

# Help! I'm Struggling with Addictions

## INTRODUCTION:

- Alcohol
  - Just under 13.8 million US adults have issues with alcohol, and 8.1 million of them officially suffer from alcoholism.
  - Alcohol dependence and abuse cost the US approximately \$220 billion in 2005. For the sake of comparison, this was greater than the amount of money spent to combat cancer (\$196 billion) and obesity (\$133 billion).
  - An estimated 43% of US adults have had someone related to them who is presently, or was, an alcoholic.
- Internet
  - About 6% of surveyed individuals responded, “their relationships suffered as a result of excessive internet use.”
  - Almost 14% reported they “found it hard to stay away from the internet for several days at a time.”
  - Facebook – average user spends 55 minutes on Facebook. According to an article in the Washington Post companies are now having to monitor employees’ use of their time because so many spend it on Facebook rather than working.
- Drugs
  - 19.5 million people over the age of 12 use illegal drugs in the United States (Mayo Clinic).

- In one research study, approximately 1 in 5 people between the ages of 16 and 59 said that they had taken at least one of the drugs mentioned.
  - Death rate extrapolations for Drug Addiction in the United States: 19,102 per year, 1,591 per month, 367 per week, 52 per day, 2 per hour.
  - Pornography
    - 9 out of 10 children aged between the ages of 8 and 16 have viewed pornography on the Internet, in most cases unintentionally
    - Adults admitting to Internet sexual addiction: 10%; 28% of those are women.
  - Video Games
    - A 2007 Harris poll reported that in the US 8.5% of youth gamers (ages 8 to 18) “can be classified as pathological or clinically ‘addicted’ to playing video games” while another 23% say they have “felt addicted” to video games.
  - Gambling
    - According to recent research, about 2.5 million adults in America are pathological gamblers and another 3 million of them should be considered problem gamblers, 15 million adults are at a risk for problem gambling and about 148 million are low-risk gamblers.
    - Gambling addiction is a compulsive need that can be devastating for the person and his family. Gambling addiction statistics show that more than 80 percent of American adults report having gambled at some point in their lives.
- I. The statistics you just saw were not meant to scare but to inform you about the reality of our situation. More than statistics though the odds are against us: In this auditorium right now there are probably some who are struggling with alcohol, some struggling with some type of drugs (prescription or illegal), gambling, pornography and other things as well.
- II. However, there are things that we are addicted to that are just as damaging to us yet it is so second-nature we do not even realize that it is an addiction...
- a. Facebook.
  - b. Texting.
  - c. Politics.
  - d. Food.

- e. Power.
- f. Shopping.
- g. TV.
- h. Jobs.

- III. Addictions come in all sizes, shapes and forms. Consider this definition of addiction, ***“the state of being enslaved to a habit or practice or to something that is psychologically or physically habit-forming, as narcotics, to such an extent that its cessation causes severe trauma.”***
- IV. That could encompass a lot of different things in our lives. So what is the point of today’s lesson? Awareness but also pleas for those who are struggling to find help. Addictions are developed over time and they are also treated over time. Like I said earlier, I am simply here to point in a helpful direction and I am not up here to proclaim that a simple faith statement will automatically generate a cure from an addiction. Cures depend on the type of addiction and the type of person.
- V. Having said that...here are some suggestions on finding help from an addiction.

**BODY:**

## I. The Dreaded Word

- a. Whether the addiction is great or small the first roadblock to the path of recovery is the dreaded word called **denial**.
- b. Denial is a typical reaction for those who have struggled or currently struggling with addictions. Like King David, we become so calloused to what we have done that it is nearly impossible to believe that the very person who is wrong is the person we are looking at in the mirror.
- c. Or maybe you have said this, “I am not addict, I got everything under control!” Have you heard someone say that before? In a book about idolatry Tim Keller speaks to the things we hold dear to our lives. He says this, ***“What is an idol? It is anything more important to you than God, anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God, anything you seek to give you what only God can give. A counterfeit god is***

*anything so central and essential to your life that, should you lose it, your life would feel hardly worth living”* (Tim Keller, *Counterfeit Gods*, pp. xvii-xviii).

- d. I am not sure why we jump to denial so quick when we have to face a problem about ourselves. I guess it is because there is something encoded in us that just does not like to face the fact that we fall short.
- e. I had to attend some AA meetings for a graduate class and the group was so nice to let me be a part of their community. The first experience I had was that we all stood up and recited the 12 steps to recovery. Step #1 hit home with me – ***“We admitted we were powerless over our addiction - that our lives had become unmanageable.”***
- f. The first step for anyone in addiction is to admit that they are not in control.
- g. Jesus said, “No man can serve two masters,” and when an addiction consumes you that becomes your master!!!
- h. Our first suggestion is that we must overcome denial and admit our weakness.

