive the benefits and power of Jesus, which in turn enable us to overcome the evil that can so burden our hearts.<sup>92</sup> Further, Paul describes the redeemed body as a

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<sup>85</sup>Gen. 3:15.

<sup>86</sup>Col. 1; Heb. 1.

<sup>87</sup>Francis A. Schaeffer, *True Spirituality* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1971), 133-134.

<sup>88</sup>Rom. 3-4.

<sup>89</sup>Colin E. Gunton, *Christ and Creation*, The Didsbury Lectures (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1992), 94.

<sup>90</sup>John 1:14; Phil. 2:5-11.

<sup>91</sup>Rom. 12:2.

<sup>92</sup>Bryan Chapell, *Holiness by Grace* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway), 41, Kindle.

temple of the Holy Spirit,<sup>93</sup> and he and the Apostle John affirm that genuine change is possible.<sup>94</sup>

Redemption has several implications for human sexuality. First, it affirms that the free grace of God in Jesus Christ has the power to legally justify<sup>95</sup> and existentially change<sup>96</sup> the sexually broken. Justification points to Christ's sacrifice applied to us by faith. Because we had faith that Christ paid the penalty for our sin by his death on the cross, we received the benefit of his righteous fulfillment of the Law applied to us. God accounted us as just and righteous in his sight through Christ's work and not our own.<sup>97</sup> In addition, existentially change means that God makes us more and more like Jesus in experience. Redemption does not promise a magic bullet<sup>98</sup> to change people's desires in a moment. Redemption instead promises a faithful God whose grace is sufficient to carry his people through all the moral disorder of a broken world until Jesus returns.

Second, this reconstructive work of grace uses means.<sup>99</sup> Means are bridges through which God empowers his people to live holy lives. God calls his people, who are redeemed but sexually broken, to live the Christian life in community.<sup>100</sup> God also calls

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<sup>93</sup>1 Cor. 6:19-20.

<sup>94</sup>1 Cor.6:9-11, 1 John 5:18.

<sup>95</sup>Rom. 4:5; Eph. 2:1-10.

<sup>96</sup>Titus 2:12-14.

<sup>97</sup>Bryan Chapell, *Holiness by Grace* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway), 51, Kindle.

<sup>98</sup>Mark R. Laaser, *Taking Every Thought Captive*, Men of Valor Series (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2011), 222-224.

<sup>99</sup>James 5:16.

<sup>100</sup>Edward T. Welch, *Addictions: A Banquet in the Grave*, Resources for Changing Lives (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Pub., 2001), 247-268.

his people to utilize the means of grace: the word, sacraments, and prayer. These means of grace are powerful agents of change, enabling mind and body to feed by faith on Jesus Christ, thus, accessing the explosive power of a new affection.<sup>101</sup> For example, the love for Jesus becomes the motivation and power for genuine transformation. The main message of redemption is that what is broken can be substantially restored.

Third, true spirituality and human sexuality are closely connected. For example, the Apostle Paul encourages Christian married couples to fill the sexual void with prayer.<sup>102</sup> This entails communication through mutual agreement and commitment to the regularity of sex as a way to resist sexual temptation and maintain self-control.<sup>103</sup> John Gottman and William Doherty reflect Paul's concern in this matter. Marriage and family therapist William Doherty cautions that life responsibilities and aging may play a part in diminishing the sex life of some couples. He explains,

What do I mean by the marriage needing sex? For sex to be the love bond it can be in marriage, we have to make it a regular ritual in our relationship. Like all rituals, we hope and expect it to give us joy....It's easy for most couples to have regular sexual relations when they are young and energetic. It's harder when energies sag and life responsibilities mount. That's when it takes commitment to the relationship to keep sex a regular ritual. In consumer marriage, all it takes is for one spouse to not "feel like it" very often for the couple's sexual life to go on the shelf.<sup>104</sup>

John Gottman, a secular psychologist, on the other hand, emphasizes communication. He says,

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<sup>101</sup>Thomas Chalmers, *The Expulsive Power of a New Affection* (Minneapolis: Curiosmith, 2012), Amazon Digital Services, Inc.

<sup>102</sup>1 Cor.7:5.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid.

<sup>104</sup>William J. Doherty, *Take Back Your Marriage: Sticking Together in a World That Pulls Us Apart* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2001), 141.

No other area of a couple's life offers more potential for embarrassment, hurt, and rejection than sex. No wonder couples find it such a challenge to communicate about the topic clearly....Learn to talk to each other about sex in a way that lets you both feel safe. That means learning the right way to ask for what you want, and the appropriate way to react to your spouse's requests.<sup>105</sup>

In fact, redeemed sex, properly understood from the Christian scriptures, reflects one's redeemed relationship with God. Christian author Gary Thomas points to sex in marriage as a reflection of the believer's relationship with God. He writes,

If sex is going to turn us toward God and each other, it is vital that we examine it with Christian understanding. Christian spirituality serves us in at least three ways here: It teaches us the goodness of sex while reminding us that there are things that are more important than sex. It allows us to experience pleasure without making pleasure the idol of our existence. It teaches us that sex can certainly season our lives but also reminds us that sex will never fully nourish our souls. To begin to view sex in this positive sense, as a mirror of our desire and passion for God, the institution of marriage becomes all-important.<sup>106</sup>

### *Restoration's Implications*

The biblical theme of restoration is the final stage. It reveals the saving and ruling power of Jesus Christ brought to full completion. There is substantial healing now, but full healing and the removal of all psychological, social, cultural, and physical effects of sin await the last day. The kingdom of God is truly here now and fully manifested at the consummation of the ages.<sup>107</sup> Theologians<sup>108</sup> name this the "already" and "not yet" of God's kingdom.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>105</sup>John M. Gottman and Nan Silver, *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work: A Practical Guide from the Country's Foremost Relationship Expert* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1999), 200-201.

<sup>106</sup>Gary, Thomas, *Sacred Marriage* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 200-201.

<sup>107</sup>Matt. 5:12, 20; 6:33; 7:21; 18:3; 19:23-24.

<sup>108</sup>Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), 41-54.

<sup>109</sup>Gerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testament* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1975), 383-384.

This theme also entails the resurrection of physical bodies in the new creation.<sup>110</sup> This sure and future hope is based on the fact of the already accomplished resurrection of Jesus Christ. Human bodies will experience eternal glory and realignment with God's original creational order. God will transform Christians' bodies, as consummated continuations of their present embodied existence in the same way that Jesus' body is the same body he had on earth, yet fully glorified.<sup>111</sup> The new creation will be more than just the resurgence of the garden of Eden. It will be Eden and more. Eden will become a city, the city of God,<sup>112</sup> a place where "nothing unclean will ever enter it,"<sup>113</sup> including the sexually immoral whose portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.<sup>114</sup>

An implication of restoration is that human genders remain the same in the new creation. On the other hand, sexual activity will not.<sup>115</sup> Sex will be fulfilled<sup>116</sup> in the resurrection, rather than nullified. The much-awaited eschatological marriage<sup>117</sup> supper of the lamb<sup>118</sup> will finally arrive. Union between a man and a woman through the covenant

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<sup>110</sup>1 Cor. 15:42-57.

<sup>111</sup>Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), 65-67.

<sup>112</sup>Rev. 21:2; Heb. 13:14.

<sup>113</sup>Rev. 21:26-27.

<sup>114</sup>Rev. 21:8.

<sup>115</sup>Matt. 22:23-33.

<sup>116</sup> Dennis P. Hollinger, *The Meaning of Sex: Christian Ethics and the Moral Life* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 90-91.

<sup>117</sup>Rev. 19:7.

<sup>118</sup>Raymond C. Ortlund, Jr., *Whoredom: God's Unfaithful Wife in Biblical Theology* (Leicester: Apollos, 1996).



of marriage in all its aspects was a sign<sup>119</sup> of God's love for his people.<sup>120</sup> Marriage and sex anticipated the beatific vision, seeing God face to face. Christopher Ash, Christian writer, puts it this way,

Their love will be consummated with an intimacy and enduring delight that the best human marriage can only begin to echo faintly...This is...a time when all the deepest yearnings and longings of the human heart will be fulfilled. And it is open to all who will come in repentance and faith to Jesus Christ in this age...On that day all the sex within marriage that has been used in the service of God in this age will be taken up into an eternity of sexual fulfillment that will fill the age to come with delight, security, and wonder to beat all marriages.<sup>121</sup>

This biblical literature seen through the biblical paradigm of creation-fall-redemption-restoration provides a balanced approach for understanding sex. This literature review has briefly examined the biblical paradigm and its implications for human sexuality. Throughout the Old and New Testaments, biblical authors give a unified story of God's purposes for human sexuality. As the researcher continues to explore the connection between Christian married men, sexual integrity, and the Sea Services, this chapter will now look at the literature on sexual addiction and recovery.

### **Sexual Addiction and Recovery**

The following section incorporates literature that explains the nature of sexual addiction, the addictive system, and some causes and effects of sexual addiction. The literature review will also explore some possible stages and treatment models of recovery for sexual addiction.

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<sup>119</sup>Douglas Rosenau, *A Celebration of Sex* (Nashville: Oliver Nelson, 1994), 20.

<sup>120</sup>Rom. 7:1-6; Eph. 5:21-33.

<sup>121</sup>Christopher Ash, "Christianity and Sexuality," 2009, accessed September 1, 2014, <http://tgc-documents.s3.amazonaws.com/cc/Ash.pdf>, 33.

### *The Nature of Sexual Addiction*

Experts have studied how to assess and treat sexual addiction.<sup>122</sup> Common patterns and signs of sexual addiction are compulsive masturbating, over-use of pornography, cyber sexual chat, anonymous sexual relationships with multiple partners, and obsessive sexual fantasies.<sup>123</sup> Psychiatrist Aviel Goodman defines sexual addiction as “a disorder in which a behavior that can function both to produce pleasure and to provide escape from internal discomfort is employed in a pattern characterized by recurrent failure to control the behavior, and continuation of the behavior despite significant harmful consequences.”<sup>124</sup> Sex addicts recognize that their sexual behavior is excessive and chaotic to their lives both personally and socially, but they often make the claim that they can’t stop it.<sup>125</sup>

However, there is no definition included for the term sexual addiction in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*.<sup>126</sup> In addition, there is disagreement on how to label cyber sexual activity and what exactly fits into this

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<sup>122</sup>Frederico Duarte Garcia and Florence Thibaut, “Sexual Addictions,” *The American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse* 36, no. 5 (2010): 254-60; Patrick Carnes, *Don't Call It Love: Recovery from Sexual Addiction* (New York: Bantam Books, 1991), 11-12; Mark R. Laaser, *Healing the Wounds of Sexual Addiction* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 63-69; E. Coleman, N. Raymond, and A. McBean, “Assessment and Treatment of Compulsive Sexual Behavior,” *Minnesota Medicine* 86, no. 7 (2003): 42–47; J. Gerber, “Treatment of sexually compulsive adolescents,” *Psychiatry Clinics of North America* 31, no. 4 (2008): 657–669; J. M. Bradford, “The Neurobiology, Neuropharmacology, and Pharmacological Treatment of the Paraphilias and Compulsive Sexual Behavior,” *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry* 46 no. 1 (2001): 26–34.

<sup>123</sup>Patrick Carnes, *Don't Call It Love: Recovery from Sexual Addiction* (New York: Bantam Books, 1991), 11-12.

<sup>124</sup>Aviel Goodman, “Sexual Addiction: Designation and Treatment,” *Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy* 18, no. 4 (1992): 304.

<sup>125</sup>M.H. Miner, et al., “The Compulsive Sexual Behavior Inventory: Psychometric properties,” *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 36, no. 4 (2006): 579-587.

<sup>126</sup> *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: DSM-5*, 5th ed. (Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

category. For example, sexual addiction experts Patrick Carnes and Mark Laaser believe that the term “sexual addiction” is warranted, but some authors argue that it is better termed as an obsessive-compulsive disorder or an impulse-control disorder.<sup>127</sup> Others go so far as to argue that it’s all a myth.<sup>128</sup> Within the controversy, some propose a viable way ahead;<sup>129</sup> others point to differences but agree on characteristics of this sexual behavior. Experts suggest that each view includes “the role of personal distress and/or impairment in functioning.”<sup>130</sup>

Christian sexual addiction expert Mark Laaser further adds that “defining sexual addiction as a disease is also consistent with a definition of sin.”<sup>131</sup> Both sin and disease can eventually lead one to death if not addressed. Christian author Harry Schaumburg agrees with Laaser, explaining that “sexual addiction isn’t just an issue of sex or even of external behavior: It’s a byproduct of loneliness, pain, self-centered demand to be loved and accepted regardless of the consequences, and a loss of vital relationship with God.”<sup>132</sup> However, a mere understanding the reality of sin will not take away the complexity and secondary causes of sexual addiction.

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<sup>127</sup>Stephen B. Levine, “What Is Sexual Addiction?” *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy* 36, no. 3 (2010): 263-265.

<sup>128</sup>M.P. Levine, and R.R. Troiden, “The Myth of Sexual Compulsivity,” *Journal of Sex Research* 25 (1988): 347-363.

<sup>129</sup>Martin P. Kafka, “Hypersexual Disorder: A Proposed Diagnosis for DSM-V,” *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 39, no. 2 (2010): 377-400.

<sup>130</sup>D.A. Kingston and P. Firestone, “Problematic Hypersexuality: A Review of Conceptualization and Diagnosis,” *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity* 15, no. 4 (2008): 298.

<sup>131</sup>Mark R. Laaser, *Healing the Wounds of Sexual Addiction* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 25.

<sup>132</sup>Harry Schaumburg, *False Intimacy: Understanding the Struggle of Sexual Addiction*, rev. and expanded ed. (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1997), 25.

## The Addictive System

Patrick Carnes is a forerunner in sexual addiction research who has developed a theory of the sexual addiction system.<sup>133</sup> The sexual addiction cycle is comprised of the four stages of preoccupation, ritual, acting out, and despair, which lead to shame and guilt. In the preoccupation stage, the addict's thoughts become focused on their sexual acting-out behavior. The individual becomes enraptured with feelings, fantasies, memories, hopes, and expectations surrounding acting out. Most of the addict's time is spent in this preoccupation phase. Initially, the obsession serves as a coping mechanism for dealing with pain, but it eventually results in low productivity and procrastination. It is critical to know time of day, place, and situations that may trigger the preoccupation stage in order to recover from a sexual addiction and deal with the negative consequences. The preoccupation stage and its triggers may hold clues to the reasons for sexual experience becoming the primary relationship for the sexual addict.<sup>134</sup> Awareness of these triggers may be the first step toward the ultimate goal of satisfying the emotional and spiritual hunger deep in the soul in healthy ways.<sup>135</sup>

The second stage of the addiction cycle is ritualization. In this stage, addicts often enhance their mental preoccupation with the use of rituals. For addicts, anything can become a ritual; it may involve certain places, certain smells, and certain people. Rituals are the sexual addicts' own special methods or routines that lead to the sexual activity.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>133</sup>Patrick Carnes, *Out of the Shadows: Understanding Sexual Addiction*, 3rd ed. (Center City, MN: Hazelden Information & Edu, 2001), 19-20.

<sup>134</sup>*Ibid.*, 26-27.

<sup>135</sup>Mark R. Laaser, *Healing the Wounds of Sexual Addiction* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 35.

<sup>136</sup>Patrick Carnes, *Out of the Shadows: Understanding Sexual Addiction*, 3rd ed. (Center City, MN: Hazelden Information & Education, 2001), 20.

They trigger arousal and the rush of excitement. Like preoccupation, once the ritual begins, it is virtually impossible for the addict to stop it from continuing into acting-out.

Acting-out is the inability to control one's sexual behavior. This is the stage that truly establishes an addiction.<sup>137</sup> In other words, sexual addiction manifests when people are powerless over their sexual expression. After the addict acts out, the next stage of the cycle is shame and despair, which inevitably increases one's isolation. This stage is characterized by intense shame and guilt over not being able to stop the sexual behavior; this despair leads the addict to start the cycle over again by becoming preoccupied with sexual fantasies to block out the negative feelings and find relief. Unfortunately, the shame and despair become more deeply rooted after each repetition of the cycle. It is common for addicts in this cycle to "attempt suicide and become depressed"<sup>138</sup> due to the hopelessness about ever being able to stop their sexual behavior and their self-hatred over personal values being violated.<sup>139</sup>

Laaser agrees with the four-part cycle description but adds the building blocks of sexual addiction: sexual fantasies, pornography, and masturbation. These building blocks develop a continuous cycle in the addict's life. Sexual fantasy excites the individual, producing adrenaline, neurochemicals, and catecholamines, which have narcotic-like effects that facilitate the human sexual response. Pornographic materials, defined as anything that elicits sexual fantasy and response, feed the appetite of the sexual addict

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<sup>137</sup>Patrick Carnes, *Contrary to Love: Helping the Sexual Addict* (Center City, MN: Hazelden Foundation, 1989), 64.

<sup>138</sup>Patrick Carnes, *Don't Call It Love: Recovery from Sexual Addiction* (New York: Bantam Books, 1991), 63.

<sup>139</sup>Patrick Carnes, *Out of the Shadows: Understanding Sexual Addiction*, 3rd ed. (Center City, MN: Hazelden Information & Education, 2001), 23.

and spur on sexual response. The addict will then gratify the appetite through masturbation.<sup>140</sup>

This addiction cycle is part of a larger addictive system, which includes specific belief systems, impaired thinking, and life unmanageability. The addict's belief system is crucial in the governing of the addictive behavior. Dr. Carnes explains,

The driving force of the addictive system is the belief system, the addicts' filtering lens from which he or she views the world. This includes all messages, conclusions about self, family roles/rules, myths, meanings, information, self-evident truths, prejudices, and guesses regarded as facts gathered from life experience and combined to form an interlocking mosaic of beliefs. Through this belief system all decisions are filtered.<sup>141</sup>

According to Dr. Carnes, four faulty core beliefs feed sexual addiction: "I am basically a bad, unworthy person...no one would love me as I am...my needs are never going to be met if I have to depend on others...sex is my most important need."<sup>142</sup>

Impaired thinking is the force that allows these faulty core beliefs to survive. Some types of impaired thinking associated with sexual addiction include denial, rationalization, self-delusion, self-righteousness, or blame of others. This impaired thinking is sometimes challenged, and the addict "wakes" to realize a split between illusion and reality. It may be the case that either the impaired thinking or the sudden waking to reality makes the addict's life unmanageable. Together, the addiction cycle,

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<sup>140</sup>Mark R. Laaser, *Healing the Wounds of Sexual Addiction* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 28-35.

<sup>141</sup>Patrick Carnes. *Contrary to Love: Helping the Sexual Addict* (Center City, MN: Hazelden Foundation, 1989), 69.

<sup>142</sup>Patrick Carnes, *Out of the Shadows: Understanding Sexual Addiction*, 3rd ed. (Center City, MN: Hazelden Information & Education, 2001), 108-113.

unmanageability, impaired thinking, and belief systems form an addictive system that people who want to help those on the path of recovery must understand.<sup>143</sup>

### **Causes of the Addiction Process**

Cultural factors may influence sexual addictions. Addictions are often encouraged by the values established in culture, and this is especially true for sexual addiction. Culture may provide an optimal environment for the formation of addictions when it includes the following components: convenience, sophisticated technology, entertainment or escapism, experiences of massive paradigm shifts, loss of community, high stress, denial of human limits, exploitation of others, and a significant population of other addicts.<sup>144</sup> Along with these cultural factors that influence sexual addictions, Carnes suggests that society slows or prevents the process of recovery from addiction by perpetuating stereotypes, shame, and secrecy for addicts.

Another set of factors involves people's genetic predisposition. After some trauma or catalytic event, the predisposition results in the creation of neurochemical deficits that make a person vulnerable to situational and environmental stressors.<sup>145</sup> The potential addict may excessively use highs derived from sexual activities over time to combat the stress. This prolonged abuse of the sexual high then alters the neurochemical

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<sup>143</sup>Ibid., 26.

<sup>144</sup>Patrick Carnes, *Don't Call It Love: Recovery from Sexual Addiction* (New York: Bantam Books, 1991), 78; Delores Dorton Rimington and Julie Gast, "Cybersex Use and Abuse: Implications for Health Education," *American Journal of Health Education* 38, no. 1 (January/February 2007): 34-40; Chien Chou, Linda Condrón, and John C. Belland, "A Review of the Research on Internet Addiction," *Educational Psychology Review* 17, no. 4 (December 2005): 363-388.

<sup>145</sup>Martin P. Kafka, "Hypersexual Disorder: A Proposed Diagnosis for DSM-V," *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 39, no. 2 (2010): 382-384.

balance in the brain and a neurochemical change occurs. Psychology professor William Struthers, addressing men with pornography addiction, explains,

...as men fall deeper into the mental habit of fixating on these images, the exposure to them creates neural pathways. Like a path is created in the woods with each successive hiker, so do the neural paths set the course for the next time an erotic image is viewed. Over time these neural paths become wider as they are repeatedly traveled with each exposure to pornography. They become the automatic pathway through which interactions with women are routed.<sup>146</sup>

The continued use of highs to compensate for the deficit preserves this imbalance, and addiction may result. The neurochemical imbalance protects itself by needing the high to balance the chemistry in the brain, so the addict can feel normal. Carnes agrees and highlights that the brain has the extraordinary ability to rewrite itself in the pursuit of sexual pleasure and is able to self-regulate as it processes these sexual experiences. In addition, digital media intensifies this rewriting and self-regulation. As a result, addicts report feeling intensely sexual an inordinate amount of the time at a level they had not experienced prior to using digital media.<sup>147</sup> Small experiments have also pointed to the power of sexually arousing images to produce a lasting biochemical memory trail.<sup>148</sup>

Carnes' next set of factors deals with shame. He explains that shame is about lack of "acceptance of who you are and what you do."<sup>149</sup> This is especially true of children who grow up in rigid or disengaged families. Children growing up in this type of

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<sup>146</sup>William M. Struthers, *Wired for Intimacy: How Pornography Hijacks the Male Brain* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2009), 85.

<sup>147</sup>C. Carnes and P. Carnes, "Understanding Cybersex in 2010," *Family Therapy Magazine* 9, no. 1 (January/February 2010): 10-17.

<sup>148</sup>Marie-Elaine M. Corbeil and Stuart J. McKelvie, "Pornography Use and Recall of Sexual and Neutral Words," *North American Journal of Psychology* 10 (2008): 380.

<sup>149</sup>Patrick Carnes, *Don't Call It Love: Recovery from Sexual Addiction* (New York: Bantam Books, 1991), 95.



environment often develop a shame-based personality since they never measure up to the expectations of others. An “excessive emphasis on ‘doing it right’”<sup>150</sup> makes them particularly vulnerable to sexual addiction and codependency. Perfectionism is the only acceptable standard of performance.<sup>151</sup> These children often grow up to be self-doubting, desperate for approval, afraid of discovery, and unaware of their own feelings. They become shame-based adults who engage in shame cycles whereby they act out sexually to get rid of the shame and feel a sense of release. Acting in or acting out sexually become compulsive behaviors that lead to despair, powerlessness, and unmanageability; they are a destructive part of the shame cycle. Carnes explains, “the clearest way to engender shame in children is to abuse them sexually, physically, or emotionally.”<sup>152</sup>

It is almost universal that “the more abused you are as a child, the more addictions you are likely to have as an adult.”<sup>153</sup> Carnes’ research illustrates that identical percentages of men and women who have been diagnosed sexual addicts reported having been abused. The report showed “emotional abuse at 97%, sexual abuse at 81% and physical abuse at 72%.”<sup>154</sup> Laaser agrees and points out, “the more profoundly abused a person has been, the greater the likelihood of multiple addictions.”<sup>155</sup> Laaser explains that some abused people choose to escape painful feelings and shame through illicit or promiscuous sexual activity that produces highly addictive adrenaline. The goal is to get

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<sup>150</sup>Ibid., 98.

<sup>151</sup>Ibid., 96.

<sup>152</sup>Ibid., 106.

<sup>153</sup>Ibid., 108.

<sup>154</sup>Ibid., 109.

<sup>155</sup>Mark R. Laaser, *Healing the Wounds of Sexual Addiction* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 110.

a high from sexual activity in order to forget or medicate negative feelings such as loneliness and sadness. This survival strategy is hard to give up since it provides the wounded person with a short-term escape and the approval they desperately seek.<sup>156</sup>

Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) may lead to severe addictions that may become central coping mechanisms. PTSD is characterized by disassociation, flashbacks, confusion, displaced anxiety, exaggerated distrust, mix of sex with associated feelings, tolerance for pain, perfectionism, dependency avoidance, and shame.<sup>157</sup> The addiction becomes a maladaptive response to stress; it becomes a way to escape pain, to nurture oneself, and to fill a void; it may also become a way by which abusive events become internalized. Fantasies and behavioral acting-out may develop.<sup>158</sup>

Closely related to post-traumatic stress/abuse experiences, betrayal bonds may also contribute to the development of sexual addiction.<sup>159</sup> Carnes points out that many individuals form strong attachments to those who betrayed them, and he notes that these bonds of attachment are strengthened by an individual's desire to help the betrayer. Individuals may even blame themselves, their deficits, or their failed efforts for the abuser's betrayal. These exploited relationships and the individual's deep denial of the betrayal create betrayal bonds. Essentially, betrayal bonds occur "when a victim bonds to someone who is destructive to him or her."<sup>160</sup> Often individuals, as a result of the trauma

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<sup>156</sup>Ibid., 112-113.

<sup>157</sup>Ashwin Budden, "The Role of Shame in Posttraumatic Stress Disorder: A Proposal for a Socio-Emotional Model for DSM-V," *Social Science & Medicine* 69 (2009): 1032-1039.

<sup>158</sup>Ibid., 269-292.

<sup>159</sup>Patrick Carnes, *The Betrayal Bond: Breaking Free of Exploitive Relationships* (Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications, 1997), xviii.

<sup>160</sup>Ibid., xvii.

caused by the betrayal and the bonds that were formed, rely on addictions as a way of coping with the trauma. Unfortunately, a sexual addiction is often elicited, as the nature of the betrayal is often sexual.

