

Faithful & True

Certification Article:

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Partnering TOGETHER To Heal Sexual Brokenness

In writing this brief article – as it has happened since the beginning of time – various sex scandals are rocking the country. Politicians, famous athletes, movie stars, and now coaches and storied football programs are suffering the consequences of their infidelities. In the average Christian church today, two thirds of the men and one third of the women have intentionally looked at pornographic images over the past 30 days. The Internet, with its various forms of pornography and the endless possibilities to find and make sexual contact, is being called a tsunami that is drowning our culture in moral depravity.

On behalf of all those who labor in this difficult field, we beseech you as the body of Christ to get trained in how to help the sexually unfaithful and addicted clients that will flood your office. Christian counselors must be prepared to serve the sexually broken.

I am a recovering sex addict and have been sober for over 25 years. In the early years, of my ministry, I was lost in a sea of sexual sin. I sought help from my professors, supervisors, and peers and no one knew how to really help. Finally, in 1987, I found it through the treatment work of Dr. Patrick Carnes. By the grace of God, I was later led to be employed by the hospital where he worked and we became colleagues and good friends. While sitting under Dr. Carnes, who founded the field of sexual addiction, I was blessed to be able to teach with him from 1988 – 1992, at an institute which provided training for both therapists and pastors.

Those were the early days of training and research, when secular and Christian counselors came to us from all over the world. It was an amazing and productive time and eventually led to my first book, *Healing The Wounds of Sexual Addiction*, in which Dr. Carnes graciously agreed to write a forward. As is frequently the case, people move on and the institute and hospital closed in 1992. I went on a journey of working with many other programs and ministries and Dr. Carnes continued to write more books and work with several other treatment programs.

Dr. Carnes always had a heart for training and, even back in those days, wanted to figure out a way to provide certification for therapists. Eventually, he did create the Institute for Trauma and Addiction Professionals (ITAP), which now provides certification at several levels where an individual can be credentialed as a Certified Sex Addiction Therapist (CSAT). Hundreds of counselors have received that certification, and many of them are Christian practitioners. For years, it has been the only quality certification program available, and I am personally encouraged that so many faith-based counselors have received the training.

Today is very different, however. After several false starts, I decided to partner with the American Association of Christian Counselors (AACC) to create a certification program that is both *clinically sound* and *biblically based*. As a Christian counselor, our foundation is Christ and our training must be biblical. Yet, we can also acknowledge that the clinical world has tools to assist us with counseling people in ways that will help them lead lives after the heart of God. Dr. Carnes and others developed those clinical tools. I, along with a number of my colleagues, have adopted and adapted many of these approaches so that they are consistent with our faith. While there are various Christian-oriented

programs, AACC's is *the only one I trust* to provide certification that is both *faith-based and clinically competent*.

To those of you who have pursued and achieved CSAT – congratulations... you are almost home! You know that you have received excellent instruction, great clinical tools, and have been supervised by many highly- skilled people. Also, you have probably spent thousands of dollars in the process and have had to “import” your own biblical understanding to the tools you received. We now invite you to apply for certification through the AACC where you can be fast-tracked with the additional requirements of signing a statement of faith and presenting us with a case study of how you apply biblical principles to particular circumstances.

For those of you who have already studied with us, attended our training event, or watched one of the video series, you may have met some of the requirements in terms of academic training that certification involves at various levels. I encourage you to visit the web site (www.bcppc.net/addictions.php), where the necessary training is outlined in detail. You may have more of the hours you need than you realize.

Oversight for certification as a Christian Sexual Addiction Specialist is provided by the Board of Christian Pastoral Counselors (BCPPC). The BCPPC is part of a larger umbrella organization called the International Board of Christian Care (IBCC). Currently, two specialty credentials are being offered through the BCPPC: Clinical Sexual Addiction Specialist (CSAS) and Pastoral Sexual Addiction Specialist (PSAS). Each specialty designation also has four different levels of certification depending on education and experience: Basic, Advanced, Supervisor and Trainer.

Unlike CSAT, which is based predominantly on the teaching of Dr. Carnes, I have always believed in the diversity of wise teachers. There are other Christian leaders in our field besides me who provide seminars, workshops, supervision and experience that can qualify you to be certified. The Institute for Sexual Wholeness based at Richmond Graduate School in Atlanta; Fuller Seminary; and Denver Seminary are some examples. The newest and most similar to Dr. Carnes' program in terms of structure can be found at Mid-American Nazarene University in Olathe, Kansas. Additionally, this program is approximately half the cost of the traditional CSAT training.

Let me re-emphasize an important point: our program is not only distinctively Christian, but also clinically competent and will give you the requisite clinical tools and skills you need to be effective. We stay current with the latest research in field regarding counseling interventions, psychological testing, and neuroscience breakthroughs. I maintain professional connections in the broader sex addiction community and serve on the board of a scientific journal that is sponsored by a national sex addiction clinical organization. We look forward to building a strong coalition of Christian caregivers where, together, we can realize great accomplishment in healing sexual brokenness. I hope you will join us.



Mark R. Laaser, M.Div., Ph.D., is an internationally known author and speaker who has written several books, including *Healing The Wounds of Sexual Addiction*, and *Talking To Your Kids About Sex*. He is also an adjunct faculty member at several graduate schools. Mark and his wife, Debbie, started **Faithful & True** (www.faithfulandtrue.com) to counsel individuals and couples healing from sexual addiction.