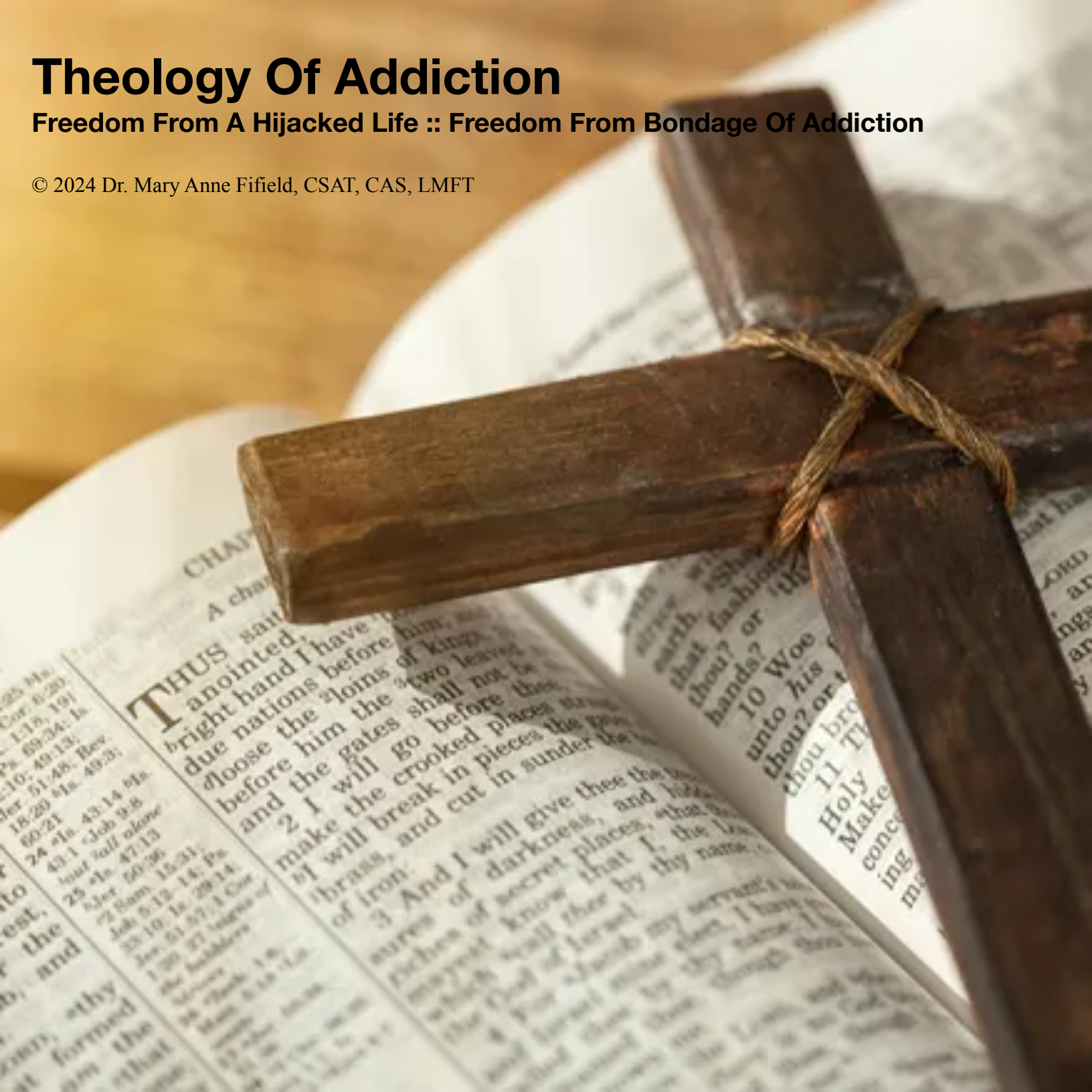


Theology Of Addiction

Freedom From A Hijacked Life :: Freedom From Bondage Of Addiction

© 2024 Dr. Mary Anne Fifield, CSAT, CAS, LMFT



Theology Of Addiction

Freedom From A Hijacked Life :: Freedom From Bondage Of Addiction

I. Introduction to Theology

- A diagnosis of addiction or dependency (not abuse) is now recognized as bondage – the addict has lost his or her capacity of choice
- Addiction is a power greater than an individual's power that results in bondage. This bondage destroys the addict and his or her family in a cycle of inter-generational self-perpetuation
- "Just Say No" has been offered as a deterrent to addiction
- For the using or abusing individual, that suggestion could work
- However, addiction is a bondage that is characterized by the loss of choice over one's desires, beliefs, and actions --- the insanity of being unable to "just say no"
- For the dependent person, an individual who has an addiction to a chemical and/or behavior, that approach only generates more failure, shame, guilt and acting out
- In fact, it could be safely stated that the inability to "just say no" is a diagnostic indicator of the presence of an addiction
- The individual was rendered powerless with their lives progressively unmanageable

A. Evil forces

- Col 2.15: disarmed, defeated, made spectacle of evil rulers and authorities
- Gal 1.4: present evil world
- Rom 8. 20-22: all of creation groans awaiting final deliverance - fall damaged creation
- Ep 6.12: spiritual forces of evil - hostile forces

B. Jesus Christ's work

- Ep 1.20-22: resurrection was demonstration of work on cross, completed the triumph over these forces and powers
- Acts 10.38: healing all who were oppressed by the devil
- Phil 2.9-11; 1 Pet 3.25; 1 Tim 3.16: JC is Lord over all

C. God has redeemed us from the judgments and delivered us from the power of evil

- Mk 10.25: we have been rescued, ransomed
