

# PRESSING ON...

"I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:14



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## Unity With Christ

### Jesus Leads and Empowers Us from Within

■ by Lynne B. Scherschel, MS, LMFT

Sometimes, in the midst of difficult circumstances, we feel as if God is far away and that He has forgotten us. Well, He is far away – yet closer than our breath! It is important to base our lives on TRUTH, not Feeling. Our only reliable foundation is the TRUTH of scripture, not our feelings. The latter change constantly, while the truth of scripture is unchanging; God never changes (Malachi 3:6, James 2:17).

So, how can God be both far away and so close at the same time? God made everything and is everywhere, which includes being with us at all times. Actually, it is even better than that! He promises that when we accept Jesus as Lord and Savior, Jesus actually takes up residence within us. In baptism we die with Christ and are resurrected with Him (Romans 6:4-6). That can

only happen if He is one with us, in us. Miracle of miracles! Then we are told that we are seated with Him in heavenly places, which means we are with Him where He is seated at the right hand of the Father (Ephesians 1:19-20, 2:6-7).

#### Nothing Can Separate Us From God's Love

I have known all the scriptures about unity with Christ for a long time, but I recently heard an example given that took the knowledge from my head to my heart and produced a major paradigm shift in me. Suppose you have a glass of water. It is just water. Then suppose you put several tea bags into the water and let it sit for a while. We all know that the water will become saturated, united with the tea, and it would be very difficult to separate the tea from the water. As well, the tea bags will become saturated with the water. Assuming that the glass is clear and clean, the tea would be quite visible, however, if the glass was dirty or cloudy on the outside, the tea would be hidden. We would be hard pressed to remove the tea from the water. Romans 8: 35-39 tells us that nothing can separate us from God's love.

This example isn't perfect, but God supernaturally used it to impact and change me. The next morning, as I was walking, I remembered how many times I've heard people talk about "when Jesus walked the earth." Suddenly, I KNEW that He walks the earth now – in me! The next day I heard the song, "Just Give Me Jesus," and I thought, "I HAVE Jesus!" I don't need more of Jesus. That might be like saying, "I am a little pregnant!" What I need is to be fully convinced of His



presence in me and to allow Him to carry out His will for my life. I need to be a "clean glass," so that the light and love of Christ can shine through me. I need to be aware that His life vibrates in every cell of my body, giving it His divine life and power – the same power that raised Him from death (Romans 8:11). I need Him to work within me to get ME out of His way, so He can erupt, explode from within me for His Kingdom purposes.

#### Seated With Christ

In addition to knowing that Jesus lives within us, it is vitally important to know that we are seated with Him in heavenly places. This is a sign and a wonder in itself! Where is Jesus seated? Ephesians 1:20 tells us that He is seated at the right hand of the Father. This suggests to me that, as we are seated next to Christ, we have the perspective of the Father and the Son. In every situation we can have their perspective, which is one of perfect wisdom and VICTORY! They see the big picture and know what to do in every circumstance. They have the power to carry out their wisdom, so theirs is a perspective of complete victory. Having that perspective changes how we look at everything and how we respond to life's

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# Process Addiction

■ by Kim Pronoitis, MA, LCPC

Process addiction—also known as behavioral addiction—is any addiction excluding drugs and alcohol where a person becomes dependent on a behavior. Behaviors such as eating, sex, pornography, shopping, gambling, video games/gaming, and yes, even work have become an issue for many. Process addictions can harm a person's physical health, end primary relationships, and cause legal, financial, and mental health problems.

When we engage in behaviors repeatedly despite the negative consequences, it can become addictive. When addicted to a behavior, the reward system in our brain (pleasure principle) becomes stimulated, releasing the neurotransmitter dopamine, which is similar to what happens with a substance addiction. As professionals, we look at an addiction - whether substance or process - as a brain disease. The prevailing view is that process addictions share many commonalities with substance addictions, including co-occurring mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. Dealing with mental health issues can be difficult and it's not uncommon for one to self-medicate with addictive behaviors to feel better.

The difference between behavior addiction and substance addiction is that behaviors affect the brain indirectly whereas substance addictions actually physically change the brain's neurotransmitters. Many narcotics and alcohol, for example, cross the brain barrier much quicker, flooding the reward system with the neurotransmitter dopamine which is highly addictive.

## WHAT CAUSES ADDICTION

Although there can be many reasons for using drugs and alcohol, or engaging in behaviors, addiction is present in the brain's reward system even before one engages in behaviors or uses substances. Knowing if we are predisposed by looking at family history is beneficial. Often times we see addictions run in family systems across different generations, whether behavioral or substance-related. I will ask clients during an initial counseling session if addiction runs in their family, and they often will say "no", but through the therapeutic process we often find differently.

Our environment also influences how we behave and how we learn to cope. Along with the addiction itself, there are many other behaviors that coincide. Co-dependence is not uncommon and is also detrimental in a family system where addiction is present. This may include enabling the addict - for example, making excuses for them, which allows the addiction to continue with no consequences and the addict to stay in denial. More often than not, if we grew up in a codependent family system, we attract what we feel comfortable with, and seek this out in a mate, and so the cycle continues.

Our culture makes it very easy to have many things at our fingertips. We have what I like to call "societal ADD," where we are continually stimulating the brain and not being still. Not having to wait for things is not congruent with the virtue of patience, therefore making it easier for addictions to develop - these behaviors may temporarily relieve symptoms, but don't address the root cause of the stress. I often ask my clients in therapy if they can be still - it has proven difficult for many. Even the Lord asks us to be still and wait upon him (Psalm 37:7).

