



No Stones: Women Redeemed from Sexual Addiction

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The Secret Sin of Female Sexual Addiction

Because no one in the church talks about sexual temptations, especially among women, it's easy to believe no other female has similar issues. When was the last time you heard an honest, nonhumorous discussion among Christian women about their difficulties and struggles in the sexual area? Have you ever heard such a conversation? I believe that silence about sexual matters is a great shortcoming of the church. Have you gotten the message sexual problems are simply too bad to talk about?

Sexual addiction is a secret sin that has been around since biblical times, yet it has been denied, ignored, undiagnosed and untreated for centuries. Those within religious communities have been quick to condemn such sin, and rightfully so, but they also have been unwilling or unable to understand the sexual sinner and offer her the help she so desperately needs. . . .

The female sex addict quickly embraces an identity of shame, rather than seeing herself as created in the image of God. She questions whether God even loves her at all. How could she be a Christian and remain involved in sexual sin? The only way to make sense of that dual reality is to condemn herself. My own self-description (privately, at least) was "slut." I knew what I was doing was wrong; I knew I couldn't stop. The only conclusion must be that I was a horrible, terrible person. The label that matched how I felt inside was "whore." The juxtaposition of my heart for God and my lust of the flesh caused me to doubt my salvation. I was afraid of being stoned by God.

A common assumption is that sex addicts are nothing more than moral failures who are weak of character and will. Clearly they must lack faith and genuine commitment to God. If they would only try harder and be more intentional in their Bible study and prayers, they wouldn't sin sexually. These beliefs are inaccurate and only compound an addict's shame. Perhaps like you, most sexually addicted women have prayed about their problem and begged God to free them from its power. They've read God's Word and been convicted of their sin. They have tried to stop and have been unable to maintain abstinence from inappropriate sexual behavior. If the solution were as simple as taking these steps, far fewer women would remain enslaved. Failure to stop acting out, despite their best intentions, only increases these women's shame. To be judged as nothing more than morally corrupt adds to that pain.

While sexual addiction is unquestionably sinful behavior, to stop with this explanation alone is to miss other critical factors that are involved. Sexual addiction is also a disease. It's not an "either-or" issue. It is "both/and." If the question is, Is it a disease or is it sin? the answer is yes. My guess is that if you personally struggle with sex addiction, you already intuitively understand this idea. . . .

Accepting sexual addiction as a bona fide disease doesn't in any way absolve an addict from responsibility for her sinful behavior. She clearly must admit her immorality, become convicted of her status as a sinner before God, repent of her actions and lust, and turn from her behavior. Her recovery will be temporary and shallow, however, if she only takes these spiritual steps.

Perhaps a helpful illustration is to compare sexual addiction to the disease of diabetes. While no one denies the clear biomedical nature of diabetes, we also understand the patient's responsibility to implement lifelong choices in managing that disease. It is the foolish diabetic who shrugs her responsibility to modify her eating and lifestyle habits because she "has a disease" and "can't help it." In a similar way, it's up to the sexual addict to seek treatment for her disease of addiction and follow through consistently with those measures that are necessary for sobriety.

If the church and if individual Christians want to help sexually addicted women—those "caught in adultery" as the Scripture describes the woman brought to Jesus—they must put down their stones of condemnation and offer a way out. I'm not recommending excusing or condoning sexual addicts' behavior. I'm simply suggesting Christians move beyond the barrier of judgment and discard their stones of shame.

Even the Master said, "Neither do I condemn you" (John 8:11).

—adapted from chapter one, "The Secret Sin of Sexual Addiction"