- Jn 1: the struggle between forces of darkness and power of light
- 2 Cor 11.14-15: Satan is disguised as an angel of light, his servants as servants of righteousness
 - o this is a weapon of creative illusion
 - o the hallmark symptom of addiction - the disorder that tricks the addict into believing she or he does not have it
 - o deception

II. Need for a power greater than. . .

A. Addiction as a bondage from loss of choice

- **Hijacked brain**
 - Genetics and/or trauma changed brain from God's design
 - Addictions are a primal or limbic brain disorder
 - The power of the reward pathway system is hijacked
 - Addict is unable to "think" their way out of addiction

- Brain's attempt to function normally is lost
- About pain reduction not pleasure
- Man takes a drink, drink takes a drink, drink takes the man!
- **Hijacked childhood**
 - Individual's culture determined choices
 - Attachment process gone awry
 - Home of childhood was a home of trauma
 - Did not develop a healthy core self so left with little ability to choose own actions
 - Little power of differentiated choice
 - Little ability to separate and then connect – to be able to create a healthy “we”
 - Left with unmet attunement or attachment needs that the addiction satisfies by numbing the pain

B.Addicts lament: (Romans 7:19-25, NIV)

“For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law, but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.

What a wretched man I am!
 Who will rescue me from this body of death?
 Thanks be to God – through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

Exegesis on “rescue”: *rhuomai

- Deliver, delivered, deliverer, delivers
- Rescue, rescued, set free
- Used 17 times in new testament
- Mt. 6:13, “deliver us from evil”
- 2 Cor. 1:10, delivered from a deadly peril
- Col. 1:13, who hath delivered us from the power of darkness
- Rom. 7:25, 11:26, 15:31; 2 Peter 2:7, 9; 1 Thes. 1:10; 2 Thes. 3:2; 2 Tim. 3: 11, 4:17, 18; Mt. 27:43; Lk. 1:74.

