

Beyond Addictions

Free to live a new life in Christ Jesus



Other Biblical Views of Addiction

Lesson 4

There is great power in the name of Jesus, in the blood of Jesus,
and the work of the Holy Spirit.
No one else and nothing else can cure you from sin
or keep you from temptation.

In *A Journey to Victorious Praying*, author Bill Thrasher tells about a student who struggled with an addictive habit:

Jim's struggle with an ungodly habit in his life led him to cry out to God for deliverance. Nothing happened. One day a person came up and had the love and discernment to graciously confront Jim by saying, "Why are you asking God to deliver you from this ungodly habit? You love this ungodly habit. You do not really want God to answer your prayer." Jim admitted that this was precisely the truth.

Jim said that one of the most humbling things he had ever done was to come to God and tell Him that he loved this ungodly habit and did not really want Him to answer his prayer for deliverance. Jim also informed me that this honest prayer was the beginning of the process of breaking him from the habit!¹

Jim had a serious problem, an ungodly habit that he could not control; it was an addiction. He approached the problem with a little prayer and continued wondering why he was still struggling with this sin. Jim hadn't gotten to the root of the problem. The root issue was that he still loved this sinful habit. It required confrontation with the truth in order for him to admit to himself and to God that he still secretly loved the ungodly habit.

¹ Thrasher, Bill, *A Journey to Victorious Praying*, pg. 27

Beyond Addictions

Does this sound familiar? If you have ever struggled with addiction, then you understand Jim's situation. Addiction is cancerous and it will consume you if it is not removed. The Bible provides the correct diagnosis and it offers the cure for the problem. If you are still struggling with an ungodly habit, then you may be secretly in love with the sin. If that is the case, then admit it to God and let His light shine in that hidden area of your heart. Once you admit the problem it is easier to receive treatment and to be cured.

God's Word confronts you with the truth. It reveals the motives of your heart and tells you when you are harboring sinful habits. The Bible describes the problem of addiction in a number of ways. In the last chapter we looked at addiction as idolatry. In this chapter, we will see it revealed as voluntary slavery, adultery and life-dominating sin. You will also see how God can release you from slavery to addiction, forgive your adultery and remove the sin that has dominated your life.

Voluntary Slavery

"Okay men, we have an important mission before us and we need some volunteers. Who will step forward and volunteer to be enslaved by a cruel task master? Any takers? None? You mean that no one here wants to volunteer to be a slave for the rest of your life?" We would be seriously concerned for anyone who would step forward and take this offer. Guess what. Most of us volunteered for slavery to addiction.

Why would you volunteer for slavery? Well, probably because you didn't realize what you were really volunteering for. You thought you were volunteering for pleasure, for relief, for ecstasy. You may have started using drugs in order to be accepted by your peers or to relieve some pain. Maybe you glanced at the first soft porn magazine out of curiosity or to get a little pleasure. Whatever the reason for starting the habit, you never intended to become enslaved to something that you thought you controlled.

What went wrong? First of all, you were seeking happiness through unrighteousness. Satan, your enemy, sold you a bill of goods. He tells everyone that they will receive happiness through unrighteous means – sexual adultery, drunkenness, drug use, dirty movies. In John 8:44, Jesus says that Satan was a liar from the beginning and the father of lies.

You will never receive true happiness through unrighteousness. True happiness is found as you walk in true righteousness. Psalm 45:7 says, "You love righteousness and hate wickedness. Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions." The passage is a prophecy of Jesus Christ; however, the statement it makes regarding righteousness, lawlessness and happiness is also true about us. There is a direct connection

Other Biblical Views of Addiction

between our love of righteousness, our hatred for wickedness in our hearts and the level of happiness in our lives. An unholy person is rarely if ever happy. You cannot find happiness by pursuing it in pornography or drunkenness or drug use. This is true for unbelievers and it is true for Christians. If you dabble or flirt with unrighteousness then happiness drains out of your life.

So, Satan tricked you just like he tricks others. He told you that the way to true happiness, to get relief or to find peace was to take one of his pills or engage in one of his schemes. In chapter 2 we looked at Satan as a fisherman; he knows the minds and habits of those he is trying to catch and he knows just how to lure them. He baits his hook with something that promises fulfillment, excitement or relief. He attracts some men with dissatisfaction in their home life. They begin to think that their wife isn't as attractive or as exciting as she was when they first met. Satan draws them with an attractive young woman at work or the gym. And he causes her to believe that this married man is the answer to all of her problems. She becomes one attractive lure.

