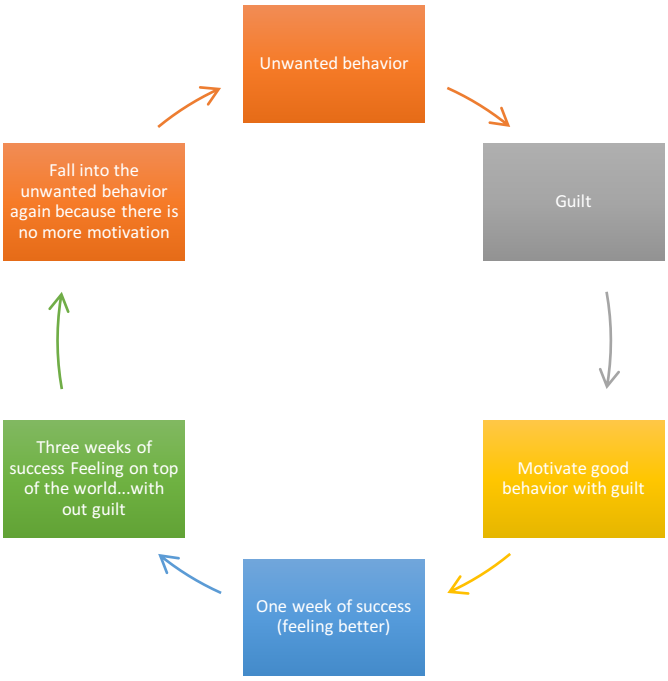
CYCLES OF ADDICTION

In 1991, I went to a seminar called The Over Flowing Grace Conference with the main speaker being Ken Blue where he spoke about an addiction cycle that looks something like this:

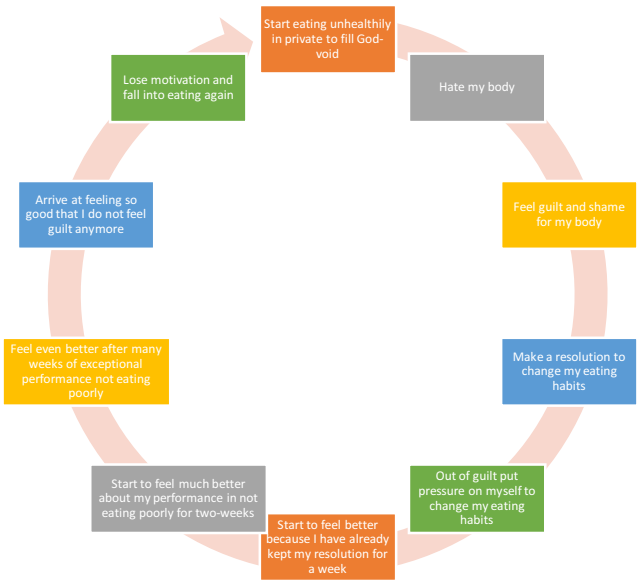
Cycle I



I appreciate Pastor Ken's observation that when the guilt is gone so is the motivation to perform and that leads to doing the unwanted behavior again. He teaches that the way to reverse this cycle is to pray for humility because with it we get grace, and grace means power to not sin. I agree that such is the first step, but if we don't hear God's voice well we won't learn from Him how to practice the needed humility to obtain the desired grace. I realized years later that there is so much more one can do to break this cycle above and the one's below that operate when we try to fill the God-void with idols.

The cycle below is a modification of the one above with a few more bells and whistles. All too often when we recognize this cycle is operating in our lives, we may pray for humility, refuse to participate in the cycle, but then just live in sin, because we hate the cycle, and because we can't seem to break the compulsion.