There are other possible explanations for the addictive process. For example, University of Maryland, College Park, MD professor of leadership studies Carol Pearson may give insight into addictions through her use of archetypes. In the orphan archetype, people have the feeling that the world owes them something. If an adult becomes fixated in this stage, a sexual addiction may develop. The orphans behave as if they are having a tantrum. Pearson says, “These are looters, the rapists, the batterers and business men exploiting for profit.”<sup>161</sup> These individuals are the macho men or the Don Juans who think they have a right to take whatever they want, including sex. The more they take, the more they want to help them feel less like the abandoned orphan. They are getting what the world owes them via the attainment of sexual gratification and all the positive feeling associated with the attainment of their goal. Orphans are narcissists, “...but they are masking primal emptiness and hunger; for the real narcissists do not yet have a genuine sense of identity and consequently feel emptiness.”<sup>162</sup>

### **Effects of Sexual Addiction on Men**

Andreas Philaretou, Ahmed Mahfouz, and Allen Katherine interviewed male addicts to find out the effects of pornography addiction for their article published in the *International Journal of Men's Health*. These interviews revealed that men tend to view

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<sup>161</sup>Carol Pearson, *The Hero Within: Six Archetypes We Live By* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986), 30.

<sup>162</sup>Ibid., 54.

pornography at an ever-increasing rate and as a pleasurable event.<sup>163</sup> For example, they found that men who are addicted spend more than eight hours on the internet each week participating in addictive sexual behaviors. They also found that men have a very hard time stopping themselves when they are in the moment.

In one interview, the researchers found that the man started by just rubbing his genitals, but as the time went on he could not help but take out his genitals and start masturbating. During these interviews, men reported that they get very aroused looking through pornographic pictures. The physical effects can be anything from the heart starting to pound fast to sweaty palms, to feeling a sexual rush go through them. This sexual high from the arousal can relieve their anxiety and sexual tension, but afterwards, these men usually feel guilty. They find themselves wondering what their wives would say if they caught them or what their family would think of them.<sup>164</sup>

Jennifer Schneider also conducted a study on the effects of sexual content on men and found similar results.<sup>165</sup> She found that men often reported being in a dissociated state. It was hard for some men to be supportive of their wives because of their dazed mood. Often, men would choose to spend time on the computer rather than spending time with their families. In addition, the negative effects of internet pornography impact their ability to be fully present within marriage.<sup>166</sup> Most men also reported strained

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<sup>163</sup>Andreas G. Philaretou, Ahmed Y. Mahfouz, Katherine R. Allen, "Use of Internet Pornography and Men's Well-being," *International Journal of Men's Health* 4, no. 2 (2005): 149-169.

<sup>164</sup>*Ibid.*, 149-169.

<sup>165</sup>Jennifer Schneider, "Effects of Cyber-Sex Addiction on the Family: Results of a Survey," *Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity* 7 (2000): 31-58.

<sup>166</sup>Patrick F. Fagan, "The Effects of Pornography on Individuals, Marriage, Family and Community," *marri.us*, December, 2009, accessed October 12, 2014, <http://www.marri.us/get.cfm?i=RS09K01>.

relationships due to the addiction. Schneider had found in the study that once the addiction started, it immediately spiraled to worse things.

In their research, one man worked two jobs in one day from 6 a.m. until 10 p.m. After work, he would go home, log into the Internet, and stay on until after midnight, participating in sexual activities and searching for pornographic websites. Schneider found that sexual activity was also lacking between couples due to a lack of time and emotional withdrawal. Schneider's interviews showed that in some cases, some men even got into trouble with the law. One man was sending pornography to someone he believed to be a minor, who was actually a police officer. He lost his job, and newspapers published his name and his photograph. Nobody trusted him, and most of the people he knew wanted nothing to do with him. These interviews showed the horrific impact of sexual addiction.

Marriage and family therapist, Dr. Jill Manning, researched the effects of sexual addiction. Her qualitative research interviews demonstrated an increase of callousness toward women; a trivialization of rape as a criminal offense; a distorted perceptions about sexuality; an increased appetite for more deviant and bizarre types of pornography; a devaluation of the importance of monogamy; a decreased satisfaction with partner's sexual performance, affection, and physical appearance; an increase in doubts about the value of marriage; a decreased desire to have children; and a viewing of non-monogamous relationships as normal and natural behavior.<sup>167</sup>

Addicts sometimes lose interest in sex all together. They may make excuses to avoid sex with their partner and, during relational sex, they may appear to be distant,

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<sup>167</sup>J. C. Manning, "The Impact of Internet Pornography on Marriage and the Family: A Review of the Research," *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity* 13 (2006): 131-165.

emotionally detached, and interested in only their pleasure. They may also blame their partner for their sexual problems and often do not want to take responsibility for their actions. Addicts sometimes wanted their partners to participate in sexual activities with which their partners may feel uncomfortable. As noted, there are many different ways that sexual addiction affects the sexual activity of the addict.<sup>168</sup>

In an empirical study of the effects of cyber-sex addiction on the family, Dr. Schneider studied the marital strife that is the consequence of the addiction.<sup>169</sup> The primary issue reported was a lack of trust. This lack of trust needed to be redeveloped after the disclosure. Only fourteen percent of addicts' spouses reported being able to trust their spouse completely after disclosure. The second issue reported was that spouses struggled with high levels of anger. Spouses also dealt with self-blaming, shame, hurt, resentment, insecurity, and emotional withdrawal.

Third, the study found that secrecy is a consequence of addictions in marriage. When confronted about secrecy, the addicted spouse usually responds with irritation or defensiveness, which typically happens because the addict feels shameful, and because of the shame, the addict feels hopeless and not able to control anything. The secrecy provides a disorganized way of dealing with the shame that the addict is feeling at the time. Fourth, a change of the communication pattern and interaction is an effect of the addiction on the marriage bond.

Fifth, egotism affects marriages with a spouse who struggles with a sexual addiction. In trying to fix the relationship, the addicted spouse becomes focused

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<sup>168</sup>Jennifer Schneider, "Effects of Cyber-Sex Addiction on the Family: Results of a Survey," *Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity* 7 (2000): 31-58.

<sup>169</sup>Ibid.

completely on themselves, which is very harmful in trying to develop secure attachment.

Sixth, sexual addiction affects the marriage and the spouses' sexual relationship.

Attachment, betrayal, and mistrust are the most probable causes for this effect, and women can also experience less satisfaction with their intimate partners, including their partner's affection, physical appearance, sexual curiosity, and sexual performance.<sup>170</sup>

Dr. Susan Johnson, a pioneer of Emotionally Focused Therapy, identified relational traumas as attachment injuries between those in close relationships.<sup>171</sup> She explains,

Following traumatic abandonment, an injured partner's involvement in the relationship often becomes organized around eliciting emotional responsiveness, or defending against the lack of this responsiveness from the other partner. Moreover, the injured partner may exhibit the classic symptoms characteristic of PTSD, such as re-experiencing, numbness, and hyper vigilance.<sup>172</sup>

According to Dr. Johnson, traumatic events from this perspective involve betrayal, abandonment, and refusal to provide support at times when they are needed the most. The injured partner may exhibit classic symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder.

A consistent theme of the research on the impact of sexual addiction in men is the loss of intimacy with others, especially within marital relationships. Sexual addiction erodes trust within marriage since wives view pornographic activities as a form of infidelity and breach of the marital exclusive bond. The escalating negative effects of

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<sup>170</sup>Spencer T. Zitzman and Mark H. Butler, "Attachment, Addiction, and Recovery: Conjoint Marital Therapy for Recovery from a Sexual Addiction," *Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity* 12, no. 3 (2005): 311-337.

<sup>171</sup>Barbara A. Steffens and L. R. Rennie, "The Traumatic Nature of Disclosure for Wives of Sexual Addicts," *Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity* 13 (2006): 247-267.

<sup>172</sup>Susan Johnson, *Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy with Trauma Survivors* (New York: Guilford, 2002), 187.

sexual addiction on men may also lead them into trouble with the legal system if their sexual activities involve children.

### *Recovery Process from Sexual Addiction*

Dr. Carnes suggests a possible course that some individuals may take during the first five years of recovery. In the first year, Carnes found there was no measurable improvement in the addict's life; in some cases things get worse. Most addicts slip and turn to acting out behavior as a coping strategy in the first six months of recovery. Also during the first six months, health indicators such as increased number of accidents, sickness, and visits to the physician are higher than any other in the five-year recovery process. The first year may also be marked by extraordinary amounts of emotional turmoil.<sup>173</sup>

Though this turmoil may still exist during the second and third years of recovery, this time is more associated with starting to rebuild the addict's life. During years two and three, improvements occur in many areas of the addict's life. For example, addicts may see improvement in their finances, ability to cope with stress, spirituality, self-image, career status, and friendships. During years two and three, addicts may have an increased amount of the energy that is needed to reconstruct their lives and to do what is required to sustain recovery.<sup>174</sup> In years four and five, healing can start to occur in the addict's key relationships, which may include friends, children, parents, siblings, and partners. Sexual addicts report a significant shift toward a healthier and more satisfying

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<sup>173</sup>Patrick Carnes, *Don't Call It Love: Recovery from Sexual Addiction* (New York: Bantam Books, 1991), 210.

<sup>174</sup>*Ibid.*, 259.



sexual expression with the healing of relationships and an increase in overall life satisfaction.

It is imperative for anyone to understand the recovery stages an addict may experience in order to help the person move through them with the least amount of turmoil.<sup>175</sup> Carnes suggests the developing stage as the first stage. Unmanageability and powerlessness force the addict to acknowledge that they have a problem. Yet, they continue to stay in the addiction and to act out. In this stage, addicts may seek help but discontinue it or find it unhelpful. Addicts also tend to encounter the reality of the problem but may minimize its severity, thinking they can handle it themselves. Some addicts may alter their behaviors or substitute less characteristic behaviors for the addiction.

The second stage is a crisis/decision stage. Here there is a growing consciousness in the addict that something needs to be done, and the addict makes a commitment to change. In this stage, addicts are often forced to do something about their behavior by events, people, or fear associated with escalation of their actions.

The shock stage is the third stage. It also occurs during the first eight months of the first year of recovery. Emotional numbness, extraordinary disorientation, and efforts to control damage mark this stage. During this stage, addicts describe withdrawal, disorientation, confusion, numbness, and inability to focus or concentrate; addicts also have periodic bouts with despair, loneliness, and hopelessness. Some addicts react with angry feelings when therapists or others set limits. Addicts also commonly feel relief and

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<sup>175</sup>Ibid., 352.

acceptance that their double life is finally over. It is, however, hard for most addicts to be honest with themselves about the extent and nature of their addiction.

The fourth stage is the grief stage. Addicts experience denial, bargaining, and anger for the losses resulting from the addiction; they experience a profound loss as the addiction ceases to serve as a comfort or friend. Sexual addicts experience the reality of their situation and have intense sadness. Grief may sometimes be so intense that individuals may become sick due to immunological impairments caused by grief. It is imperative for recovery that addicts submit to awareness of the extent and range of their addictive behavior. This awareness will expand and deepen over the years. The grief stage lasts for about eight months and usually occurs at the end of the first year or the beginning of the second year.

Closely following the grief stage is the repair stage, in which a sense of productivity and renewal begins to occur in the addict's life. Many critical changes happen during the repair stage. For example, there is a new capacity for joy and a deepening of new bonds with others. Addicts take responsibility for themselves, they sometimes have to re-parent themselves. They learn to express their needs, accept that they have needs, and work to meet those needs. During this phase, addicts work on completing tasks and being dependable. If balance is achieved, life becomes manageable.

The growth stage comes when the addict begins to explore new options and restructure relationships in a new, non-addictive way. This period usually occurs during years four and five of recovery. Some markers that suggest addicts have entered this stage include dramatically improved relationships, stabilized careers, restored balance

and intimacy, improved capacity for conflict resolution, increased ability to offer compassion, and decreased judgmental attitudes.

Additionally, Carnes notes that addicts develop a “profound empathy and compassion for oneself and others, developing trust for one’s own boundaries, finding integrity in relationships, feelings of achievement over new milestones in love and sex, a new ability to take care of and nurture relationships, and old relationships [are] transformed and ended.”<sup>176</sup> During this final stage, addicts may have strong adverse emotional reactions to some of their previous acting out behaviors. For the first time, some addicts can step back, look objectively at their behavior, and react with a deep abhorrence. The stages of recovery impact addicts differently, and the stages’ durations differ with every addict. It is also the case that, during any stage, an individual may relapse and fall prey to the addictive cycle once again.

Dr. Carnes has one of the most comprehensive models for recovery of sexual addictions. However, there are several other models for recovery that are similar to Carnes’ model but have slightly different outlooks on sexual addictions. One such model is Ginger Manley’s model of healthy sexuality.<sup>177</sup> Manley’s model includes five sections. The first section is sexual “person-hood” which begins with conception and develops throughout life. Sexual personhood includes the areas of self-image, gender orientation, sexual identity, and gender assignment. The second section deals with sexual relationships and/or attachments. The third section is concerned with an individual’s sexual behaviors and the continuum that ranges from over to under indulgence. Manley, a

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<sup>176</sup>Ibid., 201-206.

<sup>177</sup>Ginger Manley, “Healthy Sexuality: Stage III Recovery,” *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity* 2 (1995): 157-183.

nurse psychotherapist and sex therapist, identifies somewhere in the middle as the healthy area. The fourth section deals with the sexual physical/biological capabilities ranging from areas of major body systems to physical maturity. Manley views the fifth section of the model, as the core of the entire model: sexual spirituality. She highlights that “sexuality and spirituality are connected at a very basic level in terms of value and meaningfulness regarding other dimensions, love in one’s life, the miracle of existence, and the development and affirmation of sexual grace.”<sup>178</sup> Manley is concerned with a connection to a greater power; healthy sexuality cannot bypass the crucial junction of the addicts’ spiritual journeys.

Manley also suggests three stages of sexual health recovery that are reflected in the five sections of healthy sexuality. She uses the following definition of healthy sexuality as a goal to work towards while engaged in the three stages of sexual health recovery:

Healthy sexuality is the experience of feeling whole and worthy as a sexual person, willing and able to consent to a variety of relationships with appropriate boundaries, including an established, committed, primary relationship in which expression of sexual behavior is by personal choice and is consistent with one's value system, wherein a full range of sexual functioning occurs within one's physical capabilities, and further that one is connected in all parts of one's sexuality to one spiritual core.<sup>179</sup>

In Manley’s first stage of recovery, addicts are in the area of addict/victim. Individuals are victims to emotional wounds of which they may or may not be aware. In this stage, addicts use coping strategies. For example, an excess of sex may medicate the wound’s pain. To progress from this stage, individuals must limit excessive sexual

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<sup>178</sup>Ibid., 161.

<sup>179</sup>Ibid.

behavior, detach from entangled relationships, seek a spiritual connection, and develop friendships with other safe recovering persons.

In stage two, addicts work to tend those wounds that helped create sexual addiction. At this level, addicts direct their work towards creating safety through redefining boundaries in certain relationships that may have been instrumental in creating the emotional wounds.<sup>180</sup> In stage two, addicts also have three basic tasks they must complete: continuing to refrain from excessive sexual activity, creating safety to allow memories and feelings to emerge, and working within a structure and with professional guidance to remember, revisit, and integrate past wounds. When addicts meet these goals, they move to the third stage of recovery.

According to Manley, the third stage of recovery requires addicts to consider going where they have never gone, moving towards a healthy, positive, thriving sexuality. Manley suggests twelve tasks that may help addicts achieve healthy sexuality: limiting unhealthy sex activities, integrating past sexual wounds, making positive choices, attaching to an adult sexual self and to another person, drawing boundaries for physical touch, recognizing and giving voice to sexual needs and desires, receiving education on sexual physical function, expanding sexual repertoire within boundaries, practicing emotional and physical intimacy, practicing sexual etiquette, developing sexual mentors or an advisory committee, and participating in sex therapy.

Manley's model has similarities to Carnes' model of sexual addiction and recovery. Both models provide sexual addicts or their therapists with a possible template of issues that may indicate underlying problems that resulted in acting out sexually. The

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<sup>180</sup>Ibid., 169.

models also illustrate the stages that the afflicted may experience on their path to recovery and what possible methods may help with the recovery process.

Contrary to Carnes' and Manley's models of recovery, Laaser incorporates biblical teaching and wisdom.<sup>181</sup> According to Laaser, the addict must first decide to go on the journey. Laaser develops this understanding by asking whether the individual wants to get well. This journey will be a difficult one, but it will also need to be a spiritual one. With man, recovery is impossible, but with God, all things are possible. This spiritual journey requires addicts to die to the old, sinful self and rise to new life in Christ (the new self). To do this, addicts must establish accountability. Laaser draws his definition of accountability from the first four chapters of Nehemiah. Accountability begins in sadness and brokenness, then moves to confession and repentance. Addicts must honestly express their feelings and needs while practicing in the strength of groups. One day at a time, they can eliminate waste and filth, start close to home, use times of strength to prepare for times of weakness, and build something new while defending against attacks and serving others. This accountability will indeed be a process, not a onetime event. The addict, and those supporting them, will need to understand the process of change. Establishing boundaries, accountability, and channels for confession and absolution will be extremely important for the process.<sup>182</sup>

If the sex addict must be confronted in order to come to terms with their need for help and come to an awareness of their problem, Laaser outlines guides for individual and group addictions that are based upon the biblical model of discipline recorded in the

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<sup>181</sup>Mark R. Laaser, *Healing the Wounds of Sexual Addiction* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 25.

<sup>182</sup>Ibid., 126-131.

Gospel of Matthew.<sup>183</sup> Treatment of sexual addiction targets the building blocks of sexual addiction—healing shame, stopping fantasy, stopping rituals, stopping sexual behaviors, and healing despair.<sup>184</sup>

The work the addict puts into the process often determines the outcome. Ultimately the addict can recover from addiction, although there may be slips and relapses during the recovery process. Slips include a single instance of acting out. Relapses include a series of instances of acting out—this may happen about six to twelve months after recovery starts.<sup>185</sup> However, as addicts become obedient unto death – death of their old addictive lifestyles – they experience genuine healing in the recovery process. Jesus’ death and resurrection become a paradigm of recovery, and the redeeming light Jesus brings a source of freedom, resurrection, and peace.<sup>186</sup>

### **Treatment of Sexual Addiction**

Therapeutic approaches used for the treatment of sexual addiction may involve cognitive-behavioral,<sup>187</sup> psychodynamic,<sup>188</sup> rational emotive behavior,<sup>189</sup> and systems<sup>190</sup> approaches. Interventions that may be useful may include medication and relapse prevention that addresses past relationship harms with family of origin and abuse issues.

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<sup>183</sup>Ibid., 140-147.

<sup>184</sup>Ibid., 149.

<sup>185</sup>Ibid., 166.

<sup>186</sup>Ibid., 224.

<sup>187</sup>Rebecca D. Stinson, “The Behavioral and Cognitive-Behavioral Treatment of Female Sexual Dysfunction: How far we have come and the path left to go,” *Sexual and Relationship Therapy* 24, no. 3-4 (2009): 271-285.

<sup>188</sup>Michael D. Berry and Philip D. Berry, “Mentalization-Based Therapy for Sexual Addiction: Foundations for a Clinical Model,” *Sexual and Relationship Therapy* 29, no. 2 (2014): 245-60.

These interventions can occur in individual, group,<sup>191</sup> marital, and family therapy. In some cases, inpatient treatment may be better suited to some addicts' situations and needs.<sup>192</sup> In addition, Joshua Hook, assistant professor of counseling psychology at University of North Texas, offered a methodological review of treatments concerning sexual addiction in 2014.<sup>193</sup>

Carnes' book, *Don't Call it Love*,<sup>194</sup> delineates a treatment protocol for a sexual addict. For example, during the first year, the addict needs to break the isolation, survive withdrawal symptoms, reduce shame, work through emotions, and resolve crisis situations. During years two and three of the rebuilding stage, addicts need to build relationships, experience celibacy, develop self-affirmations, change their lifestyle, develop a relapse prevention plan, and find alternative highs and spirituality. During years four plus, Carnes describes other changes that need to occur, such as having a healthy sex life and having healthy relationships with family and friends. Carnes focuses most of his intervention strategies around the twelve-step program<sup>195</sup> and cognitive

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<sup>189</sup>Janet L. Wolfe, "Assessment and Treatment of Compulsive Sex/Love Behavior," *Journal of Rational-Emotive and Cognitive-Behavior Therapy* 18, no. 4 (December 2000): 235-246.

<sup>190</sup>Spencer T. Zitzman, and Mark H. Butler, "Attachment, Addiction, and Recovery: Conjoint Marital Therapy for Recovery from a Sexual Addiction," *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity* 12, no. 4 (2005): 311-337.

<sup>191</sup>Ruth Cohn, "Calming the Tempest, Bridging the Gorge: Healing in Couples Ruptured by 'Sex Addiction,'" *Sexual and Relationship Therapy* 29, no. 1 (2014): 76-86.

<sup>192</sup>Timothy W. Fong, "Understanding and Managing Compulsive Sexual Behaviors," *Psychiatry (Edgmont)* 3 (November 2006): 51-58.

<sup>193</sup>Joshua N. Hook, et al., "Methodological Review of Treatments for Nonparaphilic Hypersexual Behavior," *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy* 40, no. 4 (2014): 294-308.

<sup>194</sup>Patrick Carnes, *Don't Call It Love: Recovery from Sexual Addiction* (New York: Bantam Books, 1991), 181-382.

<sup>195</sup>*Ibid.*, 179-180.



behavioral forms of treatment. In addition, some treatments may even involve medication. For example, naltrexone is a medication that has been shown<sup>196</sup> to reduce sexual compulsive behavior and addiction to internet pornography.<sup>197</sup> Another potential medication is cyproterone acetate, which seems to diminish sexual drive and desire.<sup>198</sup> Overall, more clinical studies need to be done on the effectiveness of medication treatment.<sup>199</sup>

Another treatment resource is the behavior-modifying model that seeks to shift addicts' attention and interest from the erotic.<sup>200</sup> The first behavior-modifying method is aversion conditioning, where unwanted patterns of sexual behavior are linked repeatedly with unpleasant stimuli. The second modifying method is masturbatory training, which shifts patient arousal patterns toward a healthy direction by controlling the fantasies or visual stimulation that they experience while masturbating. This may be achieved by masturbating after orgasm to the point of pain in hopes of extinguishing the erotic arousal by shifting the visual stimuli.<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> R. S. Ryback, "Naltrexone in the Treatment of Adolescent Sexual Offenders," *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry* 65, no. 7 (July 2004): 982-6.

<sup>197</sup> J. Michael Bostwick and Jeffrey A. Bucci, "Internet Sex Addiction Treated With Naltrexone," *Mayo Clinic Proceedings* 83, no. 2 (February 2008): 226-30, accessed October 13, 2014, <http://dx.doi.org/10.4065/83.2.226>.

<sup>198</sup> Timothy W. Fong, "Understanding and Managing Compulsive Sexual Behaviors," *Psychiatry Edmont* 3 (November 2006): 51-58.

<sup>199</sup> D. R. Guay, "Drug Treatment of Paraphilic and Nonparaphilic Sexual Disorders," *Clinical Therapists* 31, no. 1 (January 2009): 1-31.

<sup>200</sup> Aviel Goodman, *Sexual Addiction: An Integrated Approach* (Madison, CT: International Universities Press Inc., 1998), 254-255.

<sup>201</sup> Joyce H. Lowinson, *Substance Abuse: A Comprehensive Textbook*, 4th ed. (Philadelphia: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, 2005), 523.

### *Conclusion*

The literature shows that when people feel disconnected from their closest relationships—parents and peers—they may turn to sexual fantasy, pornography, and masturbation. These three building blocks of sexual addiction work together in a vicious cycle. They create negative feelings while enabling the addict to escape and cope temporarily with other unwanted feelings. The internet allows this cycle to be satisfied in real time, with full motion, full sound high speed interactivity. Regrettably, this may serve as an even more attractive refuge for those looking for a fantasy safe harbor. The escape may escalate to promiscuity, adultery, dependency relationships, and more. The intrigue, tease, and sense of doing the forbidden add to the appeal. Sexual addiction has physical, emotional, and spiritual elements. The turning point toward recovery may come with the admission that the addiction has taken over, that addicts are powerless, and that the consequences have been devastating and exceptionally hurtful to themselves and those they love.

The literature indicates that recovery is a long-term process. The best start in any path of recovery is to be fully informed. Brief interventions with a variety of therapies and medication are recommended to produce lasting recovery. Because sexual addiction often results from a combination of powerful family forces, neurochemical interactions, and early childhood trauma, there is no quick fix. Carnes is the pioneer in much of the recovery literature with others like Laaser integrating it with the Christian scriptures and community. The literature review now turns to Calvin's view of God the Son's role in sanctification.

### Calvin's View of God the Son's Role in Sanctification

Two characteristics marked John Calvin's approach to sanctification, which he outlined in his 1559 *Institutes*, expounded in sermons, and taught in lectures. As Alexandre Ganoczy, author of *The Young Calvin*, points out, Calvin first moved away from the emphasis on external disciplines and defined sanctification in terms of internal heart change. Calvin focused upon the heart under the influence of the devotion moderna.<sup>202</sup> The devotion moderna focused upon piety,<sup>203</sup> "that reverence joined with love of God which the knowledge of his benefits induces."<sup>204</sup> Second, Calvin saw that the general tendency behind Roman piety was toward exalting man's ability, while simultaneously diminishing God's glory. Against this, he rejected all efforts at flattering the human condition and called for a radical humiliation of man with a simultaneous exaltation of God as the core condition for sanctification. This two-fold knowledge of God and the self should lead to a two-fold response: a movement of the human heart downward in humble prostration regarding oneself before God<sup>205</sup> and upward in reverence of God.<sup>206</sup> These two movements of the heart became the hallmark of his call to holiness.