Satan torments others with painful memories of abuse and rejection by their parents. Then He lures them with a pain killer or a hallucinogen that provides temporary relief.

Think about your past experiences. You felt a need or a desire that wasn't being met. Satan threw something in front of you that looked like it could fill the void very nicely. At first, this lure was pretty satisfying. You were excited by this new relationship or you enjoyed some time without the pain of the past resurfacing in your mind. You were being baited. Satan is a crafty fisherman. He doesn't play "catch and release"; he wants you for life. So he drew you along until it was time to throw you some bait with a hook. It looked the same as it did before and you swallowed it, hook, line and sinker. Then he jerked the line and you were trapped. The other woman was wearing a disguise; she was controlling and deceptive, and she began to dominate your life. You realized the ugliness of your sin but also thought that it was too late to get out of it. The drug no longer satisfied. It left a gnawing emptiness and it took all of your income to pay for more of it.

This is how we volunteered to participate in something that would eventually enslave us. Just like a big bass, we took the bait thinking that this was just a casual lunch and didn't realize that it was for our life. We had a strong desire for it. We were tempted. We were drawn away to the evil. And we became its servant. The following scripture passages were written over 1900 years ago and they are still true.

Jesus answered them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin." John 8:34

Beyond Addictions

The Bible tells me that if I practice sin then I am a slave to that sin. It isn't serving me; I am serving it!

We never thought of ourselves as slaves to sin but the Bible says that is what we were before Jesus Christ set us free from sinful attachments. We thought that we controlled our own sin. Nope, the Bible says that it controlled us and we served it.

Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. James 1:12-15

James 1:12-15 is a classic description of a fish taking the bait. It says that each one of us is tempted when we are drawn away by our own lust and enticed. Where does the lust come from? We harbored it in our hearts. Who does the enticing? Satan, the fisherman. Then the desire conceived and we took action on the temptation. That is when we fell into sin. Initially, the bait provided some satisfaction but there was no hook in it yet. Satan was just playing us until the right time. The result of falling into sin is death. Death literally means separation. For all of us, addiction resulted in separation from God. For some people it led to physical death. In all cases, the lure did not satisfy very long and it came with a hook that we didn't expect.

For a time, we voluntarily used the bait (those thoughts, people, pictures, activities and substances) for our own momentary pleasure. The satisfaction was enticing and there didn't seem to be any serious consequences. When the hook was set, we were slaves to these sinful attachments and they controlled our lives. We had volunteered for slavery.

Remember this illustration, and remember how foolish it looks to volunteer for something that will eventually bind you as a slave. According to John 10:10, Satan wants to kill you, steal from you and destroy you. He did not come to give you a good time; he came to enslave you, and to take your life. On the other hand, Jesus says in the same verse that He wants to give you abundant life. He came to set you free. John 8:36 says, *Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.* He doesn't bait you with one thing and enslave you with something else. He came to set you free from sin and to give you real life, abundant life.

What counsel does the Bible have for you now that you are free from slavery to addiction and sin? Galatians 5:1 says:

Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.

Stand fast, persevere, and remain stationary in the freedom that Jesus Christ has given you. Continue reading the Bible and ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand it. Admit your weaknesses and ask the Lord for His help. Invite the Holy Spirit to remove the lust in your heart so that you will not be entangled in the sinful addiction again. And stay away from the thoughts, activities and places where you were once enticed.

Adultery

According to the Bible, departing from the true and living God in order to find satisfaction from another is adultery. Adultery in marriage is a serious betrayal between husband and wife. God wants you to understand that it is just as serious between a Christian, who is part of the bride of Christ, and our bridegroom Jesus Christ.

How can someone be guilty of committing adultery against the Lord? God has designed marriage in such a way that we derive satisfaction from our spouse. If we seek to be satisfied emotionally or sexually through a relationship with someone other than our spouse then we have committed adultery. Jesus even says that when a man lusts *in his heart*, he has committed adultery (Matthew 5:28). In other words, we can create a sinful attachment with someone other than our spouse and be guilty of adultery even though we have not engaged in a sexual act with that person. The sin begins in the heart. In the same way, we committed spiritual adultery when we sought satisfaction through thoughts, activities or use of a substance rather than being satisfied with Jesus. Our attempts to be fulfilled in sinful ways were acts of adultery against the Lord. They were just as serious as an act of adultery between husband and wife.

God compares the serious sin of idolatry to adultery in a number of Old Testament scriptures. He uses this comparison to describe the sinfulness of Israel and the reason for His judgment against them.