Cycle II:



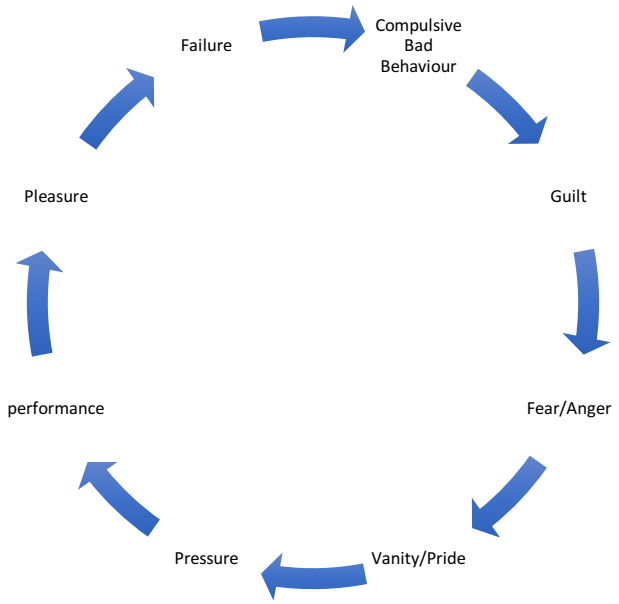
This cycle is the same for a lot of addictions that people experience. The reason the cycle continues repeatedly is because it tries to use guilt, and when the guilt eventually evaporates so does the good behavior because the guilt is what motivates the good behavior. When we use guilt in attempting to change an unwanted behavior it will promote this horrible cycle where we land up using hate, pressure, shame and self-righteous performance to somehow do good.

The problem is that God is not invited into the situation. This is very easy to do because we (especially men) compartmentalize things so often. We have God in one box just like we have everything else in their respective boxes too. When we attempt to build a part of our lives or solve some of our problems without God, we are unwisely acting in proud-independent ways. Proud ways often use harsh-whip-driven-mentalities to motivate themselves. When we use guilt/ hate/ shame/ pride to be a part of our methodology to achieve certain good behaviors (which form a negative foundation) then we will hit ourselves over the head repeatedly until our performances let us get some relief and we feel so pseudo-good that we eventually forget our guilt and lose our motivation and so fall into the addiction again. The cycle can involve many things such as unemployment issues, binging, food, drugs, alcohol, and bad habits…etc. where guilt drives us back and forth or we land up on a treadmill. So how do we invite God in our lives to break this horrible cycle above; and more than that: how do we find healing and cleansing?

Whatever path we take it should be a positive (opposed to negative) one that won't be taxing or hateful to how we are designed to live. It must be a healthy way, that does not hurt us or others. Putting pressure on oneself is a sign that we are attempting to take a path that is unhealthy. The path leads nowhere, it is barren, and devoid of life. Going to God in prayer (when we see it crop up in our lives, is the first step to health we can take

but we should know how to pray). The following is the bare bones of the bad behaviour->guilt->fear->pride->pressure->performance->pleasure->failure->bad behavior->… driven cycle:

Cycle III



Sin is attempting to get a good thing with unhealthy mechanisms or tools. We want to stop the unhealthy behavior because that will kill the guilt, but if we subscribe to the above guilt-cycle we are using pride to build our lives. So how do I use the above cycle for good?

If we are not going to use guilt to pressure us to try and change then we must not resort to stuffing the guilt either; it will still affect us in a negative way. If we choose to accept the compulsiveness of the behavior as normal, then we land up rationalizing the guilt away. I did this for some time in certain areas of my life, and I am sure many other people do it too.

For me I automatically used to go to hateful pressure to achieve my good goals when I lived the cycle, so that is where the battle was most fierce for me. I recommend countering the above cycle-components by praying the cycle that comes after the definitions below (The above cycle won't necessarily go away in one try) but it is necessary to own it before God through heartfelt (not shallow) confession. Next to repent in prayer. Then to ask the Spirit's help on how to think more healthily in the areas we are struggling with and to be open to what He says throughout the days from any person anointed with meaning that God sends our way. God can speak through anything He has made: animals, any book, any article, any program, any podcast, any situation, and any place. This will help cement the healing and growth. Growth is not supposed to stop.

