

Biblical Help for Those who Struggle with OCD

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Introduction:¹

- “I couldn't do anything without rituals. They invaded every aspect of my life. Counting really bogged me down. I would wash my hair three times as opposed to once because three was a good luck number and one wasn't. It took me longer to read because I'd count the lines in a paragraph. When I set my alarm at night, I had to set it to a number that wouldn't add up to a "bad" number.”
- “Getting dressed in the morning was tough because I had a routine, and if I didn't follow the routine, I'd get anxious and would have to get dressed again. I always worried that if I didn't do something, my parents were going to die. I'd have these terrible thoughts of harming my parents. That was completely irrational, but the thoughts triggered more anxiety and more senseless behavior. Because of the time I spent on rituals, I was unable to do a lot of things that were important to me.”
- “I knew the rituals didn't make sense, and I was deeply ashamed of them, but I couldn't seem to overcome them until I had therapy.”

A. Medical Model (from the Mayo Clinic Website)²

1. What is Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder?

“Obsessions are _____ intrusive thoughts, ideas, doubts, or impulses that seem inappropriate or senseless yet cause intense distress. Compulsions are _____ to repeat behaviors or have certain thoughts in order to decrease anxiety created by obsessions.”

2. _____ of Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) at Mayo Clinic in Rochester

“Mayo Clinic's OCD treatment program emphasizes a _____ - _____ approach called exposure and response prevention. Therapy sessions involve practice with gradually confronting one's feared thoughts and situations, while learning to control compulsive behaviors such as washing and checking. “

“Medications that enhance the brain's ability to use certain brain chemicals are also available for patients with OCD. These medications may be used in addition, or instead of, cognitive-behavioral therapy.”

¹ Taken from “OCD: The Far Side of Fear.” By Elyse Fitzpatrick

² Adapted from “Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD),” <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/ocd/basics/definition/con-20027827>. Accessed January 30, 2020.

3. Examples of _____ include:
- Exaggerated _____ of contamination from contact with people or everyday items such as door handles or money
 - Nagging _____ about having turned off the stove, iron or other appliances
 - Overwhelming fears of having made terrible _____
 - _____ thoughts that you did not do enough to prevent something terrible
 - Unwanted senseless thoughts about harmful, violent, _____ inappropriate, immoral things
 - Persistent feelings that things need to be arranged " _____ "
 - Persistent fears of _____ away unneeded items (e.g., bags, junk mail) away
4. Examples of _____ include:
- _____ hand washing, showering, or cleaning with antibacterial products Nagging doubts about having turned off the stove, iron or other appliances
 - _____ checking of locks, lights, electrical outlets, etc.
 - _____ activities such as writing checks or going through a doorway or unwanted senseless thoughts about harmful, violent, sexually inappropriate, immoral things
 - Excessive _____ to ensure that one will not commit an unacceptable or immoral action
 - Continually seeking _____ from others
 - Excessive _____
 - Repeating special words or phrases to _____ unacceptable thoughts
5. What _____ OCD (according to the medical model)?
- "The exact cause of OCD is _____, but several factors play a role."*
- Changes in brain _____ levels (chemical messengers) and other areas in the brain are thought to contribute to this disorder.
 - _____ history and _____ inheritance have been linked to OCD.
 - _____ caused by a serious loss, difficult relationship, job change, financial problem or any other stressful situation can trigger or worsen symptoms.
 - Childhood infection, such as _____, has been associated with OCD in children. Research is ongoing to determine if there is a definite link.
 - Learned _____, such as using compulsive behavior to cope with obsessional fears, is also thought by researchers to play a role in OCD.

6. How is Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder _____?

“There is no specific _____ test for OCD. The disorder is diagnosed after a complete psychiatric or psychological evaluation by a mental health professional. Mayo clinicians ask patients about their symptoms, emotional well-being and family history. A physical examination may be included in the process to rule out other causes for the symptoms. Changes in brain serotonin levels (chemical messengers) and other areas in the brain are thought to contribute to this disorder.”

B. Biblical model³

1. Distinguish between _____ and _____ issues.

2. Discern and address potential _____ issues.

a. The need for _____

1) Problems

a) He cannot _____ with uncertainty.

b) He must have total _____.

c) He must have complete _____.

d) Some have described OCD as the “_____ disease.”

2) Solutions

a) Not all doubt is _____.

b) True certainty only comes from _____ and His _____ (2 Cor. 1:20; Mark 9:14-32).

c) The battle is a battle of _____ (i.e., “functional certainty” - child sitting in a chair without checking it).

“In other words, it’s not the strength of my faith that counts, but the One in whom I place my faith.” (Emlet)

b. The need for _____

1) Problems

a) His _____ to live with doubt underlies much of his obsessional thinking.

b) He desires to _____ his _____ by compulsive behaviors.

“If I bolt and rebolt the door three times, then I can be certain.”

2) Solutions

a) Teach a _____ response to anxiety (Phil. 4).

³ Michael R. Emlet. OCD: Freedom for the Obsessive-Compulsive, Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2004.

- b) Help him to understand God's _____ care of him (Matthew 6; Psalm 139, especially vs. 2-5, 9-10, 16 and the response of the psalmist in vs. 6, 14 and 17).
- c) C.f. Psalms 104, 121, 127, and 131
- c. The need for a " _____ and _____ " world
- 1) Problems
- a) They want complete _____.
- b) They want complete _____.
- c) They want absolute _____.
- "Either I'm sure or I'm not; either I'm in control or I'm not; either I'm right or I'm not."*
(Emlet)
- 2) Solutions
- a) The secret things belong unto God (Deut. 29:29; Job 38-41).
- b) Give him a biblical understanding of _____ (Proverbs 2-3).
- c) Help him to understand what Jesus meant when he said, "Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:29).
- d. The need for _____ (i.e., must do things "just right", "it's all up to me mentality")
- "How could I think such a thing? Could I really do it? It's outrageous to think I could do such a thing! But what if I did?"*
- "This hypersensitivity and the ensuing guilt and anxiety lead to a self-oriented, mad scramble to overcome and neutralize the thought by some compensatory thought or behavior (the compulsion)." (Emlet)*
- 1) The problem of _____
- a) For those with OCD, _____ equals _____ (e.g., they react to the "what if" possibility).
- b) They confuse the _____ to sin with committing the sin.
- c) They are sometimes so sensitive to the possibility of sin that they don't realize the reality of their own sin (e.g., ignoring their responsibility to others during their rituals - Matt. 23:23-24).
- d) They practice _____ - _____ for their guilt.
- e) This is done through their " _____ " compulsions.
- f) This creates a cycle of self-righteousness - _____ (renewed obsession) - sacrifice (the compulsion to atone for the "sin" or obsession).

- 2) The solution to guilt
- a) Help him to understand what Jesus meant when he said, “Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed” (John 20:29). Must help him to distinguish between _____ guilt for real sin and guilt from _____ sin.).
 - b) Teach him a biblical view of the _____ (Hebrews 8-10 - only the blood of Christ is enough to atone for my sins!).
 - c) Teach them a biblical view of _____ (for real sinners and actual sins).
 - d) They need to understand that they are a child of God not an _____ (e.g., “It’s all up to me; I can’t trust anyone; I must control my life and destiny”).
- e. The _____ of _____ (e.g., “What will they think?”)