## II. Free Yourself!

- a. For most addictions proper counseling is needed. It is not enough to simply make a statement of faith but in some circumstances we need trained professionals who know how to help us with our addictions.
- b. I am thinking of those who struggle with alcoholism and drug addictions. To simply quit cold turkey without medical attention could be physically harmful to their bodies. Often they need to detox in a medical facility where they are under the supervision of a medical staff.
- c. Not only must we admit that we are addicted we must also start the process of freeing ourselves and without God we can do nothing.
  - i. ***Romans 6:16-17*** <sup>16</sup> *Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?* <sup>17</sup> *But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed.*

- ii. **Galatians 5:1** *For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.*
- d. If you have ever borrowed money for something you know the concept of being a slave to the lender. Until that money is paid it feels like you are under their control/bondage. Addictions are much like that in that they dominate your physical, mental, financial and even spiritual lives.

### III. Accountability

- a. The thing about addictions is that when you seek help and get on that road to recovery the ugly beasts pop up their heads in the most inconspicuous places.
- b. In Luke 4 after Jesus was tempted by the Devil, Luke records a statement that was omitted in Matthew's gospel. Luke tells us in 4:13, ***“And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.”***
  - i. I take this to mean that the Devil did not cease tempting Jesus and at every low point in Jesus' ministry the Devil was waiting there seeking to grasp the very soul of Jesus and thus defeating God.
  - ii. But God revealed to us that Jesus resisted all temptation.
- c. However, just because we quit our addictions to the internet, to pornography, to alcohol, to shopping to whatever does not mean all temptations seek to exist. In some way the temptations actually become worse and more frequent.
- d. I think the moment you celebrate a victory is the moment the Devil is trying his hardest to defeat you.
- e. So what do you do to prevent this? You hold yourself accountable! You allow others to hold you accountable. You rearrange your life in a way in which you will not put yourselves in the field of temptation. In the movie *Fireproof* the lead character (Captain Caleb) was addicted to pornography. It was ruining his marriage and so he decided to stop this addiction. What did he do? Maybe a little drastic but he smashed his computer and threw it away.
- f. If we are addicted to alcohol then we need to avoid going to places where alcohol is served. If we are

addicted to gambling then avoid going to the state of Nevada or even going into a gas station.

- g. One example of accountability is something called Covenant Eyes.

## IV. What about the Church?

- a. Most of you listening to this perhaps do not struggle with addictions in the major sense of the word. So what can you do to help those who do struggle?
- b. Idea#1 – Set up outlets (group meetings) that will help people who struggle feel welcomed to come into the assembly (AA story).
- c. Idea #2 – Have classes taught by licensed professionals on how to counsel those who struggle with addictions. Or maybe have a class on how to prevent people from developing addictive behaviors.
- d. Idea #3 – Promote an atmosphere of grace and forgiveness.
- e. Idea #4 – L.O.V.E. - Maybe you have a friend or family member and you struggle at finding the right words or actions but you want to help them so much. What could you do? L.O.V.E.!!!<sup>1</sup>
  - i. Listening – Active listening without judging them.
  - ii. Offer – Encouragement, support, wisdom and sometimes advice. They have come to you for a reason.
  - iii. Validate – Our supportive words validate those struggling with addictions to have courage and to keep fighting.
  - iv. Eliminate and Expect – eliminate immediate dangers and expect God to do his part!

Conclusion:

- I. C. S. Lewis once said, ***“A silly idea is current that good people do not know what temptation means. This is an obvious lie. Only those who try to resist temptation know how strong it is.... A man who gives in to temptation after five minutes simply does not know what it would have been like an hour later. That is why bad people, in one***

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1. Marv Penner, *Help, My Kids are Hurting: A Survival Guide to Working With Students in Pain*, (El Cajon, CA: Youth Specialties: 2005): 43-82.

*sense, know very little about badness. They have lived a sheltered life by always giving in.”*

- II. I don't know about you, but I get tired of giving in all the time. Tired of the same routine that brings the same results. I ask you and others, “What would it be like if I did not do this addiction all the time?” Can you imagine that? What would it be like?
  
- III. I think I know the answer to that...FREEDOM!!!