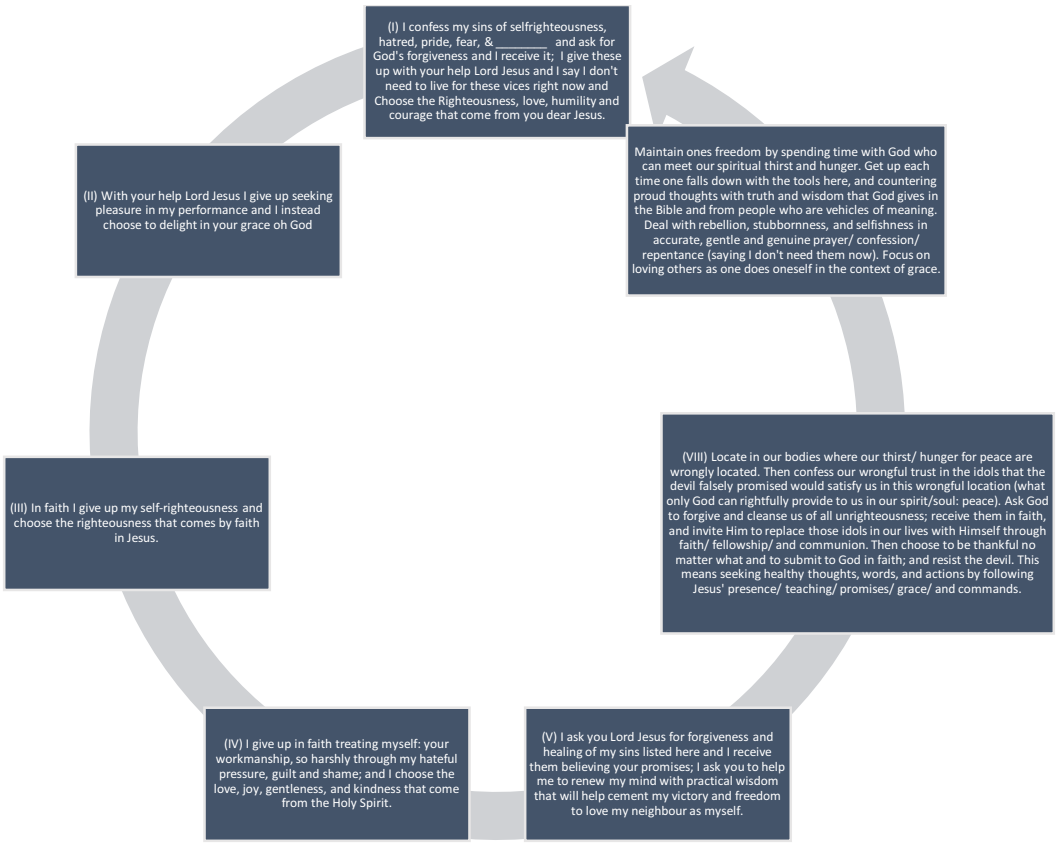
DEFINITION (for Confession):

♥ I use the word, "confess" a lot in this essay. By it I mean that we admit gently, accurately and emotionally (not acted or forced) our unhealthy attitudes, our sins, and their history; agree with God that they are wrong, and say we are sorry for them. We then ask for forgiveness and healing; and receive them in faith. (cf. 1 John 1:9)♥

DEFINITION (for Repent in Prayer):

♥ The word **"repent"** means to change one's mind. I also use it with the additional meaning of: **"I give up the sin "_____"**. So, when I use the phrase: "**repent in prayer**", I mean: praying to Jesus in clean energy using words something like: **'"Dear God I change my mind about and give up, in faith with your help, this sinful attitude of: "_____" together with the corresponding sins: "_____" as well as the sinful expectations of "_____" along with my nastiness and jerk-like-way of carrying it all out; I therefore choose to humble myself and not pretend that I'm better than what I am, accepting that I've been wounded and so I ask you the living God to heal me**" and then to speak to the sin/ attitude in faith with clean energy saying to it: **"I accept that you are in my life, but I don't need you right now along with the empty promises of "_____" that inspired you, that I wrongly believed; instead I have accepted Jesus as my Lord, Truth, Savior, Healer, and Peace Giver!"** when the sin/ attitude tries to reassert itself."' ♥

Cycle IV:



