

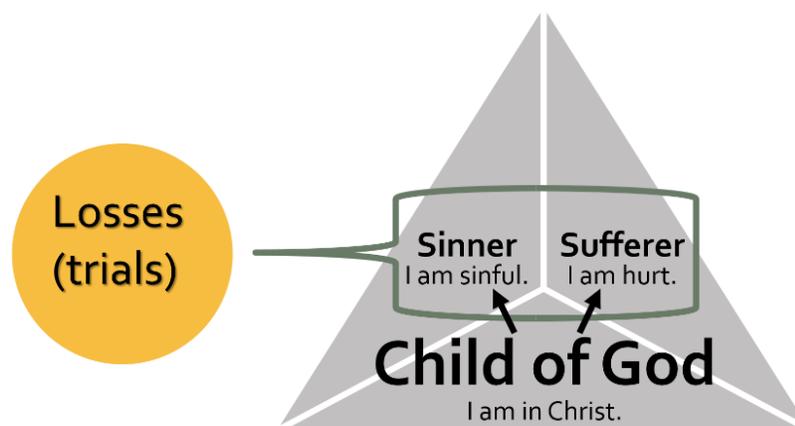
Addressing the Life-Dominating Sin of Addiction at the Heart Level

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The Fall introduced profound loss to the human experience. Someone enslaved to a life-dominating sin faces a battle with his own lusts and with the lies he is believing about God, himself, and how God's world works. Attempting to handle these challenges apart from God and His Word introduces increased losses into his life—relationally, financially, physically, legally, and so forth. When trapped in the sins and sufferings of addiction we need a biblical strategy for understanding our losses, recognizing our lies, and addressing our lusts.

Addictions are not psychiatric disorders or physical diseases—though addictions can cause serious physical problems; *addictions are dependency disorders*. An addict depends upon himself (and his own understanding and wisdom) rather than on the Creator for solutions (Proverbs 3:5-6). Addicts then choose substances and experiences within the creation as means to seek pleasure or escape pain.

Both the secular and the biblical counseling literature point to *mishandled trials* as the catalyst for most individuals to choose addictive behaviors. They do so to alter their moods. Some try to escape boredom and purposelessness through the pursuit of *pleasure* purely as a lust of the flesh. Others do so to *forget* or *avoid* their troubles. In either case, *the core of the issue is a dissatisfied, self-focused creature trying to handle the hurts and losses on a fallen planet apart from God*.



Important Definitions

Loss: something of value that is either removed or withheld from us, creating hurts and hardships

Sorrow: the emotion of loss (hurt, grief, “groaning”)

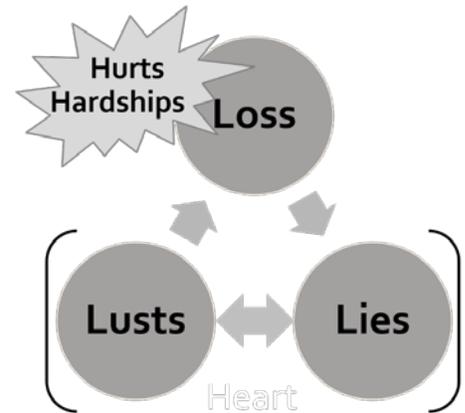
Hope: a confident expectation of a good outcome because God is involved

Despair: sorrowing (over a loss) without hope

The Danger

James speaks directly to how temptation during trials works. James 1 must become familiar territory to biblical counselors as they minister to those enslaved to sin.

Believers cannot be destroyed by their losses alone. They can be destroyed, however, by the lies they believe and the lusts in which they indulge as a result of their losses.



Listen for Losses and for How the Counselee Is Handling Them

What categories of the fallen human condition is the counselee facing?

These sources of our suffering and loss and manifestations of our losses on a fallen planet are designed to drive us *to* God—not *away* from Him. Man is a very complex physical-spiritual being—a unified duality (two parts in one). His struggles cannot be reduced to imbalanced chemistry or neurological dysfunction. He is a disintegrating being without God.