C.12-Step programs are the premier recovery opportunities

- Historically have consistently demonstrated progressive freedom from addiction for the individual who remains committed to “working the program” the steps, sponsors, meetings, service.
 - The 2 reasons why they are the most successful recovery opportunities available
- 1. Offer opportunity for renewing the developmental journey and therefore differentiation –to be set free from the hijacked childhood**
 - Opportunity for re-parenting
 - Can shift from addiction as attachment object(s) back to real world and to people
 - Sponsors and supportive individuals become safe, nurturing attachment objects
 - When can safely attach, then can begin to separate
 - Addict is taught how to appropriately self-govern which becomes internalized
 - The guilt is healed through forgiveness offered by God, sponsors, others and through the Step work
 - The shame is healed through unconditional acceptance and love
 - Trust grows with emerging autonomy
 - Healing occurs with increasing ability to be honest, vulnerable, authentic and by experiencing the care, acceptance and love from others in the moment
 - Learn how to be responsible for self-care
 - An increasing capacity for self-respect and self-responsibility
 - Can regain the capacity for personal and appropriate choice
 - 2. Offer opportunity to find a power greater than the power of the addiction(s) – to be set free from the bondage**
 - **History of 12-Steps**

- Oxford Group, founded in England by Dr. Frank Buchman, a Lutheran pastor
- From the Wesley revival
- Sam Shoemaker an American Episcopal clergyman brought the movement to New York City, then to Akron Ohio where it was introduced to Dr. Bob
- Oxford Group's teaching rested on 6 basic assumptions
- Human beings are sinners
- Human beings can be changed
- Confession is prerequisite to change
- The changed soul has direct access to God
- The age of miracles has returned
- Those who have changed can help others change
- AA moved away from Oxford Group to make the door to a sober life wide open for everyone, not just to those who identified as Christians
- Changed the language but not the core beliefs or principles
- Higher Power, or God As You Understand God, or God Of Your Understanding rather than Jesus Christ as God
- On June 10, 1935, Alcoholics Anonymous was founded

III. The Theology of the 12-Steps: What did Jesus Christ's death and resurrection Accomplish? Three Models of the Atonement.:

1. The Classic Model

- Model of the early Church – the first millennium
 - The early Church understood spiritual powers, and they understood the cosmic drama of Christ's birth, life, death and resurrection
 - First millennium Christians knew Jesus Christ to be The Victor over the forces of evil and oppression
 - The early Church fathers were clear about what had happened on the Cross – a spiritual battle between good and evil
 - They taught about that divine conflict and Christ's victory over the evil powers in the world
 - The early Christians experienced bondage and suffering created by principalities and powers over which they had no control
 - They knew the reality of evil, of hidden forces, of the forces of evil, of intentional evil
 - This knowledge of the dark side, disappeared in the second millennium
 - Martin Luther revived the Classic Model in his music
 - In 1931, Gustav Aulen, a Swedish theologian, published a book – Christus Victor – that brought the Classic Model back to the attention of the Church
 - It was a time when evil was again abroad in the world, a time between two wars, Hitler's Nazi agenda was on the rise, and rationalism had lost favor as the way to answer life's dilemmas
 - In 1935, the second step was written – "Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves can restore us to sanity"
 - These drunks of AA understood addiction as a power greater than themselves that resulted in slavery
 - And that only a Power greater than the addiction could possibly restore an alcoholic to life and health
 - Sanity returned with the God-given ability to "just say no"
 - The sober drunk had been given the power to choose to not take the first drink.
 - Christ as The Victor is the power great enough to do battle with the evil of addiction
- **Steps 1-3: The Give Up Steps**
 1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol – that our lives had become unmanageable.
 2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
 3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
 - James 4:10
 - Romans 7:17
 - Phil. 2:13
 - Romans 12:1

2. The Objective Model

- In the second millennium, two additional interpretations of the meaning of the Atonement were introduced, all but obliterating the earlier version
- Anselm introduced his Objective model in which Jesus Christ was understood as the Savior
- The Objective model of the Atonement presents Jesus as The Savior who satisfied God's demand for righteousness
- Jesus was the ransom; he paid the price for any that would believe