Pride is very superficial because it cares nothing about what is healthy spiritually. The key to real change is to not motivate oneself out of pride and guilt/ anger but through other healthier means that God wants to provide: God forgives guilt and we ought to embrace the peace that comes from it, experience it, move with it, and live out of it. God replaces self-anger with meekness. God gives humility in place of pride. God gives wisdom (think healthy mindedness) in place of foolishness. God gives healthy goals instead of empty performance. God's way is through a clean conscience, humility, and a healthy mindset that bears a healthy life! This is how we get God more into the picture of our lives:

Taking hold of God in healthy-prayer that focuses on confession, repenting, and renewing the mind are the foundations to healing with God's help. But the prayer can't be feeble/ shallow/ or surface and removed from the battle. The prayer can't be a constant

monologue. The prayer needs to be two-way. Prayer also needs to involve a healthy community (by that I mean God often speaks to us through others as well as through circumstances).

For healthy prayer, I highly recommend Brad Jersak's book: "Can You Hear Me?" along with Mark Virkler's book on journaling prayer. Prayer, listening, reading and meditating on what is communicated, in the contexts of our relationships are where God will work out the details in our lives. Each person's details are different. But we can learn from those who have gone ahead of us. Don't mock small beginnings or healthy balanced truth found in the NT, and relationship with God through Jesus.

After our spiritual condition slowly improves through the prayers above, I have found that simply saying to our "sin nature": "I accept you but I don't need you right now" works well to help practice self-control when we feel drawn to the bad behavior. When we sense that we are experiencing "gluttony" then praying "Lord Jesus, I give up this gluttony in faith with your help because your grace is sufficient" works well too, because we have already abandoned the first two Cycles above.

A second Cycle closely related to the one above is:

THE FEAR, PRIDE & UNWANTED BEHAVIORS CYCLE:

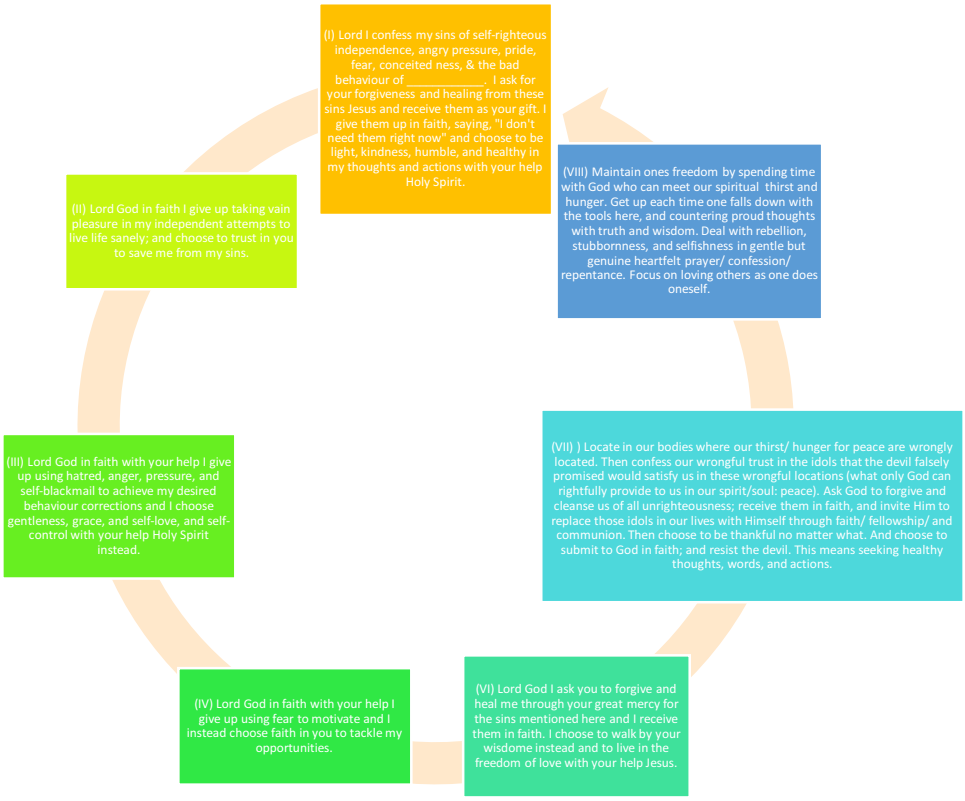
This cycle below can involve many unwanted behaviors such as gluttony (accompanied with putting on visible weight), drinking, drugs, looking at porn, visiting a hooker, masturbation…etc., that are thought of as shameful in the eyes of one's culture or subculture and that one's conscience can possibly testify to as well. When a person falls into unwanted behavior he or she will inevitably ask: What if I'd gotten caught? And this produces fear. They will also only try to do the forbidden behavior when isolated or by themselves because then the odds of getting caught are much less. Even unwanted behavior can be pleasurable. So, if it is eating or drinking then the buying of these products will be embarrassing. If it is going to the red-light district, then the trip will be uncomfortable, nervous, exciting, fearful, and uneasy but easy to get used to.