Uncertainty and vulnerability

Misplaced dependencies

Adversity

Interpersonal conflict

Injustice

Unfulfilled desires and discontentment

Overwhelming situations

Disobedience & immature heart motivations for obedience

Guilt, lust, and temptation

Difficulty with making decisions and determining the will of God

Important Truths to Reinforce with the Counselee Regarding His Losses

1. Suffering (hurts and hardships) and sorrow are *normal* on a fallen planet.
2. Losses will not destroy the believer.
3. Sorrow will not destroy the believer.
4. Turning away from God, believing lies, and indulging sinful lusts will destroy the believer.
5. If a believer is not seeing God as his Comforter for the sorrow of his losses, he is at high risk for addictions and ruin, God is being robbed of His reputation of being the only worthy Rescuer, and the believer is being robbed of the fulfillment God intends him to have. That believer is already deceived (Jeremiah 2:13).

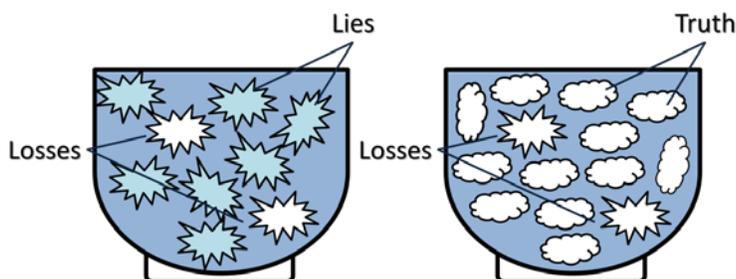
Look for the Lies the Counselee is Believing

Lies About God

“God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 2:5). Satan implied that God was not good and was withholding something from the first couple.

1. God is not loving; He doesn't care about me; He is not wise; He is not in control of everything; He is uninvolved; He doesn't notice me and my problems.
2. Only truth about God from the Bible will deliver from lies (e.g., Psalm 23, 54, 92).

Mixing Bowl Illustration of How Believing Lies Changes Life

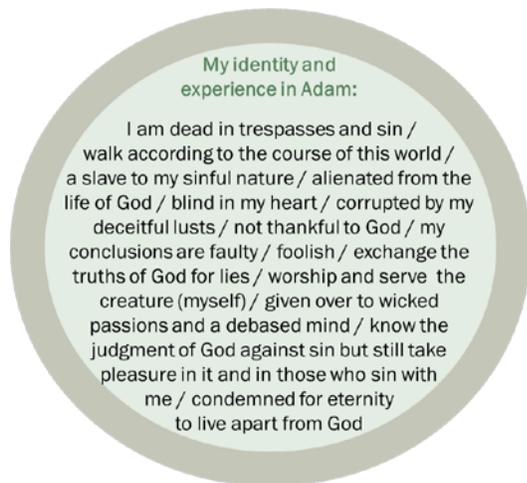


“Being transformed by the renewing of your mind” includes identifying the lies and losses and replacing the lies with truth from God. (Romans 12:1-2; Ephesians 4:22-24).

Lies About Himself

“God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 2:5). Satan implied that God was not good and was withholding something from them that they really needed to flourish.

1. I am trash, damaged freight, a failure, worthless, hopeless, better off dead, not good enough, never going to get better, I really need . . . , etc.
2. Only the truth about himself from the Bible will deliver a believer from lies (e.g., Matthew 6:25-33; Ephesians 1-2).



In Adam—Every phrase in the circle at the left is a Bible description of man’s lost condition. While believers may do some of the things in the circle even after they become Christians, these are not who they are any longer (2 Corinthians 5:17).

God *never* sees a believer like the person in the circle at the left.

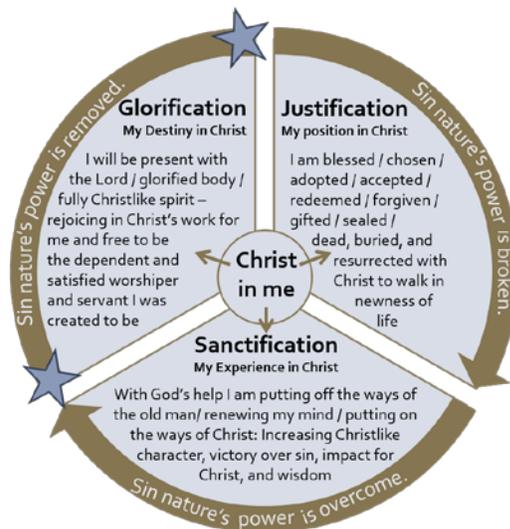
A believer’s identity must not be wrapped up in something he has done or something someone has done to him.

In Christ—Colossians 1:27 says that it is “Christ in you” which is “the hope of [restored] glory.”