#### *Defining Sanctification*

Calvin uses the term sanctification in two distinguished ways. First, he describes positional sanctification as a once-for-all separation from the world. Calvin explains,

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<sup>202</sup>A. Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987), 58.

<sup>203</sup>L. J. Richard, *The Spirituality of John Calvin* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1974), 99.

<sup>204</sup>John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. J. T. McNeill, trans. F. L. Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 1.2.1.

<sup>205</sup>John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries*, The Calvin Translation Society (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), Ps. 22:23.

<sup>206</sup>*Ibid.*; Gen. 2:16,18; Gen. 4:3; Gen. 14:22; Gen. 17:1-2; Gen. 18: Gen. 22; Gen. 22:2; Gen. 23:6.

“there is the word sanctify which means that we should be separated from the world in order that we may be joined to the Son of God.”<sup>207</sup>

Second, Calvin describes progressive sanctification as an ongoing offering of oneself to God in holiness and purity.<sup>208</sup> While Calvin would clearly distinguish sanctification from justification,<sup>209</sup> he does not do so for regeneration and sanctification, tending to use several terms interchangeably. As Columbia Theological Seminary professor and Calvin scholar Ronald Wallace points out, “Calvin, when he wishes to vary his language, can use many other terms such as repentance, mortification, new life, conversion, regeneration, to denote exactly the same as he means by the word sanctification.”<sup>210</sup>

Calvin scholar Pierre Marcel was a leading French Reformed Christian scholar who was also a pastor of the l’Eglise Reformee de France at St. Germain-en-Laye for fifty years. In addition, he was an associate professor at Faculte Libre de Theologie Reformee d’Aix-en-Provence, France. He offers a summary of Calvin’s definition, referring primarily to progressive and not positional sanctification, “Sanctification is that gratuitous and continuous operation of the Holy Spirit whereby He delivers the justified sinner from the defilement of sin, renews his whole nature after the image of God and enables him to perform good works.”<sup>211</sup> Or as Calvin puts it: “Under the term

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<sup>207</sup>John Calvin, *Sermons on Ephesians*, trans. A. Golding (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1998), 577.

<sup>208</sup>John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries*, The Calvin Translation Society (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), 1 Thess. 4:3.

<sup>209</sup>*Ibid.*; 1 Cor. 6:11.

<sup>210</sup>R. S. Wallace, *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd Ltd., 1959), 25.

<sup>211</sup>P. Marcel, “The Relation Between Justification and Sanctification in Calvin’s Thought,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 27 (1955): 133.

*sanctification* is included the entire renovation of the man.”<sup>212</sup> This is well justified by Calvin’s frequent use of the term “sanctify” to denote the actual holiness of progressive sanctification, “We know that God is holy; thus we must be sanctified and holy too. For God cannot abide in the midst of our filth.”<sup>213</sup>

### *Sanctification’s Triune Role*

Ganoczy points out that Calvin wished to prove that God was the author of sanctification, and that the methods of the Roman Church, the “satisfactions, superstitions and idolatry,”<sup>214</sup> were not only unhelpful, but hurtful to holiness, inasmuch as they gave people a false confidence in their own abilities. Calvin carefully builds his case by showing the role of the triune God in sanctification: the Father decreeing holiness, the Son achieving it, and the Spirit applying it. In doing so, Calvin aims to bring people to a true knowledge of themselves and God, the two-fold knowledge that will humble men and force them to exalt God. Francois Wendel, author of *Calvin: Origins and Development of His Religious Thought*, agrees, “Above all, God and man must again be seen in their rightful places.”<sup>215</sup>

Calvin scholar Thomas Torrance was a Professor of Christian Dogmatics at New College, Edinburg, for twenty seven years. In addition, Thomas Torrance was the author of *The Hermeneutics of John Calvin* in 1988. He points out that Calvin, by describing

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<sup>212</sup>John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries*, The Calvin Translation Society (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), 1 Thess. 5:23.

<sup>213</sup>John Calvin, *Sermons on the Book of Micah*, ed. and trans. B. W. Farley (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2003), 134-35.

<sup>214</sup>A. Ganoczy, *Young Calvin* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987), 195.

<sup>215</sup>F. Wendel, *Calvin: Origins and Development of His Religious Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 151.

human sanctification in terms of God's role as Father, Son, and Spirit forces people away from their natural, but erroneously exalted, view of their own role and to see, rather, that God is the one who plays the exalted role in human sanctification.<sup>216</sup> Calvin scholar Ford Lewis Battles established his reputation with the release of his 1960 edition of the *Institutes* and he translated it from the original Latin. He agrees with Thomas Torrance, "The lesson of this knowledge is that we learn to humble ourselves, cast ourselves before God, seek His mercy."<sup>217</sup> In addition, Calvin scholar Ronald Wallace known for his Ph.D. work on *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament*, highlights Calvin's teaching that if people turn to God for help in sanctification, God's mercy transforms and remakes them into the image of Christ.<sup>218</sup>

Thus, the literature shows how Calvin offers approaches to sanctification that are derived directly from scripture, such as prayer, the word, church discipline, and sacraments. Calvin taught that people are helpless to sanctify themselves apart from the work of God. Notwithstanding the importance of God the Father<sup>219</sup> and God the Holy Spirit<sup>220</sup> in Calvin's view of sanctification, the review will focus next on literature related to Calvin's view of God the Son and his role in sanctification.

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<sup>216</sup>T. F. Torrance, *Calvin's Doctrine of Man* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997), 56.

<sup>217</sup>F. L. Battles, *The Piety of John Calvin: An Anthology Illustrative of the Spirituality of the Reformer of Geneva* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978), 16.

<sup>218</sup>R. S. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd Ltd., 1959), 322.

<sup>219</sup>John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries*, The Calvin Translation Society (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), 1 Cor. 1:2, 1 Pet. 1:3.

<sup>220</sup>John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. J. T. McNeill, trans. F. L. Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 3.1.1.

*Sanctification: The Role of God the Son*

In Christ, Calvin found not just another point of theology, but the crown of his theology. As Calvin scholar and professor of theology at the University of Berlin Wilhelm Niesel, author of *The Theology of Calvin*, argues, “Jesus Christ...is the end of the law and the essence of the Gospel....Calvin in his theology is concerned fundamentally about this living Lord.”<sup>221</sup> Calvin’s Christ-centered focus reflects his view that a chasm exists between God’s holiness and people’s complete lack of holiness. According to Battles, Calvin teaches that Christ bridges the gap. Battles explains, “These two movements of the human mind lead to the knowledge of God and the knowledge of ourselves, set in antithesis to one another: the gulf between the all-holy God and the fallen sinner which only the incarnate Son of God can bridge.”<sup>222</sup> Thus, God the Son becomes the savior of sinners and the sole source of holiness on their behalf.

Calvin would therefore insist on Christ’s role in producing holiness. In addition, Calvin stated that in the papacy “God’s gratuitous goodness either is buried or enfolded in dark obscurity, or utterly vanish away...For they have invented a system of general merits which they oppose to God’s gratuitous favor.”<sup>223</sup> This emphasis, Calvin believed, would keep people from ever properly obtaining the double-knowledge needed to

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<sup>221</sup>W. Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin*, trans. H. Knight (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956), 27-28.

<sup>222</sup>F. L. Battles, *Interpreting John Calvin*, ed. R. Benedetto (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), 149.

<sup>223</sup>John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries*, The Calvin Translation Society (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), Ezek. 20:44.

proceed in holiness,<sup>224</sup> so he countered the Roman Catholic Church with the work of the Son.<sup>225</sup>

### **The Restoration of God's Image**

Calvin recognized that Christ had one goal in sanctification, "The end of regeneration is that Christ should reform us to God's image."<sup>226</sup> This restoration of the image of God means that Christians would return to the "true order."<sup>227</sup> The perfect image of God to which Christians are restored is nothing other than the very image of Christ.<sup>228</sup> Wallace concludes that Christ's goal then is a natural one, to restore the order people once had. Calvin describes this order as the image of God, the true order, or conformity to the law.<sup>229</sup> Christ then was to take the broken "children of hell" that the human race had become and turn them instead into children of God.<sup>230</sup> Christ does this by offering Christians full sanctification through a "double grace," his mystical union with them through his offices of prophet, king, and priest.

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<sup>224</sup>John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. J. T. McNeill, trans. F. L. Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 3.15.3

<sup>225</sup>*Ibid.*, 3.11.1.

<sup>226</sup>*Ibid.*, 1.15.4.

<sup>227</sup>John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries*, The Calvin Translation Society (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), Gen. 4:2.

<sup>228</sup>John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. J. T. McNeill, trans. F. L. Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 1.15.4.

<sup>229</sup>R. S. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd Ltd., 1959), 103-121.

<sup>230</sup>John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. J. T. McNeill, trans. F. L. Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 2.12.2.



## Union with the Son

Calvin attributed great importance to Christians' mystical union with Christ for the advancement of their holiness. Calvin explains, "grafting designates not only a conformity of example but a secret union by which we are joined to him."<sup>231</sup> While Calvin acknowledges the mysterious nature of this union,<sup>232</sup> he defines the process as union with the human nature of Christ.<sup>233</sup> This union, though powerful, should not be mistaken for physical union,<sup>234</sup> for Christ is united with his people spiritually.<sup>235</sup> The children of God "are not born of flesh and blood but of the Spirit through faith," for it is faith which engrafts them into Christ.<sup>236</sup> Apart from union with Christ, all that he has done for his people is "useless and of no value for us."<sup>237</sup>

Calvin scholar Dennis Tamburello is Chair of the Department of Religious Studies at Siena College in Loudonville, New York. His published works include *Union with Christ: John Calvin and the Mysticism of St. Bernard*. He points out that Calvin

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<sup>231</sup>John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries*, The Calvin Translation Society (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), Rom. 6:5.

<sup>232</sup>John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. J. T. McNeill, trans. F. L. Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 3.11.5.

<sup>233</sup>John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries*, The Calvin Translation Society (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), John 6:51.

<sup>234</sup>John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. J. T. McNeill, trans. F. L. Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 3.11.10.

<sup>235</sup>*Ibid.*, *Institutes* 4.17.33, 3.1.1; John Calvin, *Sermons on Genesis Chapters 1-11*, tran. R. R. McGregor (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2009), 200-201.

<sup>236</sup>John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. J. T. McNeill, trans. F. L. Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 2.13.5.

<sup>237</sup>*Ibid.*, 3.1.1.

typically calls this union “engrafting.”<sup>238</sup> The benefits of Christ’s holiness become his people’s, as his life continually flows into theirs, transforming them into his image as the template of his life impresses its image onto their lives.<sup>239</sup> Calvin points to that “indwelling of Christ in our hearts—in short, that mystical union are accorded by us the highest degree of importance, so that Christ, having been made ours, makes us sharers with him in the gifts with which he has been endowed.”<sup>240</sup> The believer’s union with Christ is so potent that Christians not only gain power and nourishment from him, “but we pass from our own nature into his.”<sup>241</sup> It is this union, not good works, which transforms character.<sup>242</sup> United with Christ, communion with him transforms Christians,<sup>243</sup> which he makes daily more complete, giving his people confidence to hope for holiness.<sup>244</sup> Christians depend upon union with Christ for their sanctification. Calvin scholar Willem Spijker, professor of theology at the University of Apeldoorn in the

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<sup>238</sup>John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries*, The Calvin Translation Society (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), Isaiah 26:19; John 1:12; 1 Cor. 12:13; John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. J. T. McNeill, trans. F. L. Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 3.2.25, 3.6.3, 3.15.6, 4.15.1, 4.16.12.

<sup>239</sup>John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries*, The Calvin Translation Society (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), 1 John 2:6.

<sup>240</sup>John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. J. T. McNeill, trans. F. L. Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 3.11.10.

<sup>241</sup>John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries*, The Calvin Translation Society (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), Rom. 6:5.

<sup>242</sup>*Ibid.*, John 17:19.

<sup>243</sup>John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. J. T. McNeill, trans. F. L. Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 3.14.4.

<sup>244</sup>*Ibid.*, 3.2.24.

Netherlands, wrote *Calvin: a brief guide to his life and thought*. He declares that, for Calvin, sanctification of life is the result of communion with Christ.<sup>245</sup>

Union with Christ serves to sanctify Christians by uniting them both to the death of Christ for their mortification and to the life of Christ for their vivification. Apart from Christ, people can do nothing.<sup>246</sup> Christ's union with his people allows his death to crucify their flesh.<sup>247</sup> While Christians may still struggle with sin, the "reign of sin and death ceases."<sup>248</sup> So too, by the power of union with the life of Christ, are believers made increasingly alive spiritually, "transferring his virtue unto us, he may quicken us to spiritual life, sanctify us by his Spirit."<sup>249</sup>

### **All of Grace**

Calvin scholar Jonathan Rainbow earned his doctorate degree in Reformation History at University of California, Santa Barbara, and wrote *The Will of God and the Cross: An Historical and Theological Study of John Calvin's Doctrine of Limited Redemption*. He and Niesel agree that Calvin taught that Christians are both justified and sanctified by grace as a kind of "double grace."<sup>250</sup> Calvin explains, "By partaking of him,

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<sup>245</sup>W. Van't Spijker, "Bucer's Influence on Calvin: Church and Community," in *Martin Bucer: Reforming Church and Community*, ed. D. F. Wright (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 35.

<sup>246</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. J. T. McNeill, trans. F. L. Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 2.3.9, 2.16.19.

<sup>247</sup>*Ibid.*, 2.16.7.

<sup>248</sup>John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries*, The Calvin Translation Society (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), Rom. 5:21.

<sup>249</sup>John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. J. T. McNeill, trans. F. L. Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 2.16.16.

<sup>250</sup>J. H. Rainbow, "Double Grace: John Calvin's View of the Relationship of Justification and Sanctification," *Ex Auditu* 5 (1989): 104; W. Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin*, trans. H. Knight (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956), 137; R.C. Gleason, *John Calvin and John Owen on Mortification: A Comparative Study in Reformed Spirituality* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1995), 57.

we principally receive a double grace: namely, that being reconciled to God through Christ's blamelessness, we may have in heaven instead of a Judge a gracious Father; and secondly, that sanctified by Christ's spirit we may cultivate blamelessness and purity of life."<sup>251</sup> This double grace, coming through the work of Christ, means that Christians only look to Christ for their continued progress in holiness. Calvin again explains, "Let then the faithful learn to embrace him, not only for justification, but also for sanctification."<sup>252</sup> Dr. Randall Gleason earned his doctorate from Dallas Theological Seminary and has published articles in journals such as *evangelical review of theology* and *evangelical theological society*. He concludes that Calvin could not imagine Christ beginning a work in justification then not completing it in sanctification.<sup>253</sup>

Calvin believed that justification, through the forgiveness of sin and the imputation of righteousness<sup>254</sup> only from Christ,<sup>255</sup> grants Christians a position of righteousness in God's presence. According to Calvin, Christ justifies sinners before God's presence and enables them to enter into relationship with God; sinners now stand before God by grace alone in the work of Christ. As sinners continue in their relationship

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<sup>251</sup>John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. J. T. McNeill, trans. F. L. Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 3.11.1; 3.11.6.

<sup>252</sup>John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries*, The Calvin Translation Society (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), Rom. 8:13.

<sup>253</sup>R.C. Gleason, *John Calvin and John Owen on Mortification: A Comparative Study in Reformed Spirituality* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1995), 57.

<sup>254</sup>John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. J. T. McNeill, trans. F. L. Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 3.11.2.

<sup>255</sup>*Ibid.*, 2.16.3.

with God through justification, God continues the work he has begun, through Christ, by applying the sanctifying work of Christ to their lives that they might grow in piety.<sup>256</sup>

It is both improper and impossible to tear asunder justification and sanctification. Christians, having been justified by faith, now progress in sanctification by the same means. Calvin explains, “We cannot be gratuitously justified by faith alone, without our also living holy lives. For these graces are attached to each other as it were by an inseparable bond.”<sup>257</sup> Calvin argues that good works flow from free justification when he explains the necessity of co-joining, and he maintains the distinction between justification and sanctification. He says,

Why, then, are we justified by faith? Because by faith we apprehend the righteousness of Christ, which alone reconciles us to God. This faith, however, you cannot apprehend without at the same time apprehending sanctification; for Christ “is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Cor. 1:30). Christ, therefore, justifies no man without also sanctifying him. These blessings are conjoined by a perpetual and inseparable tie.<sup>258</sup>

Calvin, against the notion of sanctification by human effort through “satisfactions, superstitions and idolatry,” affirmed that all is of grace, including sanctification by grace. This doctrine of sanctification by grace leaves believers thankful, humble, and receptive as Christ gives them even more grace to draw them along in sanctification.

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<sup>256</sup>Ibid., 3.11.1.

<sup>257</sup>John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries*, The Calvin Translation Society (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), 1 Cor. 1:30, John 13:8, John 17:19.

<sup>258</sup>John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. J. T. McNeill, trans. F. L. Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 3.16.1.

## The Son's Threefold Office

Christ advances his people's holiness in his offices of prophet, king, and priest.<sup>259</sup>

Calvin fully develops the theology of this threefold office in the 1559 version of the *Institutes*. In these offices, Christ continually works to purify his people, who are, without doubt, still deeply in need of daily purification and just as certainly assured that Christ will finish their holiness.<sup>260</sup> As prophet, Christ continually teaches his people "everything worth knowing" through his Spirit.<sup>261</sup> Christians come by no helpful truth of salvation by their own effort, but Christ reveals all as their teacher who "impresses his word on our hearts by his Spirit."<sup>262</sup> Christ as prophet teaches truth that has real power to transform people by freeing them from their slavery to sin, including sinful thought patterns, "so that, loosed from the snares of Satan, we willingly obey righteousness."<sup>263</sup>

As king, Christ rules over his people, subduing all his enemies including the world, the devil, and the flesh. Christ also equips his people for battle so that his kingdom might advance both within and outside of his people. As Calvin explains, "Now he arms and equips us with his power, adorns us with his beauty and magnificence, enriches us with his wealth."<sup>264</sup> As the king, Christ constantly "enriches his people with all things necessary for the eternal salvation of souls and fortifies them with courage to stand

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<sup>259</sup>Ibid., 2.15.1.

<sup>260</sup>Ibid., 4.8.12.

<sup>261</sup>Ibid., 2.15.2.

<sup>262</sup>John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries*, The Calvin Translation Society (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), John 8:32.

<sup>263</sup>Ibid., John 8:30.

<sup>264</sup>John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. J. T. McNeill, trans. F. L. Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 2.15.4.

unconquerable against all the assaults of spiritual enemies.”<sup>265</sup> As high priest, Christ has interceded for his people, through the consecration of offering himself, so they are made partakers of his high-priestly holiness.<sup>266</sup> As priest, only Christ can purify his people through “purging away our defilements,”<sup>267</sup> that he might further their sanctification, which [by themselves] the saints could never do.<sup>268</sup> Christ then is completely active, not only in the establishing, but in completing the sanctification of his people.

## Conclusions

Calvin believed that Christ’s sanctification of his people is efficacious, and any attempt to obtain holiness through good works produced not holiness but hypocrisy.<sup>269</sup> Therefore, Calvin understood that only Christ deserves the title of savior.<sup>270</sup> Calvin disliked the Roman Catholic Church’s satisfactions and indulgences because they harm Christ’s glory and believers, whom they led astray in the quest for holiness. While the Roman Catholic Church offered satisfactions and indulgences, Calvin fought back, showing that holiness could be found nowhere but in the blood of Christ.<sup>271</sup> Calvin wanted to steer his readers away from any idea that they could sanctify themselves by

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<sup>265</sup>Ibid., 2.15.4.

<sup>266</sup>Ibid., 2.15.6.

<sup>267</sup>Ibid.

<sup>268</sup>Ibid., 3.20.21.

<sup>269</sup>Ibid., 4.10.12, 4.13.7.

<sup>270</sup> John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries*, The Calvin Translation Society (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), John 8:32.

<sup>271</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. J. T. McNeill, trans. F. L. Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 3.5.2.

mere human effort; instead he pointed them to Christ.<sup>272</sup> Christians can add nothing to the glorious work of Christ, who sanctifies them.<sup>273</sup> True, sinners may repent of sin, but they may not offer any work as a “satisfaction” for that sin. Calvin opposed anything that subtracts from Christ’s glory in either justification or sanctification. Calvin wanted believers to see that Christ is the foundation for sanctification.

### **Conclusions of Literature Review**

The biblical view of sex is clearly and comprehensively understood through the biblical paradigm of creation-fall-redemption-restoration. Human sexuality, as a part of creation, was created good but is under God’s curse because of human sin. However, God, through the person and work of Jesus Christ, brings forgiveness of sin and the renewal of all creation, with substantial healing now and the full restoration of all things at Christ’s second coming. Thus, human sexuality will find its fulfillment in the new heavens and the new earth when the triune God is glorified in his people.

The collective voice of the sexual addiction literature shows some controversy in how to label problematic sexual behavior. In addition, the American Psychiatric Association has not yet found sufficient data to support a sex addiction diagnosis in the fifth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. However, extensive research and work by Patrick Carnes and others has advanced this field of study and offered hope to those in the grip of sexual addictive behaviors. Professionals suggest various treatment approaches for sexual addiction, including: group and individual

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<sup>272</sup> John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries*, The Calvin Translation Society (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), 2 Cor. 7:11.

<sup>273</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. J. T. McNeill, trans. F. L. Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 3.15.3.



therapy, cognitive behavioral approaches that identify triggers, behavioral techniques to manage cravings, relapse prevention strategies, family therapy to resolve conflicts, twelve-step based recovery groups, and medication aimed at diminishing dysfunctional sexual behaviors. The secular literature also testifies to the brokenness of sexual lives and the need for some type of relief from their debilitating effects such as loss of intimacy and trust.

Calvin scholars expounding on Calvin's view of God the Son and his role in sanctification point to Christ as the one who bridges the gap between God's holiness and men's sinfulness. Christ's work on the cross brings together the Father's mercy, love, and justice, and thus, Christ secures and completes sanctification. People are helpless and unable to sanctify themselves, but Christ overcomes this problem in his office of priest, prophet, and king. In addition, Christ's union with his people communicates holiness and restores the image of God in them. Thus, Christ is the only source and guarantor of his people's sanctification. The literature review on Calvin's view of God the Son and his role in sanctification reflects the biblical centrality of Christ in the redemption of his people. The Christian faith has efficacious resources to address and deal with addictive sexual behavior without disregarding valid contributions of secular literature.

This chapter examined the biblical view of sex, current literature dealing with sexual addiction and recovery, and Calvin's view on God the Son and his role in sanctification. Attentive listening to this chapter has the potential to sharpen one's understanding of the discussion yet to come concerning the main question in chapter four: how can Christian married men sustain sexual integrity in the Sea Services? So, in pursuit of this question, it is necessary to research the experiences of Christian married

men in order to know what motivates them to sustain sexual integrity, what challenges they face along the way, and what best practices they have learned.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Methodology**

The purpose of this study was to explore how Christian married men can sustain sexual integrity in the Sea Services. This study assumed that experienced Christian married men in the Sea Services have learned important lessons involved in sustaining sexual integrity while pursuing professional excellence. In order to address this purpose, the researcher identified three main areas of literature that were central to the study. These include the areas of the biblical view of sex, sexual addiction and recovery, and John Calvin's view of God the Son's role in sanctification. To examine this purpose more closely, the following questions served as the intended focus of the qualitative research:

1. What motivates Christian married men to sustain sexual integrity in the Sea Services?
2. What challenges do Christian married men face in sustaining sexual integrity in the Sea Services?
3. What practices help Christian married men sustain sexual integrity in the Sea Services?

This chapter describes how the research was conducted. It details the design of the study, and why the particular research participants were selected. The following covers how the data were collected and analyzed, the project's limitations, and the researcher's biases toward the subject matter.

### Design of the Study

Since this study focused on how Christian married men can sustain sexual integrity in the Sea Services, the researcher adopted a general qualitative methodology that reports the findings of themes and patterns from the data. In contrast to a quantitative approach that counts how much or how many, qualitative research emphasizes the meanings Christian married men assign to their own experiences in the service. While qualitative research may be more nuanced and less objective than the standard quantitative inquiry, it was most fitting given this topic area. Denzin and Lincoln describe qualitative research, saying, “qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.”<sup>274</sup> This is precisely what the researcher has attempted to do in this research.

In her book, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, Sharon Merriam identifies four primary characteristics of the qualitative approach: “The focus is on process, understanding, and meaning; the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis; the process is inductive; and the product is richly descriptive.”<sup>275</sup> This study followed Merriam’s pattern and emphasized uncovering the meaning that Christian married men assign to sustaining sexual integrity in the Sea Services. The researcher collected and analyzed data received in a series of semi-structured interviews. Rather than testing a theory, the researcher attempted to focus on

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<sup>274</sup>N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln, *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2005), 3.

<sup>275</sup> Sharan B. Merriam, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, The Jossey-Bass Higher and Adult Education Series (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 14.

specific experiences and interview data to build understanding and meaning. This study produced a descriptive picture of how Christian married men sustain sexual integrity in the context of the Sea Services and interpret their own experiences in that environment.

### **Participant Sample Selection**

The primary tool for data collection during this research was semi-structured interviews with a purposeful sampling<sup>276</sup> of senior Sea Service leaders. The researcher chose officers and enlisted men who were most likely in a position to provide valuable insight on the proposed research questions. Toward this end, the researcher selected eight participants that met the following criteria. First, their peers, families, and friends regarded the participants as having sustained sexual integrity at a very high standard during the past twenty years. Second, the participants had achieved at least the military rank of Senior Chief or First Sergeant for enlisted men and Commander or Lieutenant Colonel for officers.<sup>277</sup> These rankings ensured that the participants had at least twenty years of experience across a wide range of duty assignments in the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard. A greater breadth of experiences throughout a wide range of military contexts proved to deepen lessons related to the proposed research questions. Third, all interviewees were on active duty at the time of the interviews, were married for at least fifteen years, attended church regularly, expressed their faith as summarized in the Apostles' Creed, and looked to the holy scriptures as the only and true guide for faith and practice. This limited participation to Christian married men who were engaging daily with the issues raised in the proposed research. The participants were selected from a

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<sup>276</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>277</sup> First Sergeant and Lieutenant Colonel are ranks used by the Marine Corps, and Senior Chief and Commander are used by the Navy and Coast Guard.

variety of occupational backgrounds to provide for an intentional spectrum. The researcher also sought to understand the experiences of many participants from different denominational backgrounds. This ensured that a myriad of competing voices would be considered from different Christian perspectives.