## SOME SYMPTOMS OF PROCESS ADDICTIONS

- defensiveness
- denial
- feelings of guilt
- lying
- hiding behavior
- craving and inability to resist the behavior
- family, work, financial and interpersonal relationships affected by engaging in the behavior
- irritability when not able to engage (withdraw)
- decrease in the pleasure of the activity over time (tolerance - pushing the boundaries)
- isolating oneself for the behavior

## GETTING HELP

Most process addictions are treated much like substance addiction, where the goal is abstinence. However, with process addictions involving behaviors like eating or sex, the therapeutic process includes much self-exploration to gain a better understanding of triggers and establishing very specific boundaries. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and understanding our thinking process gives us the perspective we need to change and replace unhealthy coping behaviors.

There is a spiritual basis to recovery - something bigger than ourselves - our Lord God. When you know who God is, you discover who you are - sometimes we have to let Jesus take the wheel, to let go and let God. Sounds like such a simple concept, but is very difficult as many of us like to be in control. I encourage my clients to reflect on living the Serenity Prayer.

In addition to therapy, I often recommend the 12 Steps, a program with proven success since the late 1930s. Celebrate Recovery (CR) is a Christian based 12 step group program with the same foundational principles as the original AA program. Addiction can be a very lonely issue and I have found that group support is very helpful because we don't feel as alone and we find that others have experienced many of the same issues. As Christians, we know we are not meant to be alone, especially in our struggles. Reaching out for help is the first step. ■



Kim Pronoitis is a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor and sees clients in our Tinley Park, IL location.



An invitation to reflect . . .



# Do Not Cling To Me

■ By Erin Davis, MSW, LCSW

There is an emptiness beyond sadness; a deep well that I have fallen into. The sunlight sprays in during the day, just enough to keep hope alive, but by night despair takes it hostage. I try to gather words or meaning, but they all fall short. I don't understand-why did the Rabbi have to go? He left and it seems like for nothing-to die a criminal's death?

These thoughts plague me as I journey to the cave where his body lies. As I approach, I see the boulder has been moved. That's strange, was someone anticipating me coming? I peer inside, holding my breath. Why am I so afraid of what I'll find? Oddly enough, I find nothing-damp, black nothingness. A wave of confusion rolls through my insides and beads of sweat form on my brow. What is this? I step in a bit closer because I see something limp on the ground. I pick up a pile of cloth-bloodied and dirty.

Fear begins to form and I'm paralyzed. What has happened to the Rabbi? I need to know. I have to see him. This empty tomb is full of darkness and death-it holds nothing for me. Have I not died enough in this life already? This man finally brought me hope, and now he's dead and missing.

I'm startled out of my trance by the gardener shuffling around. I demand to know what he's seen-desperately reaching for some crumb to satiate my fear. The gardener pauses and says my name with familiarity..."Mary." I feel a knot loosen in my gut and I turn to look upon the gardener. Bewildered, I cry out "RABBI?!" Is it really him? "I'm here, he says, I'm alive...but you must not cling to me."



My countenance drops-this feels like a death sentence. What do you mean not cling to you?! Clinging to you is the only thing I have-it's what holds me together. Do not cling to me?! What is it you are asking of me? My insides tighten up again. I don't want to let Him go. Life has opened up for me since I met him. It feels like He is dying all over again. I just found him and now I have to let go. It feels like falling, yet a part of me knows it must be done.

I will go back. I will tell the others He is alive...but I'm realizing what I must do. I have to keep living. I have to trust this moment. I have to rise and take a step. This feels new-like I'm leaving something behind. My hope has not died after all-I will let go and step out of the tomb. So for today, just one step. ■



Erin Davis, MSW, LCSW, is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and sees clients in our River Forest, IL location.

This reflection is based on the following Bible passage: *John 20:1-18*



An invitation to reflect . . .

This reflection came about from a desire to understand the humanity of the stories in the Bible. Often, I would read scripture looking for a promise of certainty to stand on, instead of as an invitation to reflect. When I see the humanity of the experiences of Mary or even of Jesus, the words take on new life and meaning. I begin to explore, question and discover more in myself and my experience with God. When I read these with clients, I use them as tools of exploration...to notice what God is eliciting in them. What do they feel in their bodies, or what word or phrase jumped out at them? - Erin Davis MSW LCSW





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### Our Mission Statement

Promoting health and wholeness through professional counseling, consultation and education from a Christian perspective.

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blessings and challenges. It also, changes the way we see and treat other people.

**United With Christ**

In conclusion, being convinced that the living Christ has inserted Himself within us as well as experiencing our presence with Him at the right hand of the Father affects the way we think, our identity, the way we pray (from a position of victory, not begging), the way we act in our sphere of influence, and our entire mindset. When we encounter life from this perspective, we no longer need to be a victim of our circumstances, our feelings, or others' opinions of us. We are

united with Christ; and we know who and Whose we are, we know where we are going, and we know that Jesus leads and empowers us from within. ■



*Lynne Scherschel is a Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist and sees clients in our Schererville, IN location.*

# We've Moved!



Our Oak Park location has moved to River Forest:

**400 Lathrop Ave, Suite LL95  
River Forest, IL 60305**

Therapists at this location are:

- Charlene Brouwer, MA, LMFT
- Erin Davis, MSW, LCSW
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