- He was the sinless sacrifice who chose to take the place of sinful humankind because men and women could never be righteous enough to satisfy God's standard of sinless righteousness
- The fallen nature of humankind to want to be in control, to not acknowledge that they are not God
- God can now forgive sin because of the Atonement, thereby removing the penitent sinner's shame and guilt
- This legal view claims that the demands of the law of God have been satisfied, the debt has been paid, and the relationship between God and humankind has been restored because of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ
- This was the work that Christ came to do, and is the model of Atonement that correlates with Steps 4-10
- This Objective model has been the historical position of the Church toward addiction
 - To be a drunkard is to be a sinner
 - Therefore, the drunk is to confess that he or she is a sinner, receive forgiveness by God and/or the Church and go and sin – drink - no more
 - Unfortunately, the ability to not sin, or to not drink or use was not available to the suffering – although forgiven - sinner
 - This was the core misperception by the Church of the true nature of addiction, which lead to additional suffering by the trapped addict

Steps 4-7: The Clean Up Steps

4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitting to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
 - Lam. 3:40
 - James 5:16a
 - James 4:10
 - 1 John 1:9

Steps 8-9: Make Up Steps

8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and become willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people whenever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
 - Luke 6:31
 - Matt 5:23-24

3. The Subject Model

- Abelard challenged Anselm with his Subjective model presenting Christ as the Teacher
- The Subjective model of Atonement, offers an understanding of Jesus Christ's life, death, and resurrection as an opportunity for the believer to look to Christ as The Teacher
- The meaning of Jesus' life and death becomes a moral influence that can inspire and transform the life of an individual as directed by Steps 11-12
- A personal relationship with Christ becomes an experiential relationship, a subjective experience that is transformational
- From this experience there is a spiritual awakening that leads to a life's practice of holiness and service
- Moreover, by practicing sound life enhancing principles modeled by Christ, the addict also has the potential of being changed from the inside out
- This is Christianity at work on the inside, a personal religion of the heart
- These two models, Objective and Subjective continue to dominate the Church's position on the Atonement today

Steps 10-12: Keep Up Steps

10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.
 - 1 Cor 10:12
 - Col 3:16a
 - Gal 6:1

IV. Recovery Today

- Spirituality has long been recognized by the recovering community as the key to attaining and maintaining a sober life
- In the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, this principle is clearly proposed: “We are not cured of alcoholism. What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition (p. 85)”
- Admission of powerlessness is the place where healing begins
- The admission that lives had become unmanageable
- It is important that as Jesus Christ is presented as a choice for a “higher power,” that he is first presented as the Christus Victor
- He is the power who can defeat the evil power of addiction, this intentional evil that takes individuals, families and cultures captive
- Addiction is a bondage and initially freedom must come from power outside the addict
- The Classic model is one way that the Church can begin to help the developing spirituality in the life of an individual in recovery, a spirituality that can protect against relapse
- The other two models of Atonement are available in turn as the 12 Steps are worked
- Instead of beginning with the condition of sin, we must begin with the condition of bondage
- Jesus Christ came to set the captives free, bringing deliverance not only to the alcoholic and/or addict, but to the suffering family as well
- As the Christus Victor, he is well able and quite willing to conquer the enemy of addiction in the body and life of the one enslaved
- Today, the Christian Church is rectifying the mistakes of the past and is collaborating with the wisdom of the 12 Steps
- Church based programs (such as Celebrate Recovery, Overcomers Victorious and HopeQuest)
- Books, videos and tapes which present Jesus Christ as:
 - o The Victor, who can conquer the power of addiction
 - o The Savior, who can forgive the sins
 - o The Teacher, who can offer a new way of living
- 12-Step programs offer:
 - An opportunity for freedom found not only in a solid core differentiated self
 - And also, a choice to be in a relationship with Christ as Higher Power,
 - the Christus Victor

Written by

Dr. Mary Anne Fifield, CSAT, CAS, LMFT

Website: <https://www.drmaryannefifield.com>

Webinars On Addiction: <https://DrFifieldWebinars.teachable.com>

Revised 2024