Participants were interviewed from a number of different Navy, Marine, and Coast Guard commands throughout the United States. Since the researcher has personal knowledge of various regions, this experience provided numerous familiar military contacts from which to draw participants. The different geographical locations of the interview subjects did not lessen the quality and personal nature of the interviews. Some specific participants who fit the research criteria were easy to reach in person, while others preferred to use Skype. Therefore, the researcher had immediate access and contact information for every military participant who fit the desired profile.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

Two interviews were conducted in person, and six were conducted through Skype. The researcher interviewed participants over the course of seven weeks. The in-person interviews necessitated some travel in order for the researcher and the participants to meet at mutually convenient locations and times. Flexibility with respect to these appointments was important because of the demanding nature of military work, changing command schedules, and potential emergencies.

The interviews focused on exploring the participants' understanding of the research questions. For this reason, interview questions were open-ended and encouraged the participants to freely discuss the pressing issues addressed in the research questions.

This “semi-structured”<sup>278</sup> interview approach allowed for flexibly worded questions and follow-up probes. As Merriam describes,

The largest part of the interview is guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored, and neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions is determined ahead of time. This format allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic.<sup>279</sup>

The semi-structured approach helped the researcher to guide the interview along, and it allowed greater flexibility to explore the meaning that the participants assign to their experiences.

The researcher used the following questions in each of the interviews. These queries formed the basis for the discussion, as well as a springboard for follow-up questions and further probes.

1. Tell me about a time when you did not face sexual temptation appropriately.  
What did you learn about yourself? God? Sin? Grace?
2. Tell me about a time when you withstood sexual temptation. What did you learn about yourself? God? Sin? Grace?
3. What kind of challenges did you experience during deployments?
4. To what extent did challenges to your sexual integrity change as you got promoted and acquired more leadership responsibilities?
5. What internal motivations helped you sustain sexual integrity?
6. What external motivations helped you sustain sexual integrity?

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<sup>278</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid.

7. What role does Christian community have in helping you sustain sexual integrity?
8. What motivated you to sustain sexual integrity during deployments?
9. What do you do to sustain sexual integrity when you are alone?
10. What do you do to sustain sexual integrity during deployments?
11. What do you do to sustain sexual integrity when you interact with various types of technology?
12. What other things do you do to sustain sexual integrity in the Sea Services?

The researcher took careful notes on anything of significance that arose in the discussion, such as important themes or non-verbal cues. In addition, the discussions were recorded with a pocket-sized, digital voice recorder. This ensured that the discussion was captured in its entirety for transcription and analysis at an opportune time. This written record served as the bulk of the research data to be analyzed.

Interview data was carefully coded and analyzed throughout the data collection process utilizing a constant comparative method.<sup>280</sup> This methodology allowed the researcher to compare and contrast the interview transcripts, looking for parallels and divergences of thought among the respondents. Merriam explains,

Basically, the constant comparative method involves comparing one segment of data with another to determine similarities and differences. Data are grouped together on a similar dimension. The dimension is tentatively given a name; it then becomes a category. The overall object of this analysis is to identify patterns in the data.<sup>281</sup>

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<sup>280</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid.



This method enabled each interview to inform the next as better questions arose or new answers brought a different perspective to the research questions. The researcher focused on understanding how participants grapple with sustaining sexual integrity in the Sea Services. As Merriam points out, “Applied research is undertaken to improve the quality of practice of a particular discipline. Applied researchers ... hope their work will be used by administrators and policymakers to improve the way things are done.”<sup>282</sup> This research design was intended to discover best practices in keeping with the objective of applied research.

### **Researcher Position**

Merriam notes, “Qualitative case studies are limited, too, by the sensitivity and integrity of the investigator. The researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis.”<sup>283</sup> The researcher is aware that his bias, background, and worldview are factors that contribute to his interpretation of the research data. The researcher is a Navy chaplain on active duty, currently serving as the Command Chaplain of a Navy Cruiser. The researcher has served with all three Sea Services in the past nine years, and he has counseled Christian and non-Christian married men concerning sexual integrity. This accounts for the researcher’s interest in the subject matter and motivation to seek a greater understanding of the topic.

As a career Navy chaplain, the researcher’s analysis of the data received is colored by his own experiences with the subject, both negative and positive. For example, the researcher witnessed some Christian married men confess their struggles with sexual

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<sup>282</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid., 52.

temptation during Bible studies. The researcher sometimes was made aware of the sources of such struggles. In addition, the researcher's theological convictions also shape him to an extent. He is a reformed Christian, ordained by the Presbyterian Church in America and endorsed for military ministry by the Presbyterian and Reformed Joint Commission for Chaplains and Military Personnel. These commitments require him to interpret his experiences through the lens of a biblical life and worldview.

In the end, the researcher tends toward what Merriam calls a "positivist" epistemological perspective, when she states, "A positivist orientation assumes that reality exists 'out there' and it is observable, stable and measurable."<sup>284</sup> This is how the researcher tends to interpret reality. He focuses on objective and external truth as it makes sense to him. This can impact the researcher's analysis in areas where there is no clear-cut objective answers. However, an awareness of the researcher's biases has enabled him to set them aside in order to treat the interviewees with fairness and record their observations accurately for the sake of research.

### **Study Limitations**

Even though the participants in this research represented several different Christian theological perspectives and backgrounds, together they embodied just a tiny fraction of the Christian diversity found in the Navy, Marines, and Coast Guard. This purposeful sampling of military senior leaders provided a great deal of stimulating information on the topic, but these eight participants can hardly be expected to speak for the entire Christian community in the Sea Services. There may be some important insight that was missed because a certain Christian theological tradition was not represented in

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<sup>284</sup> Ibid., 8.

the sample. Thus, the conclusions of this research depend on a limited literature review and on the input received from a small number of senior military leaders currently serving in the Sea Services. These constraints were necessary for logistical and practical reasons as well as for limited time and resources.

There were no senior Christian married women considered for the research project. The research's specific emphasis has been on Christian married men. Similarly, there were no single Christian men interviewed. Of course, they would have available information to offer, but they would not have the marital status and longevity to meet the participants' criteria. This research focused on the feedback received from senior military leaders who were still on active duty. Certainly junior service members, retirees, and reservists have valuable insight on the subject matter as well. However, this research did not include those groups in order to limit the scope of the study.

Moreover, it is important to note that the spotlight was exclusively on the Department of the Navy and Coast Guard. Many of these same issues likely have parallels in the Army and Air Force services, but the implications of these findings for Christian married men in these services may be different. The results of this study may also have implications for police and fire departments in the United States.

Some of the study's findings may be generalized to other similar military environments in different countries. Readers who desire to generalize some of the particular aspects of these conclusions on sustaining sexual integrity should test those aspects in their particular context. As with all qualitative studies, readers bear the responsibility to determine what can be appropriately applied to their context.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Findings**

The purpose of this study was to explore how Christian married men can sustain sexual integrity in the Sea Services. The assumption of this study was that some senior<sup>285</sup> Christian married men in the Sea Services have learned important lessons concerning sustaining sexual integrity<sup>286</sup> while pursuing professional excellence. These Christian Navy, Coast Guard, and Marine Corps senior leaders all have substantial military experience and are currently serving on active duty all over the continental United States. In order to address the purpose of this study, the following research questions served as the intended focus of the qualitative research:

1. What motivates Christian married men to sustain sexual integrity in the Sea Services?
2. What challenges do Christian married men face in sustaining sexual integrity in the Sea Services?
3. What practices help Christian married men sustain sexual integrity in the Sea Services?

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<sup>285</sup> At least twenty years in the Sea Services.

<sup>286</sup> A process by which Christians consistently seek to live out their sexuality as an expression of covenantal fidelity to the triune God of the Christian holy scriptures. See Exod. 20:14; Prov. 5-7; Song; Mal. 2:14-15; Rom. 1; 1 Cor. 5-7; 1 Thess. 4:1-8; Heb. 13:4.

In order to shed light on these research objectives, this chapter utilizes the interview findings of eight Sea Service military members and reports on common themes and relevant insights pertaining to the research questions for this study.

### **Introduction to Participants**

The paragraphs below briefly describe the eight research participants. For the sake of anonymity, the interviewees' names have been changed.<sup>287</sup> A brief review of the extensive military experience of these subjects will highlight their expertise and interaction with the research topics. Each holds a military rank of Commander/Lieutenant Colonel or greater for Sea Service officers and Master Chief/Sergeant Major for enlisted Sea Service members. Each is a career military member with at least twenty years of military experience across a wide spectrum of diverse Navy, Coast Guard, and Marine Corps assignments, except in one case which falls short only by two years. In addition, each is still serving on active duty, guaranteeing the fact that these are not abstract concepts to them. These are Sea Service military members who constantly face the issues addressed in the research.

CDR Harris is an officer on a Navy ship which is part of a strike group ready to project naval power worldwide. As a member of the command triad of a ship, he supervises hundreds of sailors spread across several departments and functions. He has deployed several times in support of Navy combat missions overseas. Previous assignments include multiple frigates and one Navy Destroyer similar to the USS The Sullivans (DDG 68). He has been a Christian since childhood and has been in the military

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<sup>287</sup>The researcher has made necessary grammatical corrections to participants' quotes, but care has been taken not to alter the intent of their observations.

in various capacities since the late eighties. He is a father and is approaching twenty years of marriage.

CDR Wilson is a Navy officer. He supports programs that directly affect the well-being of thousands of Navy and Marine Corps families stationed in the U.S. and around the globe. He has deployed several times in support of Navy and Marine Corps combat missions overseas. Previous assignments included a Navy ship, a Marine unit and a naval air training station on the west coast. He has been a Christian since childhood and has been in the military in various capacities since the late eighties. He is a father and has been married for more than twenty-three years.

CAPT Madison is an officer in a Navy unit. He has commanded both a military installation and a fighter squadron during his twenty-four years of military service. He has also been responsible for leading hundreds of sailors and civilian employees across several departments and functions. He has deployed once in support of Navy combat missions overseas and was part of several two-week detachments in support of training and special operations missions. Previous assignments include two VFA units similar to VFA-151. He has been a Christian for twenty-two years. He is a father and has been married for more than twenty-one years.

CAPT Smith is an officer in a Navy unit. He currently commands and supervises hundreds of sailors spread across several departments and functions. He has deployed several times in support of Navy combat missions overseas. He has accumulated thousands of flight hours and hundreds of carrier arrested landings. Previous assignments include two VF units similar to VF-102. He's been a Christian for more than fifteen years

and has been in the military in various capacities for the past twenty-five years. He is a father and has been married for more than twenty years.

CAPT Menendez has served with the Navy and Coast Guard for the past eighteen years. He is currently involved with support services in the Coast Guard. He has deployed in support of Navy combat missions overseas. Previous assignments include Navy carriers similar to CVN 71 and a Coast Guard training center. He has been a Christian since childhood. He is a father and has been married for more than fourteen years.

CAPT Oliver is an officer in the Coast Guard. He has commanded thousands of Coast Guardsmen spread across several departments and functions. He has deployed overseas. Previous assignments include geographical areas such as Washington, D.C. and Virginia. He has been a Christian since he was fourteen years old and has been in the military in various capacities for the past twenty-five years. He is a father and has been married for more than twenty-five years.

SGT MAJ Miller is a senior enlisted member in the Marine Corps. He has commanded hundreds of Marines across several functions. He has deployed several times in support of Marine Corps combat missions overseas. Previous assignments include two Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadrons similar to HMLA 773. He has been a Christian for over thirteen years and has been in the military in various capacities for the past twenty-one years. He is a father and has been married for more than twenty-one years.

Sea Service officer<sup>288</sup> Stuart is a high senior sea service military member. He has commanded thousands of military members across the U.S. and overseas. He has

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<sup>288</sup>The research participant requested to keep his rank and branch of service anonymous.

deployed overseas and undertook several geo-bachelor<sup>289</sup> tours. Previous geographical assignments include North Carolina, Washington D.C., and Florida. He's been a Christian since his early forties and has been in the military in various capacities for over thirty years. He is a father and has been married for more than thirty-four years.

This group of Christian research participants includes some of the most experienced and knowledgeable military service members in the country. Their years of service range from a low of eighteen years, in the case of CAPT Menendez, to a high of over thirty years for Sea Service Officer Stuart. Each Sea Service member has received numerous personal awards, and they all have various amounts of advanced graduate degrees. This is a credible group of seasoned veterans of the sea service military that is well suited to address the questions proposed in this research.

### **Motivations For Sexual Integrity**

The first research question sought to focus on issues related to motivations behind sustaining sexual integrity. In other words, "What motivates Christian married men to sustain sexual integrity in the Sea Services?" With each Sea Service military member representing a specific sea branch of service, there are bound to be differences due to the unique mission and command structures present in these military institutions. For example, Navy and Marine Corps tend to deploy their members for longer times than Coast Guard. With these differences in mind, research participants discussed numerous matters related to the motivations that sustain their pursuit of sexual integrity in the Sea Services. Their consensus coalesced around five broad categories: Christian faith content,

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<sup>289</sup>The military member is a geo-bachelor when one moves to another geographical area without one's family for part of or the entire tour assignment.



Christian marriage vows, Christian community, Christian character and conscience, and faithfulness to military institutions. These five categories will be discussed below.

### *Christian Faith Content*

In the course of the interviews, all of the eight participants referenced the content of the Christian faith in one way or another. It figured prominently in these participants' understanding of their motivation to sustain sexual integrity in the Sea Services. It became clear that these participants saw the content of the Christian faith as the main motivating factor for their pursuit of sexual integrity while seeking professional excellence in what they do. CDR Wilson elaborated on the centrality of his Christian faith for all of life, including motivating him to sustain sexual integrity, in this way:

I realized since I was very young I was not my own and that I was bought with a price which was very costly. God has done something for me in saving me, keeping me, fitting me inside and setting me apart. Therefore, in response to that love for me and the love I have for Him, I have a motivation to do what he has called me to do; that is, to be sexually pure.... The strongest motivation of all is my faith. How important Christ is to me and how important he has been to me all of my life.

In CDR Wilson's mind, the person and work of Christ is the motivating engine for his pursuit of sexual integrity. God demonstrated his love in Christ for CDR Wilson by paying a costly price for his salvation. This sacrificial love has set CDR Wilson on a new path of loving obedience to God in all areas of his life, including his sexuality. Accordingly, the grace of God in Christ not only saved CDR Wilson but also guides him into a life of holiness where love becomes the main motivation rather than fear of punishment.

CAPT Oliver spoke along similar lines when he emphasized following what the Bible says. Several biblical passages came to his mind as he talked about the testimony of the scriptures. He explained,

My Christian faith compels me to follow the Bible in what it says....One of the ten commandments says, “Don’t commit adultery;”<sup>290</sup> Jesus goes even further and says “Don’t be lustful toward a woman.”<sup>291</sup> These are pretty high standards to me. A lot of the epistles talk about sexual purity, living a holy life and keeping yourself separate;...other sins are outside your body and sexual sin is joining yourself with another person and becoming one.<sup>292</sup> So, I feel there is an emphasis on that in the Bible.

The point that CAPT Oliver made here by citing a few biblical passages is that God has spoken through his word to his people concerning what it means to live a holy life in the area of sexuality. According to CAPT Oliver’s understanding of these biblical passages, God’s commandments will speak not only into external sexual behavior but also into internal thought patterns of the mind.

CAPT Madison and CDR Harris went a step further and offered a term that is rooted in biblical writings and familiar in theological circles, and that is sanctification. CAPT Madison suggested that this work of sanctification is done through the agency of the Holy Spirit mediated through the holy scriptures. He elaborated, “It is clear from the scriptures that sexual purity is God’s desire for men and women for their sanctification.... Since the time I became a believer I have the Lord’s Spirit within me that is part of my identity as I die to the desires of myself and grow into Him.... It’s both happening in my mind and in my heart.” CDR Harris agreed with CAPT Madison but emphasized the

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<sup>290</sup>Exod. 20:14.

<sup>291</sup>Matt. 5:27-28.

<sup>292</sup>1 Cor. 6:12-20; 1 Thess. 4:1-8.

work of sanctification as sanctification of the body. He asserted that “you should not defile the body.” CDR Harris went on to say, “I believe that sexual immorality is sin.” God’s call to sanctification in their lives compels them to offer their bodies, more specifically their sexuality, unto godliness and righteousness and away from sin.

The Christian faith is the main motivating factor for all eight participants in sustaining sexual integrity in the Sea Services. CDR Wilson emphasized the gospel, the work of God in Christ to save sinners from eternal guilt and condemnation, as the primary source of motivation for sexual integrity. CAPT Oliver teased out several biblical passages that clearly state God’s will for his people in the area of sexuality from external behavior to internal thought patterns. CAPT Madison and CDR Harris preferred to use the biblical term sanctification to codify their motivation for sexual integrity.

#### *Christian Community*

Another observation about motivations that sustain sexual integrity in the Sea Services that came up during the course of the interviews was that of Christian community; that is, being in relationship with other Christian brothers and sisters. In fact, all of the eight participants claimed it as an important motivation overall. The participants explained that it is important to quickly find a Christian community to plug in to and be accountable to. It does not matter whether it takes weeks or months to find a church or a small group of like-minded brothers; it is vital to get to know others and be known. CAPT Oliver put his finger on the issue more succinctly. In discussing the importance of Christian community as a motivation for sexual integrity, he emphasized how important it is for Christian Sea Service members to get this right. He asserted,

I became good friends with a Sunday school teacher where we lived just through normal conversations. We were both believers which helped. I was also close

friends with a pastor in Michigan. We both showed up in town because we both were moving from one state to another. So, we were kind of new and we started a friendship. I also had peers about the same age [which] enabled us to sharpen and challenge one another. Certain Bible studies and classes, whether addressing pornography in the modern age or marriage in general to marriage counseling with the pastor,...[m]y wife and I had encouragement there.

CAPT Oliver illustrated well the reoccurring theme of Christian community as an important motivation unto sexual integrity in the sea services. However, he was also the strongest proponent of it for several reasons. He explains,

My wife and I decided that the local church was a high priority wherever we moved. As soon as we moved into a new town and started hunting for a house, we would also visit the local churches because it is too easy when you start over and are in a new town to kind of lay back, relax, get in a rut and not join a church. Then, there is no accountability and you and your wife start drifting and that can become a weakness if you and your wife let that happen...We did not always find a church right away. Sometimes we had to look for a couple months and visit half a dozen churches. When we found a church, we tried to plug in somewhere; either going to Sunday school or serving somewhere. This enabled them to get to know us and we felt like we were more accountable because if we were not showing up we would get a call or a visit.

CAPT Oliver pointed to the negative consequences of not joining a local church. He explained that a husband and wife become vulnerable to temptations and isolated from nurturing Christian relationships that promote accountability, spiritual growth, and a life of sacrificial service to others. In CAPT Oliver's mind, whenever accountability, spiritual growth, and a life of sacrificial service erodes, motivation for holiness, including sexual integrity, will soon erode as well. This negative domino effect can be set into motion by neglecting Christian community.

CDR Wilson agreed with CAPT Oliver but preferred to focus on accountability. He mentioned Christian community as a very important motivation unto sexual integrity. He explained, "[B]elievers become stronger when they are in relationship to other believers in Christ." This connection allows for a sustained accountability. He comments,

Christian community allows individuals to share their fears, their temptations; to admit their faults; to be able to not only to find redemption and forgiveness for those faults but also to allow them to be torn down. [O]ften times when you publicly state those temptations they no longer become temptations anymore, like a bomb which is taken apart and no longer becomes a threat. Community has a way to guard you; it is when you hide from community and lie to community that you find yourself in a position [where] you can fall into sexual impurity.

CDR Wilson talks about Christian community as a force multiplier for one's motivation to pursue and sustain sexual integrity. Christian community accountability breaks down in order to build up. It enables healing from past sexual failures of all kinds and offers necessary resilience for new levels of sexual integrity. In addition, CDR Wilson believes that Christian community can also strengthen one's motivation for sexual integrity because of faithful discipleship undertaken in the past; that is, during one's childhood, early, and late teenage years by parents and church leaders.

CDR Harris was the first participant to acknowledge that his present motivation to sustain sexual integrity is due in large measure to the discipleship work done by his parents and church leaders in the past. The benefits of such endeavors are still paying dividends. He explains, "I was raised as a Southern Baptist. I was raised with the idea of marriage between one man and one woman and I still believe that. I was also raised that you should be true to that person. I am certainly not without sin but... I was looking to preachers and pastors through the years." CDR Harris looks back and sees his formative Christian years as having a positive impact today. His motivation to sustain sexual integrity has blossomed and taken deep root into his life as a Christian Sea Service member due to the discipleship investment of Christian parents and leaders through the years.

The compound effect of Christian community into one's motivation to sustain sexual integrity is real, nurturing, and protective in all the participants' minds. CAPT Oliver pointed to Christian community as a non-negotiable in strengthening one's motivation to sustain sexual integrity. It can truly make Christian married men resilient in the face of so much sexual temptation. CDR Wilson highlights Christian community accountability while CDR Harris points to Christian community discipleship. Therefore, both of their testimonies point to Christian community as a motivation to sustain sexual integrity.

### *Christian Marriage Vows*

Seven of the research participants regarded their Christian marriage vows as a motivation to sustain sexual integrity in the sea services. The commitment that these Christian men made to their Christian wives seems to be a high priority in their lives and minds. This commitment also fuels their motivation to sustain sexual integrity no matter what professional challenges they face, what geographical areas they live in and what marital stage they find themselves in.

CAPT Menendez was the only one who did not stress the importance and impact of marriage vows in one's motivation to sustain sexual integrity in the sea services. His discussion about motivation for sexual integrity centers on Christian faith content. He said, "[M]y main motivation is the Word of God." CAPT Menendez believes in sexual faithfulness to your marriage partner because "the Bible says to maintain the marriage bed pure."<sup>293</sup> He also stressed community when he explained that "one of the things very important is relationship with a church wherever we have been; on the first Sunday we

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<sup>293</sup>Heb. 13:4.

are there we are trying to find a church; ...it has been a critical part of life in...every location with the military.” Perhaps his silence regarding Christian marriage vows as an important motivation for sexual integrity may be linked to his distinctions on motivations. It may be that he considers Christian marriage vows as an external motivation. CAPT Menendez went on to say, “My internal drive is so strong that I never had the need for any external motivation... I am aware of external motivations like laws but I don’t think about that.” During the interviews, CAPT Menendez answered in the same manner, “Overall the answer is still the same: the word and the Holy Spirit to guide and convict.” In this way CAPT Menendez’s motivation for sexual integrity is totally shaped by Christian faith content and Christian community. His distinction between internal and external motivations for sexual integrity may explain why Christian marriage vows do not figure prominently as a motivation for him personally.

However, CAPT Menendez’s position is an outlier in the findings. The other seven sea service military members took a different view. CAPT Smith expressed in the beginning of his interview, “I think that the single motivation that has helped me above all others is my commitment to my wife: our marriage vows and what those vows mean to each of us separately and together.” CAPT Madison concurred with this view by affirming the importance of “...the desire to remain in right relationship to my wife.” SGT MAJ Miller spoke along the same lines but included the whole family as well. He explained that for him, a significant motivation for sexual purity is “[m]y family; I have four children. My wife and I were married very young and have been together for quite a long time.... I want to do this for my wife as well.” Unanimously and with firm

conviction, the research participants affirmed their Christian married vows as an important motivation for sexual integrity.

In addition, three of the sea service military members interviewed discussed how the potential consequences as well as the lingering consequences of past marital unfaithfulness drive them to have this motivation in the forefront of their minds. Sea Service officer Stuart explains,

I have been absolutely loyal to my wife with one exception. I had a one-time sexual encounter with an old girlfriend very long ago during a point in my life where my marriage was not working so well. The basic reason why it was not working so well was that sexual relations between my spouse and I had dried up. She showed no interest at all.... It is the one thing in my life I wish I could undo; it has eaten me alive since then. This took place before I came to know Christ the way I do now. Now my Christian married vows are far more important to me and that's why it hurts so much. Since that time, I have gotten on my knees and prayed for forgiveness; it was eating me alive. I have never succumbed to that again. I don't want to let God or my spouse down.

Like Sea Service officer Stuart, all the research participants, with the exception of CAPT Menendez, echoed the sentiment that their Christian marriage vows fuel their motivation for consistent sexual integrity. With a shared sense of faithfulness to God and their spouses, these men are motivated to keep faith with both to the end.

#### *Faithfulness to Military Institutions*

Four of the research participants also regarded faithfulness to the military institution as a motivation for sexual integrity. Whereas all of the participants focus on Christian faith content, Christian community, and Christian marriage vows, four participants went a step further and described their relationship to the military as one of faithfulness. They see their personal sexual conduct as having an impact on their professional relationship with the sea service institutions they serve. The desire to be a role model to those they lead, either in peace or war times, compels them to sexual



integrity. In addition, the desire to excel in what they do and use their time for the good of the institution drives them avoid situations where they can falter and bring shame on to themselves, their families, and their respective military institutions.

The desire to provide a role model to those he leads is a motivation for sexual integrity according to CAPT Smith. He explains,

As I become senior in my service I think the motivation is to become a good example to others, to those I lead; but more importantly to them and their spouses. My wife and I could be an example for them as they are going through challenges we had as a young couple or [that I had] as a young new officer through [which] we were successful in making our way through. The motivation to be a good example to others has clearly been central from the time I have been in service and matured as an officer.