A believer’s sin-debt has been fully paid by Christ, granting the believer justification (Ephesians 1-2).

God’s Spirit now resides in believers sanctifying them—remaking them to be like Jesus as they fellowship with Him and hear and do His words in the power of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:17-6:24).

Note: While a believer’s legal “position” is in Christ, his “identity”—what God calls Him—has multiple aspects: child of God, servant of God, a member of His Body, living stones in His temple, etc.



Lies About How God's World Works

"Ye shall not surely die" (Genesis 2:4). Satan led Adam and Eve to believe that God was not truthful with them and that there would not be the consequence of death if they ate the fruit.

1. I don't trust anyone; I don't need anyone; I don't show any weakness, pain, or emotion, etc.
2. Only the truth from the Bible about how life works will deliver from lies (e.g., Psalms, Proverbs, James)

Look for the Lusts That Are Driving the Counselee's Sinful Choices

What are Lusts?

1. Lusts are "strong desires."
2. Some desires are sinful—coveting, immorality, vengeance, etc.
3. Some desires are not sinful—good family, financial stability, good job, respect of others, etc.

Where Do Lusts Come From? (Ephesians 2:2-3)

2) Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.

3) Among whom we all had our [lifestyle] in times past in the lusts of our [sinful nature], fulfilling the desires of the [body] and of the mind; and were by nature children of wrath, even as others.

What Makes a Lust Sinful?

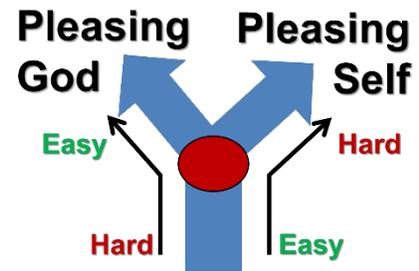
1. When it is forbidden by God—coveting, immorality, vengeance, etc.
2. When a non-sinful lust is gratified in violation of God's Word—food, possessions, pleasure, etc.

How Do Lusts Lead into Sin? (James 1:14-15)

1. I am tempted by a deceptive appeal to strong desires.
2. I sin when my will agrees with my desires.

How Do We Battle Lusts? (Romans 6)¹

1. Identify the ruling lusts: "All I wanted was _____."
2. Realize I have two choices: pleasing God or pleasing self.
3. I must submit to God and His ways of handling the loss.
4. I must obey God's Word in the power of God's Spirit.

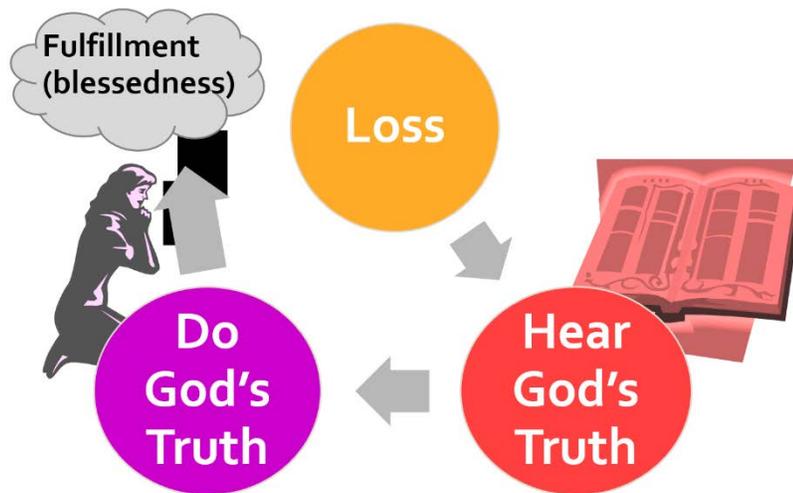


Overcoming the Loss Cycle (James 1:21-25; Matthew 7:24-25)

James describes the way to "blessedness"—fulfillment and completeness.

Hearing — Biblical counselors must help the counselee know from God's Word what He says about Himself, about the counselee (in Christ), about others, and about how His world works.

Doing — Biblical counselors must help the counselee learn to trust God based upon who He says He is and to obey God in the power of the Spirit in order to respond to the trial in a way that demonstrates to all observers that God is first in his life and worthy of his trust and obedience and that the believer loves Him most (James 1:12).



¹ Diagram used with permission from Ken Collier, President of The WILDS Christian Camp in Rosman, NC.