Cycle V:

If the person ignores God or doesn't know that God is willing to help, or how to get God to help, then they will use fear to attempt to save themselves from disclosure by all that is at hand. When one's fear is activated along with pride then one will use willpower to stop the unwanted behavior. Usually when one resorts to willpower one will use angry-pressure, or self-hatred; as well as self-blackmail to get the job done. One may say: "I will hate myself more if I fail again." Note that these are "negative/ heavy/ dark/ depressing/ bitter/ isolated/ hurtful/ independent/ and proud" ways to motivate the desired good behavior and reputation. When these negatives are present we will seek relief so secondary addictions might precipitate and relief in the undesired behavior will become compelling causing failure yet again. Thus, the cycle repeats itself.

When God is in His rightful place in our hearts as the true landlord providing peace, then the cycle is broken. Working these steps repeatedly in the areas in our live where these cycles operate and not giving up is key to bringing about self-control. Self-control results when God supplies us with His supernatural peace. When we have self-control, we have true freedom. We won't feel out of control anymore. We will grow in confidence, feel clean inside, and begin to have victory in relationships, finances, and feel healthy spiritually inside and healthy physically too. The devil will try to steal these gifts, but we need to submit to God and resist the devil with the tools God has given us to wield.

Cycle VI:



It is not wise to count the days, weeks, and months one has victory. It leads to measuring, judging, pride, and takes away our focus on building a fuller, richer, humble life based on Jesus' peace and wisdom. Measuring has to do with performance, something that can be intimidating to those who don't know better, something the Pharisees did (with the Old Testament-LAW) in showing their self-righteousness, when Jesus walked the earth 2000-years-ago.

Living a healthy life takes forgiveness, receiving peace, commitment to truth, time, hope, faith, humility, wisdom, and love that are supported in a relationship with God through Jesus Christ that overcomes guilt/ shame/ emptiness/ disappointment/ pain/ and suffering. Overcoming all our challenges doesn't happen overnight…but is worked out by persevering through "trial and error." Faith, humility, and love will grow in our lives because they are gifts from God that we get when we ask for them and search for them. Relationship with God ought not be primarily sin-focused but be open-celebration-focused. By open I mean that one is honest in the presence of God…with letting it all hang out: the good, the bad and ugly so we can be healed.

God is not like an earthly Ruler that we need to tense up within when in His presence, or be afraid that He will punish us at the slightest annoyance; He is not anal, is not sin-focused; but is love focused. But He is one with whom we can relax, enjoy, rest in, celebrate life with, find peace in, find refreshment with, and relationship with. He isn't judgmental. But He hates sin. Moreover, when we come into God's presence we are not in a court of law…but in the family living room. We ought to get to the place where we know God loves us more and more…which is also a journey in itself. That doesn't mean that God changes, but it does mean we discover more of who God is as time goes by.

Just because one sees how pride and humility are related does not mean one understands them all. One only understands parts of them when one practices humility. Realize that the only one who practices it perfectly is God because He is perfect, and not because he is aiming for perfection. He does what needs to be done naturally.

I am always grateful to those who give me more insights into how to grow humility in my life especially the Holy Spirit (who showed me many of these sick dynamics at work in my heart, and provided the cures found in the Bible). Ultimately humility comes from Jesus. Remember this always; otherwise pride will have a foothold in your life that you won't defeat!