CAPT Smith described how his personal sexual integrity impacts his military leadership style. For example, he shared that he wants to be able to offer constructive advice to those he leads if the need arises which can only be possible with a walk that supports his talk. He continued, “Now in a leadership role I am responsible for more people that are dealing with their own challenges; my personal leadership style is such that they are part of my family now and their challenges are my challenges.” CAPT Smith sees those he leads as an extension of his own family. Faithfulness to this greater family, his branch of service, motivates him to sexual integrity. SGT MAJ Miller agreed and summarized in this way: “My Marines see me and my wife and how we live our lives; this is a visual testimony to all of my Marines.”

CDR Harris agreed with CAPT Smith and SGT MAJ Miller but pointed to his desire to excel professionally and use his time wisely back at home and overseas. He has learned to avoid situations where he would be more susceptible to sexual temptations of any kind. He explains,

As I have gotten older I find that a good cup of coffee and being at home with my family is really where I find my pleasure. Early in my career there was a push to go to the wrong places; it was either “Let’s go to the strip clubs” or “Let’s find some prostitutes.” I just had no interest. I would go back to the ship and do something else. I am just not going to put myself in that kind of position. I am not that much of a liberty<sup>294</sup> guy anyway. My work ethic is very strong.

CDR Harris’ emphasis on professional excellence restrains him from wandering off and putting himself in risky and tempting situations. CDR Harris’ focus on his vocation and good time management keeps him faithful to the military institution, which in turn gives him motivation for sexual integrity.

Sea service officer Stuart agrees with CAPT Smith, SGT MAJ Miller, CDR Harris and summarized this conversation in this way: “The next worst thing I could do is to let the organization down because that would be scandalous; it would be conduct unbecoming and I don’t want to go there. It is a trap and I don’t want to get [caught] up in it.” In essence, each of these men desires to be faithful to the military institutions they serve.

### *Christian Character and Conscience*

Two of the research participants revealed that character and conscience propelled them to sustain sexual integrity, especially in times away from what is familiar, such as family and local churches. They also mentioned the role of conscience in helping one to navigate the turbulent waters of sexual temptation no matter what shape these took. For example, when talking about deployments, CAPT Oliver highlighted the importance of character to stay motivated in sustaining sexual integrity. He explained,

I think in these times we rely more on character and internal reserves because we don’t have the time to plug in somewhere as strongly as when you are permanently stationed in one place. These times are the more dangerous because

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<sup>294</sup>Liberty refers to time off work: the sailors’ free time at home or overseas.

even with the best of intentions you will crack if you don't have a solid foundation. You get lonely, you are away, there [are] other influences like peer pressure; you have to make sure you are pretty solid inside.

CAPT Oliver affirmed the importance of character as a motivation to sustain sexual integrity. He developed this even further by stressing the importance of the life of the mind. He asserted, "You need to make sure you are flooding your mind and soul with positive things so that you can resist temptations or areas [where] you can fall."

Essentially, who one is inside, one's character, feeds and molds the motivation to sustain sexual integrity in times without the support of a familiar Christian community.

Regarding motivation for sexual purity, Sea Service officer Stuart stressed the role of conscience. During the interview, he was very clear on this point. He even gave this answer twice: "[M]y own conscience and the Word of God motivate me to sustain sexual integrity.... I do not want to betray my wife and best friend." His repeated emphasis on conscience shows it to be very sensitive to the work of God's word. In other words, his conscience is deeply responsive to God's leading on this matter. His conscience sparks great flames of motivation for sexual integrity since he does not want to betray his wife who is his best friend. He adds, in response to the question of motivation for sexual purity, "[I]t is the right thing to do." This motto was repeated several times by Stuart during the interview.

All of the research participants did not share a consensus on the role of character and conscience as a motivation for sexual integrity. However, CAPT Oliver and Sea Service officer Stuart mentioned both in addressing the motivations enabling sustained sexual integrity. These two Christian sea service military members both noted the

importance and impact of character and conscience when they looked back at their personal and professional lives.

The above discussion focused on issues related to the motivations behind sustaining sexual integrity in the Sea Services. In other words, “What motivates Christian married men to sustain sexual integrity in the Sea Services?” With each sea service military member representing a specific sea branch of service, there are bound to be differences due to the unique mission and command structures present in these military institutions. For example, Navy and Marine Corps are more combat-oriented than the Coast Guard. With this in mind, research participants discussed numerous matters related to the motivations that sustain their pursuit of sexual integrity in the Sea Services. Their consensus coalesced around five broad categories: Christian faith content, Christian marriage vows, Christian community, Christian character and conscience, and faithfulness to military institutions. These were the topics that came to the forefront with respect to the motivations that sustain their pursuit of sexual integrity in the Sea Services.

### **Challenges to Sexual Integrity**

The second research question, “What challenges do Christian married men face in sustaining sexual integrity in the Sea Service?” sought to give insight into the difficulties these men faced in their pursuit of purity. With each sea service military member representing a specific sea branch of service, there are bound to be differences due to the unique mission and command structures present in these military institutions. For example, the Coast Guard tends to move members and their families around mostly during the summer. Their consensus settled on six broad categories: unexpected advances

of the opposite sex, pornography, peer pressure, loneliness, unfulfilled marital needs and abuse of media technology. These six categories will be discussed below.

*Advances of the Opposite Sex*

In the course of the interviews, six of the eight research participants referenced advances of the opposite sex as a challenge Christian married men face in sustaining sexual integrity in the Sea Services. These situations did not all look the same. They were often unexpected and took the participants by surprise, either because they felt it would never happen or they saw themselves as too strong. In other instances, they saw it coming and sought to resist or get out as soon as possible. However, there were situations which did not end well, and some of the participants live with the scars to this day. Overall this situation was the greatest challenge mentioned during the interviews.

CAPT Oliver pointed to a situation that took him by surprise. He described how, what he termed, “friendly ways” can sometimes become a cover-up for advances of the opposite sex. The more ordinary the situation seemed also contributed to leading him into a potentially seductive and sexual trap. He explains,

There was a woman who I thought was just friendly. So, I let my guard down a little and was asked to help get her back to the airport she had flown into for some training. Then she asked me if I could stop for lunch; then she asked me to help her get back from the car; then she approached and said she was interested in more than that. I talked to her for a little while but I didn’t do anything,...but looking back maybe I should have taken the Joseph<sup>295</sup> approach and got out.

CAPT Oliver many years later looks back on this situation with a more analytical eye. He continued, “I told it to my wife and even though nothing happened, she was upset that I didn’t have boundaries in place;...not realizing what was happening...that’s a weakness...a weakness in my armor; my wife and I talked about that.” CAPT Oliver

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<sup>295</sup>Gen. 39:12.

ended his analysis by saying, “[M]aybe I had been ignoring these situations; maybe I thought I was pretty solid. Pride goes before the fall; maybe I was in a place I thought I was strong enough. I realized you are always a step away from a bad situation.” CAPT Oliver and other participants related similar stories where women aggressively tried to cross the friendship boundaries. Sometimes they used deception, like in the example CAPT Oliver just described. On the other hand, CAPT Oliver and other participants didn’t deny that they are responsible for some of what happened. In fact, CAPT Oliver saw that he had a “weakness in the armor” which was brought to light through such seductive and sexual tempting situations.

CAPT Smith also pointed to advances of the opposite sex as a challenge for Christian married men regarding their sexual integrity in the sea services. However, unlike CAPT Oliver, CAPT Smith saw the tempting situation developing. He did his best to resist it, but it took him a while. He explains,

[After] about six to eight years of commissioned service, which also would be my seventh year of marriage,...I was called to serve with women in the same unit. I was becoming more and more comfortable and familiar talking to a [particular] female but I was not being open in communicating with my wife about it. I got myself to a point where I got really uneasy because it felt [like] the female was communicating with me in a way that suggested I was not even married,...and she knew I was married.... [T]here was never anything that I did that violated my commitment to my wife.... I found myself in a situation where I learned the importance of communication with my spouse and fellow believers.

CAPT Smith also described his personal experience of this recurring theme of temptation in a few different scenarios. His examples include a situation that developed during a few weeks detachment away from home in social settings. He explained, “It was common,...in a mix of married and unmarried officers,...to find ourselves in some type of physical activity such as going to a restaurant or skiing. There were women that would

engage with us and could well be married women in this group. I would often make sure that my wedding ring was visible as a sign I was committed.” CAPT Smith summed up his resistance to temptation in this case by using his wedding ring to send a clear message of his marital status. Overall CAPT Smith learned the value of communication with his wife and other believers as well as the value of using his wedding ring as a way to resist the challenge of open sexual advances of the opposite sex during his military career. However, other participants’ stories did not always have such a happy ending.

Among the eight research participants, Sea Service officer Stuart has been married the longest and has the most years of military service. He honestly and forcefully talked about this challenge from personal experience. During his interview, his experience with this issue was the first thing he wanted to talk about. He jumped right into it before discussing motivations for sexual integrity. He describes his experience this way:

I have been absolutely loyal to my wife with one exception. I had a one-time sexual encounter with an old girlfriend very long ago during a point in my life where my marriage was not working so well.... [S]he was in a bad relationship with her husband. I had a final conversation with that woman whereby I asked for her forgiveness and apologized, but she was not looking for any apologies; as far as I know she was completely good with it,... but I basically said “I am ceasing all communication. I wish you well.” I completely cut it off. I completely cut it off.

Sea Service officer Stuart pointed it out that he was not a Christian when this happened but that the memories continue until this day even after being forgiven by God. He continued, “We were young and had young kids. Both busy. We were both tired. Men are too much into sex and women are too much into romance. All grew into resentment which helped me to rationalize what I did. I learned that I was a weak man but I have come clean with God. I know that he has extended me his grace.” When pressed to

describe a little more what God did, he summarized in this way: “He took that awful burden of guilt off my shoulders although I did not deserve it.” Sea Service officer Stuart’s experience highlights not only the lingering memories of succumbing to the advances of the opposite sex but also the rest that the forgiveness of God will provide for the weary soul.

It is interesting to note that CAPT Madison and SGT MAJ Miller did not mention this challenge of sexual advances of the opposite sex. They pointed to other challenges to sexual integrity, which this chapter will uncover, but they remained silent regarding the sexual advances of the opposite sex. When pressed to address any other challenges other than the ones he mentioned, CAPT Madison preferred to put it this way, “[Y]ou fly and are occupied during the day and the evenings become a time of temptation.” In addition, SGT MAJ Miller said the following in regards to opportunities for him to be unfaithful to his wife: “[E]ven before I was born again, I did not give in to those temptations.” As SGT MAJ Miller addressed the challenges to sexual integrity, the researcher could not find advances of the opposite sex as one of them.

The collective voice of the majority of participants pointed to sexual advances of the opposite sex as the major challenge Christian married men face in sustaining sexual integrity in the Sea Services. This challenge took some of the participants like CAPT Oliver by surprise, while others like CAPT Smith saw it coming but were not as quick to respond. Sea Service officer Stuart had the hardest experience of all the participants but did his best to mend the situation while finding forgiveness, grace, and genuine transformation with God. The participants went on to name other challenges to sexual integrity, which the study will explore in the following sections.



### *Pornography*

Pornography and peer pressure were the next two major challenges the participants faced in sustaining sexual integrity in the sea services. Five of the eight participants recounted their struggles with pornography. It is important to stress that at no time did the researcher lead the participants to mention the challenge of pornography, which is also true of all findings throughout chapter four. Like the other findings, the participants willingly and clearly pointed to pornography as an important challenge they faced in sustaining sexual integrity in the sea services. It is also important to stress that the Department of Defense officially does not approve the use of its work computers to access pornography.<sup>296</sup> Sometimes research participants got involved with it by accident. For example, they entered an environment where fellow sea service members were actively viewing pornography. Similar to second-hand smoking, they had to deal with second-hand pornography. At other times they readily admitted being involved with it on their own. Thus, the challenge of pornography showed itself differently but truly in the participants' lives.

SGT MAJ Miller illustrated how some of the participants consumed second-hand pornography, later sought it on their own, and then had to deal with the consequences that followed. As he started to move into leadership, he described the struggle in this way:

Especially on deployment there was usually an over-abundance of pornography and there were times when I found myself wanting some of this stuff with some of the Marines and did that for a little while and then shook my head asking, "What are you doing?" Sometimes I put myself in those situations and later would beat myself [up] over this for some time.

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<sup>296</sup>DoD 5500.07-R, "The Joint Ethics Regulation (JER), including Changes 1-7," dtic.mil, 17 Nov 2011, accessed January 30, 2014, <http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/550007r.pdf>, p.25.

SGT MAJ Miller described his struggle with the challenge of pornography by highlighting that he is a product of others' influence as well as his own will. What followed seems to indicate that his desire to stay away from pornography was overrun by the power of pornography that was being consumed by others around him. In addition, he started a conversation with himself marked by endless self-judgment.

CAPT Smith limited his struggles with pornography to the inevitable day-to-day interactions with fellow sea service members. He stressed his experience in the following way:

Sometimes they were people, whether in state rooms or wardrooms, watching pornography or reading it; you were faced with it more frequently.... [I]f they were engaged with that [then] I [was] confronted with that. How [do] I deal with that situation and what [do] I say?; how strongly [do] I engage in that?; do I just ignore it and walk away? Do I tell them that it is not appropriate and why it is not appropriate? Those were the challenges I faced on deployment that I wouldn't face when I was not deployed.

CAPT Smith emphasized the dilemma he faced after witnessing others consuming pornography. Second-hand pornography affected him personally because of its close proximity and the endless self-talk it produced in his mind. His example also illustrates how personal pornography consumption affects the community's well-being by eroding unit cohesion and mutual trust among its members. The question becomes, "If I cannot trust my wingman during peace times to care for me, will I trust him or her when war comes around?" One may imagine other repercussions this challenge may have brought into the lives of the research participants. However, it suffices to describe only what the interviews reveal for the purposes of this research. The following paragraphs will highlight the fact some participants readily admitted that they got involved with pornography mostly on their own.

CDR Wilson exemplifies the case that some of the participants found pornography a challenge regardless of the presence of outside influences. He put it succinctly, “[T]he big thing for me is I don’t think I have a temptation to have an adulterous affair or sleep with a prostitute or do anything like that; the big thing for me, temptation speaking, would be pornography.” When pressed to describe this challenge further, he did not hesitate but explained, “I am very susceptible to that temptation and there was a strong desire to satisfy it.” He described how it made him feel; “[Y]ou feel horrible afterwards and another challenge I felt was that I was not a good Christian.” This last statement shows that the challenge of pornography produced other challenges in CDR Wilson’s mind; in other words, it challenged the truth of his Christian identity and his walk with God. He concluded by saying, “[M]y only choice was to rest and live in the grace of God because I did not have the personal strength to avoid that temptation.” In CDR Wilson’s mind, the hope to resist pornography was not within but found through the grace of God.

Regardless of how the challenge of pornography revealed itself, whether because of others’ influence, one’s own will, or a combination of both, most of the participants pointed to pornography as a formidable challenge that they faced in sustaining sexual integrity in the sea services. Their conclusions reveal that it is not a question of if pornography is a challenge but when one shall face it during one’s military career.

### *Peer Pressure*

Peer pressure and pornography were among the top three major challenges the participants faced in sustaining sexual integrity in the sea services. Five of the eight participants recounted their struggles with peer pressure. Some participants described the

struggle as simply as “there was a push to go to the wrong places.” Others pointed out that as they got higher in rank, they became better able to navigate the powerful waves of peer pressure. The higher rank allowed them to divert some sexually dangerous situations.

CDR Harris illustrated the peer pressure to go to the wrong places. He explained, “I would get invited to the strip clubs and potential places where prostitutes were. I just had no interest. I would go back to the ship or do something else.... I would not put myself in that kind of situation.” CDR Harris did not measure words and jumped right into what enabled him to turn the other way. He continued, “Keep God number one and keep looking in that direction and it is like the song: ‘Turn your eyes upon Jesus and the things of this world will grow strangely dim’; as long as you keep your focus right and you and your wife pray together...everything else will take care of itself.” CDR Harris was a man of few words. His interview was the one which took the least time to conduct but its brevity did not take away from the clarity and sense of conviction that characterized CDR’s Harris demeanor and attitude.

CAPT Oliver also added to the conversation by sharing his own struggle with the challenge of peer pressure in sustaining sexual integrity. His contribution lies in the fact that he felt he could resist peer pressure more readily as he got promoted along the years. He could silence the invitations to go to the wrong places. However, he was the only one to consider what else the power of a higher rank can do to you concerning this matter. He explains, “There is less opportunity to be roving around with a group of people that put peer pressure on you.... [T]he higher rank you get, the less peer pressure because you just rise above that,... but at the same time you also have more and more power and you have

people you can manipulate and get favors from.” CAPT Oliver’s insight into the other side of having a higher rank separated him from all the other participants. Power did indeed enable him to resist the challenge of peer pressure along the years but he still recognized the need to be cautious. In his own words, “There are two sides to that coin I think.” Notwithstanding this reality he concluded with an unexpected word of encouragement for leaders. He shared, “The more responsibility you have, the more people you have under you, the more you see the damage and you have to deal with a lot of it and it brings home the severity of it. I think in a lot of ways that helped me because it helped me to see some of those things and you know how bad it is and you don’t want any part of that.” To clarify, CAPT Oliver did not mean that he enjoyed seeing those under him getting into trouble because they succumbed to sexual temptations and challenges due to peer pressure. He meant that the byproduct of seeing so much wreckage around this matter kept the seduction to use power to gain sexual favors in check.

In most of the participants’ interviews, the challenge of peer pressure and its threat to sustaining sexual integrity was obvious. This challenge may decrease in intensity with higher rank but the antidote has its side effects as well which CAPT Oliver uniquely explained. Overall, the participants do not underestimate the negative impact this challenge may have in affecting their pursuit of sexual integrity in the sea services.

### *Loneliness*

Half of the participants pointed out loneliness as a challenge they faced in sustaining sexual integrity. One participant remarked missing being sexually intimate with his wife. Other highlighted that the higher you go in seniority, the lonelier you may feel. Still others’ input coalesced around spiritual loneliness as they felt cut off from their

Christian community and the fellowship and accountability it provided. In addition, a participant insightfully referred to the power of loneliness to break down your ability to resist sexual temptations.

CAPT Smith simply mentioned that “aside from being lonely for [his] wife and being intimate,” he missed “sexual interaction with her” especially during deployments. In his experience, deployments and others times away from his wife for work-related purposes meant long periods with no sexual activity. Navy, Marine Corps, and even Coast Guard may have deployments that last from six months to a year. These deployments are part of sea service military life and they affect the family as well. CAPT Smith highlighted this important challenge he and others faced in sustaining sexual integrity and family life.

CAPT Menendez also pointed out that as one rises in rank, loneliness may become a greater issue. A higher ranked officer doesn’t have the social flexibility to interact with everybody in the same way. However, he explained that this lack may actually be an advantage because “there are more opportunities when you are one of the fifty Lieutenants that are out there to party with the unit and there are several females around; there may be more collegiality and opportunities to get in trouble.” CAPT Menendez sees loneliness as the lesser of two evils. It is still a challenge to deal with but he prefers to face it rather than struggle under the weight of peer pressure.

The main point of the conversation around the challenge of loneliness was that it cut off the participants from their spiritual roots, specifically Christian community. CAPT Madison remarked that “you work all day and nights become a time of temptation.” CAPT Oliver described how loneliness “breaks down your ability to resist” sexual

temptation. In other words, one can feel powerless against sexual temptations on one's own. An individual is far weaker when they are not in true fellowship with others in the faith.

It suffices to say that the challenge of loneliness to sexual integrity deserved the attention of half of the participants. For some, it revealed itself because a participant missed being sexually intimate with his wife. For others, the challenge of loneliness was difficult but the alternative challenge of peer pressure felt worse. Another participant pointed out that loneliness can break down one's ability to resist sexual temptation over a long period of time.

### *Unfulfilled Marital Needs*

Unfulfilled marital needs was another challenge three of the participants described during the interviews. One participant expressed that having no sex within the marriage contributed to his sexual downfall later. Others expressed that the lack of communication with their spouses weakened them when battling sexual temptations head on. To not be known by their own wives in the most intimate way contributed to the accumulation of secrets which in the long run became walls that kept military couples from truly becoming one. This challenge, coupled with the ones that have already been mentioned in this chapter, became an explosive combination in the lives of some of the participants.

Sea service officer Stuart mentioned that having no sex life within his marriage contributed to his sexual entanglements. He explained that it contributed to a one-time sexual encounter with an old girlfriend very long ago during a point in his life where his marriage was not working so well. Sea Service officer Stuart revealed that the same

challenge pops up in the lives of his subordinates when he questions them about their professional performance. He continued,

They are in my office maybe because their performance dropped off and in the course of the conversation you find out that their excuse for their performance dropping off is that they are going through difficult times in their marriage. They many times say in the course of the conversation that “she is no longer having sexual relations with me and I am tired of this.”

Sea Service officer Stuart does not at all shrink from his responsibilities about his past, as has already been shown. His wife’s apparent neglect to fulfill his sexual needs contributed to rather than determined his sexual downfall. In his experience, this type of unfulfilled marital need was a challenge that he faced in sustaining sexual integrity. It became a clear and present danger. CDR Wilson agreed with this potential challenge and noted, “I ensure I have a sex life with my wife so that I am not starving and needing some sort of attention or stimulation.” CDR Wilson’s words solidified the position that unfulfilled sexual needs within some of the participants’ marriages made it difficult for them to sustain sexual integrity in the sea services.

Neglect of sex life was not the only type of unfulfilled marital need among the participants. This challenge also took the form of a lack of transparent communication between the participants and their spouses. CAPT Smith again explained,

I was called to serve with women in the same unit. I was becoming more and more comfortable and familiar talking to a (particular) female but I was not being open in communicating with my wife about it. I got myself to a point where I got really uneasy because it felt the female was communicating with me in a way that suggested I was not even married...and she knew I was married.... I found myself in a situation where I learned the importance of communication with my spouse and fellow believers.

CAPT Smith’s initial unwillingness to communicate openly with his wife about the uncomfortable situation put him in a tricky and precarious state of mind. This internal



conflict of mind fortunately found a happy ending as he learned the necessity of communication, albeit painfully. CDR Wilson agrees and developed the value of communicating with one's spouse. He describes it in this way:

The only thing that really helps me is to be honest that pornography is a temptation and a strong one and that I need to communicate with my wife about it so that it does not have the power over me that it would have if it was a secret. I can be honest with her about my temptations; knowing I will get forgiveness and grace from her. I can admit the truth and gain strength not to do it.

CDR Wilson asserted that honest communication about sexual temptation tempered with forgiveness and grace produced in him great strength toward sustaining sexual integrity.

CDR Wilson's words also pointed to the fact that the power to sustain sexual integrity is not in the act of communication itself but in the forgiveness, grace, and truth it conveys to him in his time of need. In other words, the power is not in the medium but in the message.

According to some of the participants, unfulfilled marital needs, like sex and communication, can become a challenge to Christian married men in sustaining sexual integrity in the sea services. Neglect of sex life put one of the participants much closer to sexual disaster while lack of communication produced much conflict of mind in another. One participant validated the importance of communication within a marriage but put emphasis on it simply happening rather than just on its content. To summarize, some of the participants labeled unfulfilled marital needs as a challenge to sexual integrity. However, this challenge is not the last one on their list.

#### *Abuse of Media Technology*

The abuse of media technology was also seen as a challenge to sexual integrity during the interviews. Although only three of the eight participants highlighted it, the

concrete examples they put forth spoke volumes. One participant pointed to his struggle with watching TV at night when traveling for work purposes. Another accidentally witnessed others watch pornography and suffered the effects of second-hand pornography. The researcher will now unpack these findings.

CAPT Menendez described how he struggled with being in a hotel with the opportunity to watch TV at night. He explained,

One thing that is challenging is being in a hotel room by myself. Many times you want to simply watch football but then there it is; it's Showtime channel right there and easily accessible. At home I don't have HBO or Showtime or channels like that. These are the times that gets a little more challenging for me personally. I just try to make sure I don't watch these shows or turn to channels like HBO.

CAPT Menendez does not point to media technology as the culprit for his sexual temptation. The challenge came when he abused it by misusing it for his own sexual gratification. Unlike CAPT Madison whose answer to how to meet this challenge was simply to “avoid electronic media and watching TV alone,” CAPT Menendez dissected exactly where, when, and how he needed to change to not be caught or entangled by the same challenge again.

CAPT Smith also reflected on the challenge of the abuse of media technology that he faced in sustaining sexual integrity in the sea services. He again pointed to the effects of second-hand pornography. He noted that in the past “sometimes there were people, whether in state rooms or wardrooms, watching pornography or reading it.” During deployments or other times away, he described that “you may be faced with it more frequently.” In other words, the way others abused media technology was a real challenge since privacy during deployment is a scarce commodity for everyone. In other words, in the service, no one is alone even when they think they are alone. The quick pace of

operations and the quantity of people around leave one with no sense of privacy as might be enjoyed back home. Sooner or later one's abuse of media technology may inflame another's mind into risky and dangerous sexual pursuits and thus away from sexual integrity.

The research's findings pointed to the abuse of media technology as the last challenge mentioned by the participants. Two of them highlighted with concrete examples, although one participant mentioned it vaguely. These participants painted a picture that the abuse of media technology was a clear and present challenge for them as they sought to sustain sexual integrity in the Sea Services.

The discussion above focused on issues related to the challenges Christian married men face in sustaining sexual integrity in the Sea Services. With each sea service military member representing a specific sea branch of service, there are bound to be differences due to the unique mission and command structures present in these military institutions. Having this in mind, research participants discussed numerous matters related to the challenges they face in sustaining sexual integrity in the Sea Services. Their consensus coalesced around six broad categories: advances of the opposite sex, pornography, peer pressure, loneliness, unfulfilled marital needs and abuse of media technology. These were the topics that came to the forefront with respect to the challenges Christian married men face in sustaining sexual integrity in the Sea Services.

### **Practices for Sexual Integrity**

The third research question addressed the best practices that help Christian married men sustain sexual integrity in the Sea Services: "What practices help Christian married men sustain sexual integrity in the Sea Services?" With each sea service military

member representing a specific sea branch of service, there are bound to be differences due to the unique mission and command structures present in these military institutions. Having this in mind, research participants discussed numerous matters related to the practices that help Christian married men sustain sexual integrity in the Sea Services. Their consensus settled on four broad categories: disciplines of grace, Christian community, appropriate use of media technology and marital life. These four categories will be discussed below.

### *Disciplines of Grace*

All of the participants testified to the disciplines of grace as a best practice that helped them sustain sexual integrity in the sea services. These disciplines of grace were the means by which they nurtured and cared for their relationship with God. As a result, they were better able to grow spiritually and resist temptations of all kinds, including sexual ones. They named prayer, personal Bible study devotions, Bible reading, memorization of biblical passages and verses, and worship. They revealed that they became far weaker in navigating and nullifying sexual temptations when their practice of the disciplines of grace was ignored or compromised in the course of time. The participants did not just casually mention the disciplines of grace as an afterthought. Their long years of marriage and military service convinced them that the practice of the disciplines of grace is non-negotiable. However, it is not automatic either. The disciplines of grace are not like vending machines. One of the participants pointed to relying on the grace of God behind it all. Ultimately, the disciplines of grace work because of who is behind them, namely a God of grace. The study will now examine more closely what the participants said about the disciplines of grace.

In light of the question of the disciplines of grace, CAPT Menendez referred to “feeding the spirit as best as possible.” He went on to explain ways that he incorporated these disciplines into his life. He shared that he made a practice of,

taking the Bible with me to places I go; having my family and personal devotions, also memory verses. One of the things I do each week is to put memory verses in the note section of my phone and I make myself look to the memory verse every time I touch my phone and I continue to do so in the course of the day. So, every time I touch my phone I am thinking of God’s word and honoring him. I don’t feel tempted on a daily basis sexually.... I think it’s more of a focus on trying to feed the spirit as opposed trying to avoid other things.

CAPT Menendez’ words stressed that sexual integrity is not his ultimate goal in using the disciplines of grace. In other words, sexual integrity was more of a byproduct of seeking to walk with and honor God on a daily basis. He drove home the fact in this way, “For me it is more than just sexual integrity, it is going to Bible studies and churches to feed the whole man.” CAPT Menendez shunned a reductionist approach to sustaining sexual integrity in the sea services. He did not deny that he cared for his sexuality but he seemed resolute in putting it under the greater purpose of seeking the person of the God of grace and the disciplines of grace help him to do just that.

CDR Wilson agreed and revealed what confession of sin accomplished within him. He said, “The Lord opened my heart and revealed the real broken-heartedness of that sin and seeing it from his perspective allowed me to cry over that sin, not desiring it. I think that was grace that strengthened me not to participate.” CDR Wilson stressed the power of the grace of God mediated by confession, repentance, and faith that enabled him to sustain sexual integrity. The grace of God trained CDR Wilson to say “no” to sin at a specific place and time. CDR Wilson’s testimony also shows the purpose of the disciplines of grace in his life which is to enable him to live a life that pleases God. It

revealed the impact of the ugliness of sin in the eyes of God. As a consequence, CDR Wilson's desires were transformed from self-pleasing to God-pleasing.

CAPT Menendez clearly represents the participants' consensus on the disciplines of grace being a "best-practice" in sustaining sexual integrity in the sea services. He is not always consistently meditating on the grace of God but he explained, "Looking back I am thankful that God's Son died for my sins and that's not based on me. I am just like anybody else; I mess up; I was born into sin just like the next guy. I am just thankful that Jesus died on the cross for me." The cross of Jesus Christ was the central theme around their conversation about the disciplines of grace. CDR Wilson also knows this grace from experience as already mentioned. Overall the participants' collective voice put the disciplines of grace as their top "best practice" in sustaining sexual integrity in the sea services. However, it was not the only one.

### *Christian Community*

All of the participants also testified to Christian community as a best practice that helped them sustain sexual integrity in the sea services. In addition, there was also consensus regarding Christian community to strengthen, protect, and care for all of these Christian married men in their pursuit of sexual integrity along the years. Some of them focused on the benefit of accountability they had access to. Others added that just ordinary but genuine fellowship with other believers kept them afloat in the midst of turbulent waves of sexual temptation. It kept loneliness from "breaking their ability to resist" as CAPT Oliver alluded to earlier in the discussion about challenges. Finally, others pointed to joining a church as a way to fully harvest the benefits of Christian

community as well as coming under the responsibilities and obligations such joining inevitably carries.

CAPT Madison and CAPT Wilson focused on the benefit of accountability they had access to from Christian community. CDR Wilson pointed to the strength such accountability provides. He explained,

There is a strengthening factor being with other believers in Christ where we can have a sustained accountability. Christian community allows individuals to share their fears, their temptations; to admit their faults; to be able to not only find redemption and forgiveness for those faults but also to allow them to be torn down. Oftentimes when you publicly state those temptations they no longer become temptations anymore. Like a bomb which is taken apart and no longer becomes a threat. Community has a way to guard you; it is when you hide from community and lie to community that you find yourself in a position that you can fall into sexual impurity.

CDR Wilson listed Christian community as a motivation for sexual integrity. He also sees it as a best practice, especially when accountability is able to disarm sexually explosive bombs through the practice of being with others and truth-telling. CAPT Madison agreed and simply put it in this way, “Prepare yourself by identifying fellow believers and make an agreement with them that you are going to hold each other accountable.” However, he added that it was important to include “prayer, Bible study, worship, and a commitment to avoid risky scenarios that tempt you. Understand that you are going to probably fail but in the end rest in God’s grace.” CAPT Madison did not propose accountability in a vacuum. He explained that it needs to be founded on the disciplines of grace and practical wisdom. He also asserted that accountability as an aspect of Christian community cannot guarantee a life of Christian victory over such temptations. In the end, he had to rely on the grace of God as his ultimate hope and motivation to keep on. Additionally, the

participants also named others characteristics of Christian community that proved to be best practices in helping them sustain sexual integrity in the sea services.

SGT MAJ Miller and CAPT Madison pointed to ordinary but genuine relationships with other believers as a Christian community best practice for sexual integrity. These were men who did not shy away from interacting with non-Christians but relied heavily on relationships with Christians to a greater degree of intimacy and fellowship. SGT MAJ Miller stressed that “iron sharpens iron” and went on to say that “it is a lot easier to put yourself up when you have someone to hold you up; allowing yourself to be with fellow believers helps you make good choices in your life.” SGT MAJ Miller ended by stating, “Christian community had a huge role in helping me sustain sexual integrity in the Marine Corps.” CAPT Madison agreed but said that there can be a deeper fellowship with some believers than with others of the faith. He commented, “I can’t really describe why you connect with other believers more so than others; it’s like Jonathan and David;<sup>297</sup> David loved Jonathan but it does not explain why he cared for him more than anybody else.” Ordinary but genuine relationships among brothers and sisters in the Lord have strengthened the participants’ resolve to sustain sexual integrity. A simple word of encouragement in the Lord or a simple revelation that one is a Christian made a positive impact on the participants in the course of their careers. In CAPT Madison’s allusion to David and Jonathan, it may be that the Lord gifts his people with his people in his work of keeping them strong in the face of sexual temptations of all kinds.

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<sup>297</sup>1 Sam. 18:1-5.



Others participants pointed to joining a church as a way to fully harvest the benefits of Christian community as well as coming under the responsibilities and obligations such joining inevitably carries. CAPT Oliver mentioned in the discussion about motivations about the importance of finding a church when he and his family moved to a next place because of military orders. In fact, it is one of the first moves he takes besides trying to find a place to live. He commented,

You want to be part of a strong church.... It is easy to isolate yourself in the military and it is easy to come into a new place and say "I will only be here for a couple years so I don't want to be close to anybody because I've been with people all day at work." I would rather stay home and decompress but I know I need to have relationships; to find Christian people to get to know and vice versa,...[people who] you can go to them when you have a problem.

CAPT Oliver's words are a warning against isolation. His best antidote to sexual temptation is being part of a church no matter how long one's military orders are. As a consequence, he had support for when life got hard. In CAPT Oliver's mind, it is better to be in God's house than a thousand years elsewhere, as one songwriter has put it.

All of the participants witnessed to Christian community as a best practice that helped them sustain sexual integrity in the sea services. Whether it was accountability, fellowship, or simply the formal process of joining a church, it was critical for their spiritual development and sexual integrity. Together with the disciplines of grace, it was considered during the interviews one of the two top best practices for sustaining sexual integrity in the sea services.

#### *Appropriate Use of Media Technology*

All of the participants except for one mentioned appropriate use of media technology as a best practice toward sustaining sexual integrity in the sea services. However, it has already been mentioned that only three participants mentioned media

technology as a challenge. So, why is there a discrepancy? The best explanation the findings reveal is that all the participants by in large did not have access to a full-blown media apparatus as they were coming up in rank as they do today. However, they reasoned that, as they look ahead for what they have left of their careers, they must be intentional about the quantity and the quality of media technology they expose themselves to. This current resolution does not mean that they were not watchful on this front before. It does mean that they are becoming more sensitive to this practice as media technology saturates our cultural milieu and shows itself increasingly hijacked by camouflaged and overt unbiblical sexuality. One participant summarized it in this way: “Sex and technology don’t have any role in my life; I use technology for what I need to use it for; I do e-mail and communicate over the phone but it has nothing to do with sex.” This stance was echoed throughout and became a common theme in the research findings.

CAPT Menendez, in light of the sexual temptations the combination of sex and technology could unleash, prefers to reduce his exposure to media technology by having “no iPad and no Facebook account.” He continued, “I don’t look at e-mail during the day on my iPhone.” His posture is not just defensive. He, as previously stated, injects his iPhone with Bible memory verses. He explained, “This is really the key. If I am looking at a memory verse and thinking about God’s word, it gets a little harder to flip that over and go into a porn site. I’ve never looked at porn on my phone but I think that is due in large part to having that memory verse on my phone every day.” CAPT Menendez’s aggressive posture toward using media technology shows how God’s word leads, convicts, and protects him in his daily media interactions. However, he also expressed

that not being saturated with media “helps him maximize time with family” since, he explained, “you are not staying up late by yourself in front of a computer continuously exposing yourself to sexual temptation.” CAPT Menendez is an example of how the participants in general reflected on the possible ramifications of their interaction with media technology regarding their sexual integrity and their families. Each participant showed discernment in the quantity and quality of media technology they exposed themselves to.

Other participants did not have much patience for CAPT Menendez’s precise and surgical discernment approach toward media technology. None of them mentioned “putting memory verses in your iPhone.” They certainly agreed with him that this practice is a help for sustaining sexual integrity in the sea services. However, many of them see so much coming at them that they prefer the all-or-nothing approach. CDR Harris decided to “cut cable TV altogether and not to watch R-rated movies.” CAPT Madison decided to not even “take personal laptops with him during detachments.” Sea Service officer Stuart, as he talked about media technology, quickly asserted in the beginning of his answer, “I do not go to porn sites; this certainly helps.” He was the first one to address the intersection of pornography and media technology. He continued, “It certainly helps when you are not tempting yourself with images of women that you are not going to fulfill.” Sea Service officer Stuart reflects the self-critical attitude of the participants concerning this matter. The place to start cleaning the house is not with the media culture out there but with the heart and eyes within.

All of the participants except for one mentioned appropriate use of media technology as a best practice toward sustaining sexual integrity in the sea services. Some

participants proposed a balanced and surgical way to deal with media technology while others did not have much time for this approach. Those preferred to root out large chunks of media technology from their lives and focus all their efforts on disciplining their hearts and eyes. They saw it more as an internal struggle than an external one. Despite this noted distinction, seven of the participants rated this best practice as an important one in sustaining sexual integrity in the sea services.

### *Marital Life*

The last but not the least of the best practices revealed by our findings was marital life. To nurture and care for one's marital life was named by five of the eight participants as an important best practice for sexual integrity. The participants mentioned fellowship, strategic communication, and worship with an emphasis on prayer and sex. These ingredients fortified the participants' marital life and consequently their sexual integrity in the sea services as well.

Three of the participants mentioned strategic communication as an ingredient of a resilient marital life and sexual integrity. Some participants took this stance because of past setbacks. CAPT Oliver explained,

It is important as a married couple to sit down and come up with strategies. I did not have this and so ran into a few mistakes before I finally learned to deal with some situations. If you are married it is good to sit down and talk about boundaries, weaknesses, and how to guard against that because everybody [has] them. You need to talk about the hard and embarrassing things up front because they will come up anyway.

CAPT Oliver also insightfully pointed out that "hard times will put pressures in your marriage and they will give you excuses to wonder and make you say 'she does not care for me. I have to fulfill my physical needs on my own'." He ended with, "Couples madly in love do not know this is all around the corner.... [Y]ou need to sit down and talk about

it now. How are we going to fight? How are we going to deal with this?” CAPT Oliver is not naïve about how young married couples in the sea service may miss the mark in the beginning. Their initial inexperience may be understandable but costly as well. Strategic communication was a marital life ingredient he and his wife adopted into their toolbox. He and others participants are convinced of its necessity for the well-being of their marriages and sustaining sexual integrity in the sea services.

CDR Harris mentioned fellowship as another ingredient of a resilient marital life and sexual integrity. He simply pointed out that as he has “gotten older [he] finds that a good cup of coffee and being at home with [his] family is really where [he] finds [his] pleasure.” He added, “We have read a book together that has to do with marriage and about sexual purity.” The participants did not have major deep hidden secrets about this important ingredient of marital life. However, how ordinary it seems to be does not mean married couples can neglect it or classify it as optional.

Two participants mentioned worship with an emphasis on prayer as another ingredient of marital life as a best practice that sustains sexual integrity in the sea services. Sea Service officer Stuart shared, “I love the old phrase where it says that couples who pray together stay together.” CDR Harris’ testimony echoes Sea Service officer Stuart’s words when the former says, “Keep God number one and keep looking in that direction and it is like the song; “Turn your eyes upon Jesus and the things of this world will grow strangely dim”; as long as you keep your focus right and you and your wife pray together, go to church together,...everything else will take care of itself.” CDR Harris and Sea Service officer Stuart clearly reflect the favorable sentiment of the five participants toward worship and prayer, which was not taken for granted during their

focused discussion on the subject matter. It is a critical factor of marital life as a best practice for sexual integrity in the sea services.

Four of the eight participants mentioned sex as another ingredient of marital life as a best practice that sustains sexual integrity in the sea services. CAPT Smith alluded to the fact that he missed being sexually intimate with his wife during deployments. CDR Wilson agreed that it is an important factor as he noted, “I ensure I have a sex life with my wife so that I am not starving and needing some sort of attention or stimulation.” Sea Service officer Stuart agreed with both CAPT Smith and CDR Wilson but added a plea to wives: “I would tell the young women that are married to these young men, ‘take care of your husbands’ needs.’ If they do that, I think it would take care of a whole lot of extramarital affairs.” Sea Service officer Stuart’s plea to the wives is partly due to what happened in his past marital life. In addition, hearing the same sentiment in the lives of his subordinates, as stated earlier, led Sea Service officer Stuart to emphasize this factor more than the other participants. Therefore, he and others are convinced that it is a critical factor of marital life as a best practice unto sexual integrity.

### **Summary of Findings**

The purpose of this study was to explore how Christian married men can sustain sexual integrity in the Sea Services. The assumption of this study was that mature Christian married men in the Sea Services have learned important lessons concerning how to sustain sexual integrity while pursuing professional excellence. Over the course of eight interviews with senior sea service leaders, more than one hundred pages of data were transcribed, analyzed, and organized around the three research questions. It began by examining issues related to motivations behind sustaining sexual integrity. Then, it

sought to determine the challenges Christian married men face in sustaining sexual integrity in the Sea Services. Finally, it sought to address the best practices that help Christian married men sustain sexual integrity in the Sea Services. Below is a summary of the findings related to each research question.

With respect to motivations for sexual integrity, the research participants identified five important items of note: Christian faith content, Christian marriage vows, Christian community, Christian character and conscience, and faithfulness to military institutions. These were the topics that came to the forefront with respect to the motivations that sustain their pursuit of sexual integrity in the Sea Services.

With respect to challenges to sexual integrity, the research participants identified six important items of note: advances of the opposite sex, pornography, peer pressure, loneliness, unfulfilled marital needs and abuse of media technology. These were the topics that came to the forefront with respect to the challenges Christian married men face in sustaining sexual integrity in the Sea Services.

With respect to best practices for sexual integrity, the research participants identified four important items of note: disciplines of grace, Christian community, appropriate use of media technology and marital life. Those were the topics that came to the forefront with respect to the practices that help Christian married men sustain sexual integrity in the Sea Services.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Discussion and Recommendations**

The purpose of this study was to explore how Christian married men sustain sexual integrity in the Sea Services. The assumption of this study was that senior<sup>298</sup> Christian married men in the Sea Services have learned important lessons necessary for sustaining sexual integrity<sup>299</sup> while pursuing professional excellence. In order to address this purpose, the research identifies three main areas of focus that are central to the study. These include the areas of the biblical view of sex, sexual addiction and recovery, and John Calvin's view of God the Son's role in sanctification. To examine this purpose more closely, the following research questions served as the intended focus of the qualitative research:

1. What motivates Christian married men to sustain sexual integrity in the Sea Services?
2. What challenges do Christian married men face in sustaining sexual integrity in the Sea Services?
3. What practices help Christian married men sustain sexual integrity in the Sea Services?

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<sup>298</sup> At least twenty years in the Sea Services.

<sup>299</sup> A process by which Christians consistently seek to live out their sexuality as an expression of covenantal fidelity to the triune God of the Christian holy scriptures. Exod. 20:14; Prov. 5-7; Song; Mal. 2:14-15; Rom. 1; 1 Cor. 5-7; 1 Thess. 4:1-8; Heb. 13:4.



This chapter will start with a brief review of the summary of the literature in chapter two and of the summary of the research findings in chapter four. Representative samples of the interview data will be discussed, along with apt selections from the literature, to draw conclusions from the research findings. Following these conclusions, I will make recommendations for chaplains, for prospective chaplains, and for non-chaplain supporters of military ministry in light of the research. Finally, I will make recommendations for further research so that others interested in the subject matter may devote their efforts with a sharper focus and clarity and expand knowledge for the sake of the kingdom of God and the common good.

### **Summary of the Study and Findings**

#### *Summary of Literature Review*

The biblical view of sex is clearly and comprehensively understood through the biblical paradigm of creation-fall-redemption-restoration. Human sexuality, as a part of creation, was created to be good but is under God's curse because of human sin. However, God, through the person and work of Jesus Christ, brings forgiveness of sin and the renewal of all creation, with substantial healing now and the full restoration of all things at Christ's second coming. Thus, human sexuality will find its fulfillment in the new heavens and the new earth when the triune God is glorified in his people.

The collective voice of the sexual addiction literature shows some controversy in how to label problematic sexual behavior. In addition, the American Psychiatric Association has not yet found sufficient data to support a sex addiction diagnosis in the fifth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. However, extensive research and work by Patrick Carnes and others have advanced this field of

study and offered hope to those in the grip of sexual addictive behaviors. Professionals suggest various treatment approaches for sexual addiction, including: group and individual therapy, cognitive behavioral approaches that identify triggers, behavioral techniques to manage cravings, relapse prevention strategies, family therapy to resolve conflicts, twelve-step based recovery groups, and medication aimed at diminishing dysfunctional sexual behaviors. The secular literature also testifies to the brokenness of sexual lives and the need for some type of relief from their debilitating effects such as loss of intimacy and trust.

Calvin scholars expounding on Calvin's view of God the Son and his role in sanctification point to Christ as the one who bridges the gap between God's holiness and men's sinfulness. Christ's work on the cross brings together the Father's mercy, love, and justice, and thus, Christ secures and completes sanctification. People are helpless and unable to sanctify themselves, but Christ overcomes this problem in his office of priest, prophet, and king. In addition, Christ's union with his people communicates holiness and restores the image of God in them. Thus, Christ is the only source and guarantor of his people's sanctification. The literature review on Calvin's view of God the Son and his role in sanctification reflects the biblical centrality of Christ in the redemption of his people. The Christian faith has efficacious resources to address and deal with addictive sexual behavior without disregarding valid contributions of secular literature.

### *Summary of Research Findings*

The interview data covered the experiences of mature Christian married men in order to know what motivates them to sustain sexual integrity, what challenges they face along the way, and what best practices they have learned. The research participants

discussed numerous matters related to the motivations that sustain their pursuit of sexual integrity in the Sea Services. Their consensus coalesced around five broad categories: Christian faith content, Christian marriage vows, Christian community, Christian character and conscience, and faithfulness to military institutions. First, all of the eight participants claim Christian faith content and Christian community as the top two main motivators in sustaining sexual integrity in the Sea Services. God's word and God's people provide the rationale, power, and grace to persevere within the context of community. Second, seven research participants pointed to their Christian marriage vows as a motivating factor in sustaining sexual integrity. The promises that they made to love and to hold until death inform, strengthen, and realign them during the ups and downs of their journey for sustaining sexual integrity. Third, four of the research participants regarded faithfulness to the military institution as a motivation for sexual integrity. They see their personal sexual conduct as having a positive impact in their professional relationship with the Sea Service institutions they serve. Finally, two of the research participants revealed that Christian conscience and character propelled them to sustain sexual integrity, especially in times away from what is familiar, such as family and local churches. Having a solid foundation was critical to their decision-making in sustaining sexual integrity.

The research participants discussed numerous matters related to the challenges they face in sustaining sexual integrity in the Sea Services. Their consensus coalesced around six broad categories: unexpected advances of the opposite sex, pornography, peer pressure, loneliness, unfulfilled marital needs, and abuse of media technology. First, in the course of the interviews, six of the eight research participants made reference to the

advances of the opposite sex as a challenge Christian married men face in sustaining sexual integrity in the Sea Services. As the participants made clear, there were situations that were unexpected and others that they were slow to address. Overall, this category was the greatest challenge mentioned during the interviews. Second, pornography and related peer pressure were the next two major challenges the participants faced in sustaining sexual integrity in the Sea Services. Five of the eight participants recounted their struggles with pornography and peer pressure. They concluded that pornography will be an ongoing challenge as one navigates and pursues a military career. In addition, peer pressure may decrease in intensity with higher rank but the antidote has its side effects too. For example, higher rank may tempt one to use power to obtain sexual favors. Third, half of the participants pointed out loneliness to be a challenge they faced in sustaining sexual integrity. The main point of the conversation around the challenge of loneliness was that it cut off the participants from their spiritual roots, specifically Christian community. Fourth, unfulfilled marital needs was a challenge three of the participants described during the interviews. Neglect of sex life put one of the participants much closer to sexual disaster while lack of communication produced much conflict of mind in another. Finally, the abuse of media technology was also seen as a challenge to sexual integrity during the interviews by three of the eight participants. Whether struggling to avoid provocative channels like HBO or Showtime or staying clear from second-hand pornography, these participants painted a picture that the abuse of media technology was a clear and present challenge.

The research participants discussed numerous matters related to the practices that help Christian married men sustain sexual integrity in the Sea Services. Their consensus

coalesced around four broad categories: disciplines of grace, Christian community, appropriate use of media technology, and marital life. First, all of the participants testified to the disciplines of grace as a best practice that helped them sustain sexual integrity in the Sea Services. They named prayer, personal Bible study devotions, Bible reading, memorization of biblical passages and verses, and worship. The participants did not just casually mention the disciplines of grace as an afterthought or matter of fact. Their long years of marriage and military service convinced them that the practice of the disciplines of grace is non-negotiable. However, it is also not automatic. The disciplines of grace are not like vending machines at all. One of the participants pointed to relying on the grace of God behind it all. The disciplines of grace ultimately work because of who is behind them, namely a God of grace.

Second, all of the participants also testified to Christian community as a best practice that helped them sustain sexual integrity in the Sea Services. Whether it helped them through accountability, fellowship, or a formal process of joining a church, it was critical for their spiritual development and sexual integrity. It kept loneliness from breaking their ability to resist sexual temptation, as one participant pointed it out. Third, seven participants mentioned appropriate use of media technology as a best practice toward sustaining sexual integrity in the Sea Services. Some participants proposed a balanced and surgical way to deal with media technology while others did not have much time for this approach. The latter preferred to root out large chunks of media technology from their lives and focus all their efforts on disciplining their hearts and eyes. They saw it more as an internal struggle than an external one. Finally, five of the eight participants revealed that caring for one's marital life is an important best practice for sexual

integrity. The participants mentioned fellowship, strategic communication, worship with an emphasis on prayer, and sex. These ingredients fortified the participants' marital life and consequently their sexual integrity in the Sea Services as well.

### **Discussion of Findings**

In this section, I will reference representative samples of the interview data, along with apt selections from the literature, to draw conclusions from the research findings. Following these conclusions, I will make recommendations for chaplains, for prospective chaplains, and for non-chaplain supporters of military ministry in light of the research. Finally, I will make recommendations for further research so that others interested in the subject matter may devote their efforts with a sharper focus and clarity and expand knowledge for the sake of the kingdom of God and the common good.

#### *Motivations for Sexual Integrity*

##### **Christian Faith Content**

The study revealed five significant items that need to be noted with respect to motivations to sustain sexual integrity in the Sea Services. Four of them are discussed below in no particular order. First, Christian faith content was one of the top two main motivating factors in sustaining sexual integrity in the Sea Services. There was unanimity among all the eight research participants regarding this factor. CDR Wilson elaborated on the centrality of his Christian faith for all of life, including motivating him to sustain sexual integrity, in this way:

I realized since I was very young I was not my own and that I was bought with a price which was very costly. God has done something for me in saving me, keeping me, fitting me inside and setting me apart. Therefore, in response to that love for me and the love I have for Him, I have a motivation to do what he has called me to do; that is, to be sexually pure.... The strongest motivation of all is

my faith. How important Christ is to me and how important he has been to me all of my life.

The centrality of the person and work of Christ as the motivation par excellence unto sexual integrity is clearly evident in CDR's Wilson reasoning. CDR Wilson's rationale does reflect one of the main themes of the biblical framework, which is redemption as reviewed in the biblical literature section. Redemption affirms that the free grace of God in Jesus Christ has the power to legally justify<sup>300</sup> and existentially change<sup>301</sup> the sexually broken. Justification points to Christ's sacrifice applied to believers by faith. Once a believer has faith that Christ paid the penalty for their sin by his death on the cross, that believer receives the benefit of Christ's righteous fulfillment of the law applied to them. God accounts believers as just and righteous in his sight through Christ's work and not their own.<sup>302</sup> In addition, existential change means that God makes his children more and more like Jesus in experience. Redemption does not promise a magic bullet<sup>303</sup> to change people's desires in a moment. Redemption instead promises a faithful God whose grace is sufficient to carry his people through all the moral disorder of a broken world until Jesus returns.

It is the conclusion of the researcher that this gift should not be taken for granted since Christians sometimes forget who they are. It is the researcher's experience that many Christian married men in the Sea Services tend to forget this basic but non-negotiable biblical truth. They may know a lot of scripture passages about sexuality or

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<sup>300</sup>Rom. 4:5; Eph. 2:1-10.

<sup>301</sup>Titus 2:12-14.

<sup>302</sup>Bryan Chapell, *Holiness by Grace* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), 51, Kindle.

<sup>303</sup>Mark R. Laaser, *Taking Every Thought Captive*, Men of Valor Series (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2011), 222-224.

sexual integrity but along the way Jesus becomes too abstract or too small to make a difference in real life, let alone sustain sexual integrity. In other words, one may believe intellectually that Jesus is their Savior but still find that sexual lust has some control over them. What one believes doesn't always seem to affect how one lives. On the other hand, John Calvin believed that trust in Jesus does affect how one should live. In fact, Christ in his office of prophet, priest, and king does advance holiness in his people. Christ as the prophet teaches truth that has real power to change his people by freeing them from slavery to sin, including sinful thought patterns. In Calvin's mind, this change leads to obedience unto righteousness.<sup>304</sup>

As king, Christ reigns over his people, subduing all his enemies. Christ empowers his people for battle against the world, the devil, and the flesh so that his cause might advance. As Calvin explains, "Now he arms and equips us with his power, adorns us with his beauty and magnificence, enriches us with his wealth."<sup>305</sup> As high priest, Christ has interceded for his people through the consecration of offering himself, so they are made partakers of his high-priestly holiness.<sup>306</sup> As priest, Christ alone can purify his people through "purging away our defilements,"<sup>307</sup> that he might further their sanctification, which [by themselves] the saints could never do.<sup>308</sup> Christ then is completely active, not only in the establishing, but in the completing of the sanctification of his people.

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<sup>304</sup>John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries*, The Calvin Translation Society (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), John 8:30.

<sup>305</sup>John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. J. T. McNeill, trans. F. L. Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 2.15.4.

<sup>306</sup>*Ibid.*, 2.15.6.

<sup>307</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>308</sup>*Ibid.*, 3.20.21.



## Christian Community

Second, Christian community was another one of the top two main motivating factors in sustaining sexual integrity in the Sea Services. CAPT Oliver reflected the collective voice of the participants as he talks about the impact that Christian community had in his life and marriage. He explained,

I became good friends with a Sunday school teacher where we lived just through normal conversations. We were both believers which helped. I was also close friends with a pastor in Michigan. We both showed up in town because we both were moving from one state to another. So, we were kind of new and we started a friendship. I also had peers about the same age [which] enabled us to sharpen and challenge one another. [Through] [c]ertain Bible studies and classes, whether addressing pornography in the modern age or marriage in general to marriage counseling with the pastor,...[m]y wife and I had encouragement there.

CAPT Oliver talks about the encouragement and guidance he and his wife had through life in community but he did not stop there. He continued,

My wife and I decided that the local church was a high priority wherever we moved. As soon as we moved into a new town and started hunting for a house, we would also visit the local churches because it is too easy when you start over and are in a new town to kind of lay back, relax, get in a rut and not join a church. Then, there is no accountability and you and your wife start drifting and that can become a weakness if you and your wife let that happen....We did not always find a church right away. Sometimes we had to look for a couple months and visit half a dozen churches. When we got to find a church, we tried to plug in somewhere; either going to Sunday school or serving somewhere. This enabled them to get to know us and we felt like we were more accountable because if we were not showing up we would get a call or a visit.

CAPT Oliver points to the negative consequences of not joining a local church. Without that connection, the Sea Service member and his wife become vulnerable to temptations and isolated from nurturing Christian relationships that promote accountability, spiritual growth, and a life of sacrificial service to others. In CAPT Oliver's mind, the absence of these factors will gradually but surely erode one's motivation to sustain sexual integrity.

In addition, it is interesting to note that the literature review on sexual addiction and recovery mentioned loss of community as a cultural factor that may influence sexual addictions.<sup>309</sup> Dr. Laaser pointed out concerning recovery from sexual addiction that accountability must be established and that practice in the strength of groups is a key element in it.<sup>310</sup> Therefore, Christian and secular literature on sexual addiction and recovery corroborates the participants' experience that community, specifically Christian community, plays a central role in motivating Christian married men to sustain sexual integrity. It is the researcher's conclusion that Christian married men in the Sea Services should understand sexual integrity as a community project rather than an isolated journey. This perspective may impact how they view new tour assignments or how often they deploy in combat. It is noble to sacrifice for the nation and defend its values in times of peace and war. However, they should not be so eager to uproot themselves and their families from local Christian communities if they are given a choice by the military in God's providence. Christian married men should ponder the long-term impact of moving around unnecessarily. It may be an over-desire for professional advancement or an over-desire to see oneself as relevant so that combat action becomes the default way to meet that desire. The researcher understands that the intersection of family and military life is complex and sometimes difficult to navigate. However, he believes that Christian married men should not be surprised to notice their resolve to sustain sexual integrity weakening if they continue to make decisions about moving solely based on promotion potential or thrill seeking. Discernment is necessary as there

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<sup>309</sup>Patrick Carnes, *Don't Call It Love: Recovery from Sexual Addiction* (New York: Bantam Books, 1991), 78.

<sup>310</sup>Mark R. Laaser, *Healing the Wounds of Sexual Addiction* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 126-131.

will always be an impact on their motivation for sexual integrity. Christian married men need Christian community to sustain sexual integrity in the long term.

### **Christian Marriage Vows**

Third, the research findings also point to Christian marriage vows as a motivating factor in sustaining sexual integrity in the Sea Services. Seven participants mentioned Christian marriage vows as a motivating factor. Perhaps CAPT Menendez's silence towards Christian marriage vows as an important motivation for sexual integrity may be linked to his distinctions on motivations. It may be that he considers Christian marriage vows as an external motivation. He explained, "[M]y internal drive is so strong that I never had the need for any external motivation.... I am aware of external motivations like laws but I don't think about that." During the interviews, CAPT Menendez would answer in the same manner: "Overall the answer is still the same: the word and the Holy Spirit to guide and convict." In this way CAPT Menendez's motivation for sexual integrity is totally shaped by Christian faith content and Christian community.

However, CAPT Menendez's position is an outlier in the findings. For example, CAPT Smith expressed in the beginning of his interview, "I think that the single motivation that has helped me above all others is my commitment to my wife, our marriage vows and what those vows mean to each of us separately and together." In addition, in the biblical literature we have learned that sex has boundaries. The marriage covenant between a man and a woman is the proper context for sex. According to the divine design, marriage between husband and wife is inextricably bound up with the spiritual unity of both man and woman with their Creator. Sex affects more than just our

bodies. Therefore, sex does not merely point to physical union but to a spiritual oneness with one another and with God.

Sex also serves as an external sign of the permanent<sup>311</sup> and holy union of marriage, as well as all other dimensions of life. Thus, sex is not an end but a means.<sup>312</sup> It is a renewal ceremony for the marriage covenant. Sex unequivocally means, “I am yours, you are mine, and we are God’s completely and forever.” Thus, it goes beyond mere biological appetite.<sup>313</sup> The legal union allows for and produces deeper intimacy<sup>314</sup> and emotions rather than vice-versa. Sex, as a part of creation, finds its rightful place only within God’s creational good order. All creation must serve God. The harmony and balance of God’s creation is a product of God’s holy creativity; human sexuality reflects that when it stands within God’s creational structures and reflects his holiness. Therefore, sexual acts have intrinsic meaning and purpose. It relates to a deeper natural order, which we must honor and not violate. Its meaning is God-given<sup>315</sup> and not merely constructed by society and the persons engaging in sex. Sexual relations between a man and a woman need to involve the natural significance of making them “one flesh,” with all that entails. “Meaningless” sex is alienation from God and from the world as it was meant to be. It is the conclusion of the researcher that Christian marriage vows as a motivation for sexual

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<sup>311</sup>R. Laird Harris, Gleason Archer, and Bruce Waltke, eds. *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 39.

<sup>312</sup>David Jones, *Biblical Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1994), 158,161-63,180.

<sup>313</sup>Timothy Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage: Facing the Complexities of Commitment with the Wisdom of God* (New York: Dutton, 2011), 220.

<sup>314</sup>C J. Mahaney and Carolyn Mahaney, *Sex, Romance, and the Glory of God: What Every Christian Husband Needs to Know* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 107.

<sup>315</sup>*Ibid.*, 110-111.

integrity is inherently tied to the previous two top motivators, Christian faith content and Christian community. There is a positive domino effect. In other words, I expected this link to be strong and consistent and the findings strengthen personal observations. I expected that Christian married men who are committed to God's word and God's people to be equally committed to vows that reflect the biblical view of sex and marriage and are genuinely embodied by local Christian communities. I also expected this motivating factor to be strong because the participants work in institutions that value commitment and promises. These are men who have sustained their commitment to the Sea Services through hard and good times. Overall they have lived the motto that a promise made is a promise kept.

### **Faithfulness to Military Institutions**

Fourth, four of the research participants also regarded faithfulness to the military institution as a motivation for sexual integrity. The desire to provide a role model to those they lead is a motivation for sexual integrity according to CAPT Smith. He affirmed,

As I become senior in my service I think the motivation is to become a good example to others, to those I lead; but more importantly to them and their spouses. My wife and I could be an example for them as they are going through challenges we had as a young couple or [that I had] as a young new officer through [which] we were successful in making our way through. The motivation to be a good example to others has clearly been central from the time I have been in service and matured as an officer.

CAPT Smith described how his personal sexual integrity impacts his military leadership style. For example, he wants to be able to offer constructive advice to those he leads if the need arises but this can only be possible with a walk that supports his talk. He continued, "Now in a leadership role I am responsible for more people that are dealing with their own challenges; my personal leadership style is such that they are part of my

family now and their challenges are my challenges.” CAPT Smith sees those he leads as an extension of his own family. Faithfulness to this greater family, his branch of service, motivates him to have sexual integrity. In the review of biblical literature, this study revealed that the plan of God in creation takes shape as he commands his image-bearers to multiply and harvest the potential of Eden. This command is called the cultural mandate.<sup>316</sup> There is work to be done in and out of Eden. Both Adam and Eve have a responsibility to cultivate and sustain it.<sup>317</sup> There is a command and thus a duty to God, to one another, and to the rest of creation. It is the conclusion of the researcher that the intersection of faith, work, and culture is inevitable for Christians and everybody else. It is impossible to compartmentalize one’s sexual life from your vocation. They affect one another for good or ill. The participants’ findings show that sustaining sexual integrity throughout one’s career will assist Christians in fulfilling the cultural mandate directly through living godly lives and indirectly through the impact of their example on those they work with. At a minimum, because of the biblical theme of creation, the researcher expects the efforts of Christian married men in pursuing sexual integrity and professional excellence to be providentially used by God to bless and sustain his creation<sup>318</sup> despite the pervasive presence and ever growing power of sin.<sup>319</sup> Theologians call this common grace, that is, “every favour of whatever kind or degree, falling short of salvation, which

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<sup>316</sup>Gen. 1:28-31.

<sup>317</sup>Gerard van Groningen, *From Creation to Consummation* (Sioux Center, IA: Dordt College Press, 1996), 67, 119, 265-66, 338-39, 440-41.

<sup>318</sup>Matt. 5:45.

<sup>319</sup>Gen. 8-9.

this undeserving and sin-cursed world enjoys at the hand of God.”<sup>320</sup> Therefore, Christian married men in the Sea Services may not forget that their private sexual integrity has public and eternal implications.

### *Challenges to Sexual Integrity*

#### **Advances of the Opposite Sex**

The study revealed six significant items that need to be noted with respect to challenges to sustain sexual integrity in the Sea Services. They are discussed below in no particular order. First, in the course of the interviews, six of the eight research participants referenced the advances of the opposite sex as a challenge Christian married men face in sustaining sexual integrity in the Sea Services. These situations did not all look the same. Sometimes they were unexpected and took the participants by surprise either because they felt it would never happen or they saw themselves as too strong. At other times, they saw it coming and sought to resist or get out as soon as possible. However, there were situations that did not have a happy ending and some of the participants continue to live with the consequences to this day. Overall, this was the greatest challenge mentioned during the interviews. CAPT Oliver pointed to a situation that took him by surprise. He described how “friendly ways” can sometimes become a cover-up for advances of the opposite sex. How ordinary the situation seemed also contributed to lead him into a potential seductive and sexual trap. He explained,

There was a woman who I thought was just friendly. So, I let my guard down a little and was asked to help get her back to the airport she had [flown] into for some training. Then she asked me if I could stop for lunch; then she asked me to help her get back from the car; then she approached and said she was interested in

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<sup>320</sup>John Murray, *Collected Writings of John Murray* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1977), 2:96.

more than that. I talked to her for a little while but I didn't do anything,...but looking back maybe I should have taken the Joseph<sup>321</sup> approach and got out.

CAPT Oliver many years later looks back to this situation and continues to analyze it. He continued, "I told it to my wife and even though nothing happened, she was upset that I didn't have boundaries in place.... [N]ot realizing what was happening...that's a weakness,...a weakness in my armor; my wife and I talked about that." CAPT Oliver ended his analysis by saying, "[M]aybe I had been ignoring these situations; maybe I thought I was pretty solid. Pride goes before the fall; maybe I was in a place I thought I was strong enough. I realized you are always a step away from a bad situation."

CAPT Oliver and other participants related similar stories where women aggressively tried to cross the friendship boundaries. On the other hand, CAPT Oliver and other participants didn't deny they are responsible for some of what happened. In fact, CAPT Oliver saw that he had a "weakness in the armor" that was brought to light through such seductive and sexually tempting situations. CAPT Smith also pointed to advances of the opposite sex as being a challenge for Christian married men regarding their sexual integrity in the Sea Services. Unlike CAPT Oliver, he saw the tempting situation developing. He did his best to resist but it took him a while. He explained,

[After] about six to eight years of commissioned service, which also would be my seventh year of marriage,... I was called to serve with women in the same unit. I was becoming more and more comfortable and familiar talking to a [particular] female but I was not being open in communicating with my wife about it. I got myself to a point where I got really uneasy because it felt [like] the female was communicating with me in a way that suggested I was not even married,...and she knew I was married.... [T]here was never anything that I did that violated my commitment to my wife.... I found myself in a situation where I learned the importance of communication with my spouse and fellow believers.

However, participants' stories did not always have such positive outcomes.

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<sup>321</sup>Gen. 39:12.



Sea Service officer Stuart is the Sea Service military member with the longest marriage and length military service among the eight research participants. He honestly talked about this challenge from personal experience. During his interview, this experience was the first thing he wanted to talk about. He immediately wanted to discuss this challenge, instead of addressing motivations unto sexual integrity. He described his experience this way:

I have been absolutely loyal to my wife with one exception. I had a one-time sexual encounter with an old girlfriend very long ago during a point in my life where my marriage was not working so well.... [S]he was in a bad relationship with her husband. I had a final conversation with that woman whereby I asked for her forgiveness and apologized, but she was not looking for any apologies; as far as I know she was completely good with it,... but I basically said “I am ceasing all communication. I wish you well.” I completely cut it off. I completely cut it off.

Sea Service officer Stuart pointed it out that he was not a Christian when this happened but that the memories continue until this day even after being forgiven by God. He continued, “We were young and had young kids. Both busy. We were both tired. Men are too much into sex and women are too much into romance. All grew into resentment, which helped me to rationalize what I did. I learned that I was a weak man but I have come clean with God. I know that he has extended me his grace.” When pressed to describe a little more what God did, he summarized in this way: “He took that awful burden of guilt off my shoulders although I did not deserve it.” Sea Service officer Stuart’s experience highlights not only the lingering memories of succumbing to the challenge of advances of the opposite sex but also the rest that the forgiveness of God will provide for the weary soul.

In the biblical literature review, we discovered that the doctrine of the Fall gives insight into the dark side of human sexuality. God accepts Christians on the merit of

Jesus' perfect death and obedience –yet they are still filled with remaining sinful sexual desires working themselves out through thoughts and actions.<sup>322</sup> Sexual temptation is an ever-present reality for Christians in all generations.<sup>323</sup> Christians, as Calvin would say, will face the assaults of spiritual enemies.<sup>324</sup> It is the conclusion of the researcher that Christian married men in the Sea Services will be better prepared to face these assaults if they listen to those who know them best. For example, CAPT Oliver's wife made a great remark about setting proper boundaries. According to Dr. Patrick Carnes, a forerunner in studies regarding sexual addiction, the current culture provides an optimal environment for the formation of sexual addictions, among others, and one of its components is the denial of human limits or boundaries.<sup>325</sup> I would take this assertion a step further. This denial of human limits or boundaries in part is a consequence of the cultural belief that sexual acts don't have intrinsic meaning and God-given purpose.<sup>326</sup> If they don't have intrinsic meaning and purpose, in other words, if it is up to us to construct meaning for sexual acts, then boundaries are a matter of personal preference and taste. This sexual ethic may bring personal freedom (with its ever decreasing boundaries) and social peace but it does so at the high cost of intellectual suicide. For example, if sexual boundaries are a matter of personal preference and taste, then, society has no moral or intellectual

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<sup>322</sup>1 Cor. 5:1-2.

<sup>323</sup>Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 106.

<sup>324</sup>John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. J. T. McNeill, trans. F. L. Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 2.15.4.

<sup>325</sup>Patrick Carnes, *Don't Call It Love: Recovery from Sexual Addiction* (New York: Bantam Books, 1991), 78.

<sup>326</sup>Timothy J. Keller, *Counterfeit Gods: The Empty Promises of Money, Sex, and Power, and the Only Hope That Matters* (New York: Dutton, 2009), 110-111.

basis to disapprove of adultery. The Bible agrees with CAPT Oliver's wife and Dr. Carnes as it also points to the necessity of boundaries in human relationships. The marriage covenant between a man and a woman is the proper context for sex, which simply summarizes the Christian sex ethic.<sup>327</sup>

### **Pornography**

Pornography, along with peer pressure, were the next two major challenges the participants faced in sustaining sexual integrity in the Sea Services. Five of the eight participants recounted their struggles with pornography. It is also important to stress that the Department of Defense officially does not approve the use of its work computers to access pornography.<sup>328</sup> Some study participants explained that their involvement with pornography was by accident. For example, they entered an environment where fellow Sea Service members were actively seeing pornography. Like second-hand smoking, they had to deal with second-hand pornography. However, they readily admitted being involved with it at other times by their own choice. CAPT Smith explained how his exposure to pornography was due to the inevitable day-to-day interactions with fellow Sea Service members. He shared about his past experience in the following way:

Sometimes there were people, whether in state rooms or wardrooms, watching pornography or reading it; you were faced with it more frequently.... [I]f they were engaged with that [then] I [was] confronted with that. How [do] I deal with that situation and what [do] I say? How strongly [do] I engage in that? Do I just ignore it and walk away? Do I tell them that it is not appropriate and why it is not appropriate? Those were the challenges I faced on deployment that I wouldn't face when I was not deployed.

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<sup>327</sup>Timothy Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage: Facing the Complexities of Commitment with the Wisdom of God* (New York: Dutton, 2011), 221.

<sup>328</sup>DoD 5500.07-R, "The Joint Ethics Regulation (JER), including Changes 1-7," dtic.mil, November, 17, 2011 accessed January 30, 2014, <http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/550007r.pdf>, 25.

CAPT Smith emphasized the dilemma he faced after witnessing others consuming pornography. Second-hand pornography affected him personally because of its close proximity and the endless self-talk it produced in his mind. CDR Wilson exemplifies the challenge that pornography posed to some of the participants due to the presence of outside influences. He puts it succinctly, “The big thing for me is I don’t think I have a temptation to have an adulterous affair or sleep with a prostitute or do anything like that; the big thing for me, temptation speaking, would be pornography.” When pressed to describe this challenge further, he does not hesitate to explain, “I am very susceptible to that temptation and there was a strong desire to satisfy it.” In the literature review, it is noted that sexual lust, as it is propelled by pornography,<sup>329</sup> distorts God-given sexual thoughts and desires and enslaves the mind through an idolatrous<sup>330</sup> and compulsive cycle of self-deception and results in pain, shame, and despair. In fact, the life of the mind must be addressed if one pursues sexual integrity in the world.<sup>331</sup> The literature also points to pornography as one of the building blocks of sexual addiction along with sexual fantasies and masturbation. These develop a continuous cycle in the addict’s life. Sexual fantasy excites the individual, producing adrenaline, neurochemicals, and catecholamines which have narcotic-like effects which facilitate the human sexual response. Pornographic materials, defined as anything that elicits sexual fantasy and response, feed the appetite of the sexual addict, which spurs on sexual response. The addict will then gratify the

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<sup>329</sup>Mark Laaser, *Healing the Wounds of Sexual Addiction* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 28-35.

<sup>330</sup>*Ibid.*, 157.

<sup>331</sup>Mark R. Laaser, *Taking Every Thought Captive*, Men of Valor Series (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2011), 67-106.

appetite through masturbation.<sup>332</sup> The researcher is not surprised that the challenge of pornography was confirmed both by the literature review and most of the participants and would be alarmed if this was not the case. The researcher cannot improve on what has already been said by the participants and the literature review on the challenge of pornography. It suffices to say that there is no middle ground for Christian married men in the Sea Services concerning pornography. The Bible, secular literature, and the participants' testimonies are all in agreement, which does not happen often. There is nothing to win when it comes to pornography and everything to lose.

### **Peer Pressure**

Five of the eight participants recounted their struggles with peer pressure. Some participants described the struggle as simply as “there was a push to go to the wrong places.” Others pointed out that as they moved higher in rank, they became better able to navigate the powerful waves of peer pressure. The higher rank allowed them to divert some sexually dangerous situations. CAPT Oliver felt he could resist peer pressure more readily as he got promoted along the years. However, higher rank may tempt one to misuse power. He explains, “There is less opportunity to be roving around with a group of people that put peer pressure on you.... [T]he higher rank you get, the less peer pressure because you just rise above that,... but at the same time you also have more and more power and you have people you can manipulate and get favors from.” CAPT Oliver's insight into the other side of having a higher rank separated him from all the other participants. Power did indeed enable him to resist the challenge of peer pressure

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<sup>332</sup>Mark R. Laaser, *Healing the Wounds of Sexual Addiction* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 28-35.

along the years but he still recognized the need to be cautious. In his own words, “There are two sides to that coin I think.”

Notwithstanding this reality he concluded with an unexpected word of encouragement for leaders. He shared, “The more responsibility you have, the more people you have under you, the more you see the damage and you have to deal with a lot of it and it brings home the severity of it. I think in a lot of ways that helped me because it helped me to see some of those things and you know how bad it is and you don’t want any part of that.” To clarify, CAPT Oliver did not mean that he enjoyed seeing those under him getting into trouble because they succumbed to sexual temptations and challenges due to peer pressure. He meant that the byproduct of seeing so much wreckage around this matter kept the seduction to use power to gain sexual favors in check. It always kept before his eyes the results of abusing power in such a way. The researcher continues to affirm the inevitable intersection of faith, work, and culture for Christians as well as everyone else. It is impossible to compartmentalize your sexual life from your vocation. They affect one another for good or ill. Sea Services are a microcosm of American society since one percent of Americans serve in the military. Christian married men should expect to rub shoulders with people whose values and outlooks on life differ. Peer pressure should not drive Christian married men to retreat into the church and treat it as if it were a hideout. However, Christian married men should not over-adapt and uncritically absorb the transient sexual ethics of the day. This researcher agrees with the participants that it is hard in the beginning of one’s career but there has been no era in which peer pressure hasn’t been a challenge. Like Joseph, they are called to be in the

world but not of the world.<sup>333</sup> I acknowledge the challenge of peer pressure in sustaining sexual integrity in the Sea Services but, while there may be right reasons for leaving the military, peer pressure is not one of them.

### **Loneliness**

Half of the participants pointed out loneliness as a challenge they faced in sustaining sexual integrity. One participant mentioned missing sexual intimacy with his wife. Others highlighted that the higher one goes in seniority, the lonelier one may feel. Still others' input coalesced around spiritual loneliness as they felt cut off from their Christian community and the fellowship and accountability it provides. Finally, one participant insightfully pointed to the power loneliness can have in breaking down your ability to resist sexual temptations. CAPT Smith is a great example of this challenge as he simply mentioned that "aside from being lonely for [his] wife and being intimate," he missed "sexual interaction with her," especially during deployments. In his experience, deployments and others times away from his wife for work-related purposes meant long periods with no sexual activity. Navy, Marine Corps, and even Coast Guard may have deployments that last from six months to a year. In the literature review, it was noted that the Apostle Paul encourages Christian married couples to fill the sexual void with prayer.<sup>334</sup> Apostle Paul points to communication through mutual agreement and commitment to the regularity of sex as a way to resist sexual temptation and maintain self-control.<sup>335</sup> It is the conclusion of the researcher that Christian married men's

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<sup>333</sup>Gen. 39:12.

<sup>334</sup>1 Cor. 7:5.

<sup>335</sup>Ibid.

discussions about when and if to deploy should include discussion about sexual fasting as well. In God's providence, Christian married men are called to abstain from sex during any type or duration of time away from their wives. However, they should intensify their prayer life all the more. I believe that every decision to do an operational<sup>336</sup> tour precludes an honest conversation between a Christian husband and wife regarding this issue as it will require abstinence for a limited time. The way Christian married men prepare themselves for such times of loneliness is to grow in communicating with their wives about their sexual concerns and in praying with them and for them. Regarding this necessary communication, I agree with John Gottman, a secular psychologist, on the importance of communication about sex. He says,

No other area of a couple's life offers more potential for embarrassment, hurt, and rejection than sex. No wonder couples find it such a challenge to communicate about the topic clearly [...] Learn to talk to each other about sex in a way that lets you both feel safe. That means learning the right way to ask for what you want, and the appropriate way to react to your spouse's requests.<sup>337</sup>

Overall I believe that this biblical antidote to the challenge of sexual loneliness should be more emphasized within circles of Christian married men in the Sea Service for the sake of their vocations and marriages.

### **Unfulfilled Marital Needs**

Unfulfilled marital needs was also a challenge three of the participants described during the interviews. One participant expressed that having no sex within the marriage contributed to his sexual downfall later. Others shared that the lack of communication

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<sup>336</sup> Military assignments that include long deployments and several weeks of training exercises away from family.

<sup>337</sup> John M. Gottman and Nan Silver, *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work, a Practical Guide from the Country's Foremost Relationship Expert* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1999), 200-201.



with their spouses weakened them when battling sexual temptations head on. Not feeling known by their own wives in the most intimate way contributed to the accumulation of secrets which, in the long run, became walls that kept the military couple from truly becoming one. This challenge, coupled with the ones already mentioned in this chapter, became an explosive combination in the lives of some of the participants. This study will also highlight Sea Service officer Stuart who mentioned that the absence of a sex life within his marriage contributed to his sexual entanglements. He explained,

I have been absolutely loyal to my wife with one exception. I had a one-time sexual encounter with an old girlfriend very long ago during a point in my life where my marriage was not working so well. The basic reason why it was not working so well was that sexual relations between my spouse and I had dried up. She showed no interest at all.

Sea Service officer Stuart revealed that the same challenge pops up in the lives of his subordinates when he questions them about their professional performance. He continued,

They are in my office maybe because their performance dropped off and in the course of the conversation you find out that their excuse for their performance dropping off is that they are going through difficult times in their marriage. They many times say in the course of the conversation that “she is no longer having sexual relations with me and I am tired of this.”

Sea Service officer Stuart does not at all shrink from his responsibility in the past indiscretion. His wife’s apparent neglect to fulfill his sexual needs contributed to rather than determined his sexual downfall. In his experience, this type of unfulfilled marital need was a challenge that he faced in sustaining sexual integrity. It became a clear and present danger. The problem identified in this case was not physical distance, as with the previous challenge of loneliness, but emotional distance. In the literature, it was noted

that marriage and family therapist William Doherty cautions that life responsibilities and aging may play a part in diminishing the sex life of some couples. He explains,

What do I mean by the marriage needing sex? For sex to be the love bond it can be in marriage, we have to make it a regular ritual in our relationship. Like all rituals, we hope and expect it to give us joy.... It's easy for most couples to have regular sexual relations when they are young and energetic. It's harder when energies sag and life responsibilities mount. That's when it takes commitment to the relationship to keep sex a regular ritual. In consumer marriage, all it takes is for one spouse to not "feel like it" very often for the couple's sexual life to go on the shelf.<sup>338</sup>

Sea Service officer Stuart's case seems to confirm what Dr. Doherty says. Sea service officer Stuart continues, "We were young and had young kids. Both busy. We were both tired. Men are too much into sex and women are too much into romance. All grew into resentment which helped me to rationalize what I did." Therefore, it is the conclusion of the researcher that Christian married men ought to reflect on the impact the pace of their professional lives is having on sex within their marriages. It is important that reflection followed up with change should start with themselves rather than their wives. It is true that Christian wives have a role to play in the overall sexual health of the marriage, however, meaningful change starts when Christian married men better evaluate and learn to prioritize giving rather than receiving. Learning the love languages of their wives may also be a great way to engage with the goal of not just fulfilling a sexual need but cementing trust and genuine bonding.

### **Abuse of Media Technology**

During the interviews, the abuse of media technology was also noted as a challenge to sexual integrity. Although only three of the eight participants highlighted it,

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<sup>338</sup>William J. Doherty, *Take Back Your Marriage, Sticking Together in a World That Pulls Us Apart* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2001), 141.

the concrete examples they put forth spoke volumes. One participant mentioned his struggle with watching tv at night when traveling away for work purposes. Another accidentally witnessed others watching pornography and suffered the effects of second-hand pornography. Still another preferred not to go into detail, but said one should “avoid electronic media and watching tv alone.” CAPT Menendez’s experience is noteworthy as he described how he struggles with being in a hotel alone with the opportunity to watch tv at night. He explained,

One thing that is challenging is being in a hotel room by myself. Many times you want to simply watch football but then there it is; it’s Showtime channel right there and easily accessible. At home I don’t have HBO or Showtime or channels like that. These are the times that get a little more challenging for me personally. I just try to make sure I don’t watch these shows or turn to channels like HBO.

CAPT Menendez did not point to media technology as the culprit for his sexual temptation. The challenge comes when there are opportunities to misuse media for his own gratification. In the literature, it was noted that sophisticated technology is another component of the cultural environment that encourages the formation of sexual addictions, according to Dr. Carnes and others.<sup>339</sup> It is the conclusion of the researcher that the challenge of abusing or misusing technology is exponentially growing because technology is everywhere and fully integrated into our culture’s way of life. Technology in general should be used in a way that honors God and promotes sexual integrity in Christian married men in the Sea Services. However, it is necessary to be critical of types of technology that isolate men from community and stirs up sexual emotions and

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<sup>339</sup>Patrick Carnes, *Don't Call It Love: Recovery from Sexual Addiction* (New York: Bantam Books, 1991), 78; Delores Dorton Rimington and Julie Gast, “Cybersex Use and Abuse: Implications for Health Education,” *American Journal of Health Education* 38, no. 1 (January/February 2007): 34-40; Chien Chou, Linda Condrón, and John C. Belland, “A Review of the Research on Internet Addiction,” *Educational Psychology Review* 17, no. 4 (December 2005), 363-388.

fantasies outside biblical boundaries. The researcher believes that there is a philosophy embedded in every type of technology. For example, a tv's remote control offers the flexibility to easily change channels without having to get up from the couch. However, it weakens one's ability to focus on one conversation at a time, and for a long period of time, because there might always be something better to watch the next second. It is designed to promote instant gratification and escapist entertainment. It promotes impatience and superficial analysis, if any at all. It is the researcher's belief that this dynamic spills over into other areas of life, such as sustaining sexual integrity. For example, the researcher's own experience includes impatience with his spouse if she does not mirror the instant gratification abilities of a remote control. Additionally, the researcher believes his reasoning faculties to be so numbed by the remote control-television duet that it becomes very hard to listen thoughtfully and have a two-way conversation. Technology itself, and not just its content, negatively affect individuals in subtle ways. Therefore, Christian married men ought to be aware that media technology can shape them and make them susceptible to sexual temptation. It is not just the porn movie next door or HBO tv shows that promote meaningless sex. Media technology has the power to change one deeply and to distort the image of God in the hearts of individuals.

### *Best Practices for Sexual Integrity*

#### **Disciplines of Grace**

The study revealed four significant items that need to be noted with respect to best practices to sustain sexual integrity in the Sea Services. They are discussed below in no particular order. First, all of the participants testified to the disciplines of grace as a best

practice that helped them sustain sexual integrity in the Sea Services. These disciplines of grace were the means by which they nurtured and cared for their relationship with God. As a result, they were better able to grow spiritually and resist temptations of all kinds, including sexual ones. They named prayer, personal Bible study devotions, Bible reading, memorization of biblical passages and verses, and worship as disciplines they were incorporating into their lives. They acknowledged that they became far weaker in navigating and nullifying sexual temptations when their practice of the disciplines of grace was ignored or compromised over the course of time. The participants did not just casually mention the disciplines of grace as an afterthought or matter of fact. Their long years of marriage and military service convinced them that the practice of the disciplines of grace is non-negotiable. However, the disciplines are also not automatic or like vending machines. One of the participants pointed to relying on the grace of God behind it all. Ultimately the disciplines of grace work because of who is behind them, namely a God of grace. CAPT Menendez is a great example of this lifestyle of the disciplines, as he referred to his practice of “feeding the spirit as best as possible.” He continued by listing a few ways he does this, such as,

taking the Bible with me to places I go; having my family and personal devotions, also memory verses. One of the things I do each week is to put memory verses in the note section of my phone and I make myself look to the memory verse every time I touch my phone and I continue to do so in the course of the day. So, every time I touch my phone I am thinking of God’s word and honoring him. I don’t feel tempted on a daily basis sexually.... I think it’s more of a focus on trying to feed the spirit as opposed [to] trying to avoid other things.

CAPT Menendez emphasized that sexual integrity is not his ultimate goal in using the disciplines of grace. In other words, sexual integrity is more of a byproduct of seeking to walk with and honor God on a daily basis. He drove home his point in this way: “For me

it is more than just sexual integrity, it is going to Bible studies and churches to feed the whole man.” CAPT Menendez shuns a reductionist approach to sustaining sexual integrity in the Sea Services. He does not deny that he cares for his sexuality but he seems resolute in putting it under the greater purpose of seeking the person of the God of grace and the disciplines of grace help him to do just that. In the biblical literature concerning redemption, it was noted that the reconstructive work of grace uses means.<sup>340</sup> Means are bridges through which God empowers his people to live holy lives. God calls the redeemed sexually broken to live the Christian life in community.<sup>341</sup> The means of grace, the word, sacraments, and prayer are powerful agents of change, enabling mind and body to feed by faith on Jesus Christ; thus, accessing the explosive power of a new affection.<sup>342</sup> For example, love for Jesus becomes the motivation and power for genuine transformation. Christian married men ought to make use of the disciplines of grace since human sexuality is not merely a physical act, but one that engages the mind.<sup>343</sup> Therefore, sexual lust, as it is propelled by pornography,<sup>344</sup> distorts God-given sexual thoughts and desires and it enslaves the mind through an idolatrous<sup>345</sup> and compulsive cycle of self-deception and resulting pain, shame, and despair. The life of the mind must be addressed

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<sup>340</sup>Jas. 5:16.

<sup>341</sup> Edward T. Welch, *Addictions: A Banquet in the Grave*, Resources for Changing Lives (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Pub., 2001), 247-268.

<sup>342</sup> Thomas Chalmers, *The Expulsive Power of a New Affection* (Minneapolis: Curiosmith, 2012), Amazon Digital Services, Inc.

<sup>343</sup>Matt. 5:27-30.

<sup>344</sup>Mark Laaser, *Healing the Wounds of Sexual Addiction* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 28-35.

<sup>345</sup>Ibid.,157.

if one pursues sexual integrity in the world.<sup>346</sup> The researcher agrees with CAPT Menendez that the aim should be to feed the whole person, that is, to grow in the knowledge and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. God wants to advance his sanctifying work of grace in all areas of one's life. It is all or nothing. The only way to not fall is to grow. In addition, the literature review detailing John Calvin's view of the role of Jesus in sanctification strengthens this conclusion as it points to approaches to sanctification which are God's own, that is, which are taught or derived directly from scripture, such as prayer, the word, church discipline and sacraments. Christian married men cannot neglect them even on deployments. The path to sustained sexual integrity necessarily includes awareness and practice of them.

### **Christian Community**

All of the participants testified to Christian community as a best practice that helped them sustain sexual integrity in the Sea Services. There was also consensus around Christian community to strengthen, protect, and care for all of these Christian married men in their pursuit of sexual integrity along the years. Some of them focused on the benefit of accountability they had access to. Others pointed out how just ordinary but genuine fellowship with other believers kept them afloat in the midst of turbulent waves of sexual temptation. Fellowship kept loneliness from "breaking their ability to resist," as CAPT Oliver alluded in the discussion about challenges. Finally, others pointed to joining a church as a way to fully harvest the benefits of Christian community as well as coming under the responsibilities and obligations such joining inevitably carries. CDR Wilson pointed to the strength this type of accountability promotes. He explained,

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<sup>346</sup>Mark R. Laaser, *Taking Every Thought Captive*, Men of Valor Series (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2011), 67-106.

There is a strengthening factor being with other believers in Christ where we can have a sustained accountability. Christian community allows individuals to share their fears, their temptations; to admit their faults; to be able to not only find redemption and forgiveness for those faults but also to allow them to be torn down. Oftentimes when you publicly state those temptations they no longer become temptations anymore. Like a bomb which is taken apart and no longer becomes a threat. Community has a way to guard you; it is when you hide from community and lie to community that you find yourself in a position that you can fall into sexual impurity.

CDR Wilson had mentioned Christian community before as a motivation for sexual integrity. He also sees it as a best practice, especially when accountability is able to disarm sexually explosive “bombs” through the practice of being with others and truth-telling. The metaphor of disarming a bomb so that it is no longer a threat gives new insight into the necessity of Christian accountability. The doctrine of the Fall tells us that people sin because they are sinners. There is an internal bent of the heart towards evil that manifests itself through desires, thoughts, and actions. It is like a bomb deeply entrenched in the heart and invisible to the natural eye that if not diffused will explode. It necessitates constant search and vigilance of a Christian community to diffuse the effects of sin in each believer’s life. However, there is always a risk. There may be an honest intent to diffuse the bomb but it can happen sometimes that whatever is done actually detonates it. Some Christian married men have been hurt by the uncaring and unwise intervention of others, which makes it hard to trust again. In light of this, the researcher believes that CAPT Madison’s point is valid but incomplete. He explained, “Understand that you are going to probably fail, but in the end rest in God’s grace.” The researcher would add, “Understand that others are going to probably fail you, but in the end rest in God’s grace.” CAPT Madison (as well as the researcher) do not propose accountability in a vacuum. It needs to be founded on the disciplines of grace and practical wisdom. Thus,



accountability as an aspect of Christian community cannot guarantee a life of Christian victory over such temptations. In the end, the believer has to rely on the grace of God as their ultimate hope and motivation to keep on.

### **Appropriate Use of Media Technology**

All of the participants except for one mentioned appropriate use of media technology as a best practice toward sustaining sexual integrity in the Sea Services. Most of them reason that as they look ahead for what they have left of their careers, they must be intentional about the quantity and the quality of media technology they expose themselves to. They were watchful in the past but now they are becoming more sensitive to this practice as media technology saturates the cultural milieu and shows itself increasingly hijacked by camouflaged and overt unbiblical sexuality. One participant summed this issue up in this way: “Sex and technology don’t have any role in my life; I use technology for what I need to use it for; I do e-mail and communicate over the phone but it has nothing to do with sex.” Much has been said in this study regarding the challenge of the abuse of media technology. It has been asserted that Christian married men should not just be critical of the content of media technology but also of the technology itself. As a consequence, it may be necessary to enter into a fasting from technology. For example, Christian married men in the Sea Services should look into how much time they spend using the internet.

This recommendation should not be understood as a call to cynicism toward technology, which can be used for good. In fact, it will be included in the restoration of all things in the second coming of Christ. CAPT Menendez made a good point when he addressed this topic. He preferred to reduce his exposure to media technology by having

“no iPad and no Facebook account.” He continued, “I don’t look at e-mail during the day on my iPhone.” His posture is not just defensive. He injects his iPhone with Bible memory verses. He explained, “This is really the key. If I am looking at a memory verse and thinking about God’s word, it gets a little harder to flip that over and go into a porn site. I’ve never looked at porn on my phone but I think that is due in large part to having that memory verse on my phone every day.” CAPT Menendez’s defensive and aggressive posture toward using media technology shows how God’s word leads, convicts, and protects him in his daily media interactions. However, he also expressed that not being saturated with media “helps him maximize time with family” since, he explained, “you are not staying up late by yourself in front of a computer continuously exposing yourself to sexual temptation.” Fasting and focus on God’s word are necessary countermeasures to the ever-increasing tendency of media technology to overwhelm one’s life and by doing so to affect one in ways one may not even realize.

### **Marital Life**

The last, but not the least, of the best practices revealed by this study’s findings was marital life. To nurture and care for one’s marital life was named by five of the eight participants as an important best practice for sexual integrity. The participants mentioned fellowship, strategic communication, worship with an emphasis on prayer, and sex. These ingredients fortified the participants’ marital life and consequently their sexual integrity in the Sea Services as well. This discussion will focus on and agree with CAPT Oliver who mentioned strategic communication as an ingredient of a resilient marital life and sexual integrity. CAPT Oliver explained,

It is important as a married couple to sit down and come up with strategies. I did not have this and so ran into a few mistakes before I finally learned to deal with

some situations. If you are married, it is good to sit down and talk about boundaries, weaknesses, and how to guard against that because everybody [has] them. You need to talk about the hard and embarrassing things up front because they will come up anyway.

CAPT Oliver also insightfully pointed out that “hard times will put pressures in your marriage and they will give you excuses to wonder and make you say ‘She does not care for me. I have to fulfill my physical needs on my own’.” He ended with, “Couples madly in love do not know this is all around the corner;...you need to sit down and talk about it now. How are we going to fight? How are we going to deal with this?” CAPT Oliver is not naïve about how young Sea Service married couples may miss the mark in the beginning.

Their initial inexperience may be understandable but costly as well. Strategic communication was a marital life ingredient he and his wife adopted into their toolbox. He and others participants were convinced of its necessity for the well-being of their marriages and for sustaining sexual integrity in the Sea Services. The researcher was impacted by what CAPT Oliver said about this issue. It is not enough to just communicate. Christian married men should share with their wives what their sexual struggles are and what tools they have in hand. They have to agree on strategies together and in doing so they neutralize the build-up of secrets between them. Strategic communication is communication with a purpose. Another facet of this issue is that most, if not all, Christian married men in the Sea Services won’t believe this strategy just by being told. They will need to be shown and convinced by God’s merciful hand in their own experiences.

## **Recommendations for Practice**

Unlike basic academic research, applied research studies, such as this dissertation, are undertaken with the goal of improving the quality of practice of a particular discipline.<sup>347</sup> Thus, this study would not be complete without a short section detailing specific and practical proposals for improving military ministry related to the topic at hand. In the paragraphs below, I will make specific suggestions for chaplains, for prospective chaplains, and for the non-chaplain supporters of military ministry.

### *For Chaplains and Prospective Chaplains*

#### **Grow in the Grace and Knowledge of Jesus Christ**

First, do not neglect your own walk with God. God wants you to grow in love, faith, perseverance, and self-control, which includes your sexual integrity. Like with other calls of ministry, do not equate the gifts of the Spirit with the fruit of the Spirit. Great preaching, overwhelming acceptance by others, and unique administrative skills do not necessarily mean you are growing in your sanctification and holiness. Pay attention to your doctrine and sexual life. Are they consistent with one another? God expects his children to advance in knowing him better. Chaplain activities of any nature will tend to be overwhelming and suffocate your spiritual growth. If you are married, your spouse may be the best person to help with this process. Don't rely on your own evaluation of yourself.

In addition, be encouraged because the call to growth is a call to grow in grace. The call to grow implies that there has been a renewal in one's heart. This call implies that the believer should read and live their story through the biblical themes of creation,

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<sup>347</sup>Sharan B. Merriam, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, The Jossey-Bass Higher and Adult Education Series (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 3.

fall, redemption and restoration. A call to grow in grace is a call to continue to drive the great truths of biblical history into one's heart. You will never outgrow your need to be reminded of the story. It is not a mere call to be a decent moral person. The good news of Jesus exhorts us to grow because of who we are, sinners saved by grace. His divine power and precious promises have given each of his children everything they need to grow in godliness. We must ask ourselves whether we believe that the Cross that justifies is the same one that sanctifies. A call to grow in grace is a call to continue to live by faith in the promises of God. In other words, a call to grow in grace is a call to be practicing our legal identity in Christ before God.

### **Grow in Knowing Your Spouse**

Second, don't take your wife and your sexual life with her for granted! The way you can know you have taken her for granted is when she becomes a mere appendix in your life book. Chaplain activities of any nature will also tend to overwhelm and suffocate your relationship with your wife. It may be interesting for Sea Service chaplains to count the number of years they have spent away from their wives when they retire. No man wants to arrive at the end of his career and look back and say, "I took care of everybody except my wife."

On top of chaplain ministry, one has financial issues, growing children, aging parents, one's wife's work aspirations, education and house ownership goals, retirement, and the list continues. Thus, chaplains must be very purposeful with the time they do have with their wives. I suggest setting apart time for your wife in the same way you would for God. Time shows where one's priorities are. There will be quality time only if there is quantity time. It sounds so obvious that often it doesn't happen. And perhaps

because it sounds so elementary, it can easily be forgotten. It may be that the struggle is not just for time. It is often one's pride. One can presume to have tomorrow to say what is important to say today. One can also presume that one's masculinity implies supernatural knowledge of all things while one barely knows the wife who is in the present.

In addition, I also admonish every chaplain to reflect on the impact major decisions will have on his sexual life with his wife. Sex is not the most important thing in life, but does it deserve to be at the bottom of the priority list? How does one preach on the importance and holiness of sex in public while in private it is devalued so much? It is vital to start a conversation with one's wife and find healthy ways to nourish this important element of married life.

### **Grow in Understanding Human Sexuality**

Third, it is important that chaplains grow in their understanding of human sexuality. Most chaplains have one or two counseling courses during their seminary years, but this is not enough. The myriad and complexity of human sexual problems normally encountered in counseling sessions demand a deeper understanding of the subject matter from both a biblical and secular perspective. I don't think a counseling degree with an emphasis in human sexuality is a bad investment in addition to a Master of Divinity if one is contemplating military chaplaincy. I would have done this differently if I could go back in time.

In addition, secular literature has so much to teach Christians about sexual addictions. There is disagreement on this, but I am still thankful for what I learned in chapter two. The study of sexual addiction greatly validates what believers biblically know about the doctrine of the fall and sin. The power of sexual addiction to enslave

one's mind in a vicious cycle of pleasure, deceit, pain, and despair reflects sin as well. I recommend Sea Service chaplains to study sexual addiction, especially the works of Patrick Carnes and Mark Laaser, the latter a Christian.

Finally, it is important to include human sexuality in your pre-marital counseling to Sea Service members. I recommend that chaplains have a good handle on what the Bible says about sex as well as cultivating a perspective on this subject through the lenses of the biblical themes of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration. Human beings in general like a good story and so I recommend teaching about human sexuality from within the context of the true story of the universe because it is the story of the gospel.

#### **For Other Concerned Christians**

First, I recommend that Christian married men in the Sea Services review at least the top two recommendations for chaplains and prospective chaplains in this study. However, it is key to focus on the findings and discussion of findings found in chapters four and five respectively. Additionally, it is important that they learn from the lives and examples of fellow experienced Christians (noting their best practices) who have faced similar challenges in the past and are examples of sustained sexual integrity amidst the constant change and fast pace of military life. Sexual integrity is vital for strengthening vocational faithfulness and stewardship. Sexual integrity is also critical for Christians solidifying their credibility for their faith and work in the workplace. The gospel informs the integration of faith and work as it informs the integration of faith and sex.

Second, I recommend that Christian single men out of high school defer marriage during their first Sea Service enlistment so that they may focus on the work at hand. I have seen much emotional wreckage in the lives of many who called themselves

Christians but whose decision-making was ill-informed about the realities of marriage and sustaining sexual integrity in the Sea Services. It would be valuable to them to review these results in order to be better prepared to evaluate potential marriage partners beyond physical appearance and first-time impressions. Single men will find no better allies in the pursuit of sexual integrity than future spouses.

Third, I recommend spouses and family members of Christian married men, church leaders, and church members at large to review the findings of this research and incorporate them as befits their specific needs. It is my opinion that compassion is the best way to begin applying the results of the research. Christian married men in the Sea Services face massive challenges of which some are natural because of the type of work they do. However, they also face supernatural challenges to sustain sexual integrity. These men and their families need prayer and to be welcomed into ministry fellowships with love, patience, and sound discipleship.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

The purpose of this study was to explore how Christian married men sustain sexual integrity in the Sea Services. As with any study, there are limitations as to how extensive the focus can be. Therefore, pursuit of the following areas of study could be highly valuable. First, it is likely that Christian married women in the Sea Services would have a slightly different perspective or emphasis on some of the research topics. This possibility makes Christian married women an interesting and unique group to research the topic of sustaining sexual integrity. Conducting similar research could yield fruitful conclusions.



Another approach that could be beneficial would be to investigate how Christian married men sustain vocational integrity in the Sea Services. They live at their workplaces for the most part and face pressures to perform at the expense of other important areas of their lives. Such study may enhance understanding of the present findings and of the intersection between faith, work, and culture in the context of the Sea Services.

An additional approach that could also be beneficial would be to investigate how married men from other religions sustain sexual integrity in the Sea Services. It is likely that married men from other religions in the Sea Services would have a different perspective or emphasis on some of the research topics. It would be interesting to learn how they use their religions' resources to sustain sexual integrity. Such study would be profitable to them and to anyone in the greater Sea Service community.

Finally, conducting research on how Christian single men sustain sexual integrity in the Sea Services is worth a closer look. This study did not include them as participants but singles are a significant percentage of Sea Service members. Such study may reveal a slightly different perspective or emphasis. Conducting similar research could yield some fruitful conclusions.

### **Final Words**

The call to serve in the military is noble and honorable. Christians should remind themselves that it is also a call of God in their lives. However, it will demand sacrifices and present challenges that unaddressed biblically may derail one's God-given potential to serve faithfully to the end. I join the rank of Christians who want to serve the Sea Services and God faithfully as long as his call continues in his life. I also join the rank of

Christians who need to incorporate the findings found in this research, and I have been forever changed and appreciative of the courageous men interviewed in this research.

They became a living proof that the power of the cross is available to anyone who repents and has faith in Jesus. He is the faithful one. How deep, how wide, how long and how high is his love for his people! Praise be to his holy name!

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