Then I saw that for all the causes for which backsliding Israel had committed adultery, I had put her away and given her a certificate of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but went and played the harlot also. So it came to pass, through her casual harlotry, that she defiled the land and committed adultery with stones and trees. Jeremiah 3:8-9

For they have committed adultery, and blood is on their hands. They have committed adultery with their idols, and even sacrificed their sons whom they bore to Me,

Beyond Addictions

passing them through the fire, to devour them. (Referring to the people of Israel before the Babylonian captivity). Ezekiel 23:37

In these two passages, God says that when Israel worshipped idols, they were committing adultery against Him. He uses the awful sin of adultery to help us see how evil and wicked idolatry is. Anytime we put another god before our Lord, we, as the Bride of Christ, are also committing adultery. Have you ever noticed that drug and alcohol addiction are often accompanied by sexual immorality and that sexual immorality often leads to addiction to drugs, alcohol or pornography?

The Israelites faced a horrible consequence because of their adultery against God – many lost their lives and most of the rest were taken captive by the Babylonians. If we choose to continue in idolatrous, adulterous sin then we will face the consequences of our decision. For some, it is the loss of their family, for others it may be prison. Whatever the case, addiction to sinful attachments, thoughts or activities carries an awful price.

There is an interesting account in Proverbs 7:1-27 where an alluring woman tempts a young man to commit adultery. It sheds some light on how we were lured into a relationship with someone or something that was equally as sinful and separated us from our Lord for a time:

My son, keep my words, And treasure my commands within you. Keep my commands and live, and my law as the apple of your eye. Bind them on your fingers; Write them on the tablet of your heart. Say to wisdom, "You are my sister," And call understanding your nearest kin, that they may keep you from the immoral woman, from the seductress who flatters with her words. Proverbs 7:1-5

Solomon encourages us to abide in God's Word, to keep it close to our eyes, to wrap it around our fingers and to write it on our heart. God's Word provides discernment that keeps us from being lured by seductive women (or men) who flatter with their words. You can also be seduced by booze or dope or anything else that attempts to lure you into its trap.

For at the window of my house I looked through my lattice, And saw among the simple, I perceived among the youths, A young man devoid of understanding, passing along the street near her corner; And he took the path to her house in the twilight, in the evening, In the black and dark night. And there a woman met him, with the attire of a harlot, and a crafty heart. She was loud and rebellious. Her feet would not stay at home. At times she was outside, at times in the open square, Lurking at every corner. So she caught him and kissed him. With an impudent face she said to him: "I have

Other Biblical Views of Addiction

peace offerings with me. Today I have paid my vows. So I came out to meet you, diligently to seek your face. And I have found you. Proverbs 7:6-15

This sounds like the stuff that Hollywood movies are made of. This guy is going to have a little romantic tryst with an older married woman. Many unbelievers see this as a good thing. A lot of men and women have become involved in extramarital affairs to get a little excitement or to have a cheap thrill; however, you need to look at it through Biblical eyes. You will never receive true happiness through unrighteousness. This foolish young man is wandering in places where he shouldn't go and responds to the call of a harlot. He is risking more than he realizes as he allows himself to pursue a little excitement through a sinful attachment.

The alluring woman caught him, kissed him, flattered him and made him an offer that *looked* too good to refuse. Sin looks good on the surface but it never supplies all that it promises and it comes with side effects that may cost your life.

With her enticing speech she caused him to yield, with her flattering lips she seduced him. Immediately he went after her, as an ox goes to the slaughter, Or as a fool to the correction of the stocks, till an arrow struck his liver. As a bird hastens to the snare, He did not know it would cost his life. Proverbs 7:21-23

“With her enticing speech” she caused him to yield. She flattered him and lured him into her net. Your first experience with drugs, booze or sex came with enticing speech. It promised acceptance with your peers, excitement and pleasure. It's interesting that it did not come with a warning label stating that it was addictive, would cost more than you ever wanted to pay, would make you sick in the morning, might ruin your marriage, etc. The addictive stuff looked good. Like this simple fool, you went after it with very little reservation. You didn't realize that we were going as an ox to be slaughtered, and you did not see what was coming until a dart had struck you in the liver. That is the part that usually gets left out of the movies. There are serious consequences to sin.

The chapter ends with tragedy.

Now therefore, listen to me, my children; Pay attention to the words of my mouth: Do not let your heart turn aside to her ways, Do not stray into her paths; for she has cast down many wounded, And all who were slain by her were strong men. Her house is the way to hell, descending to the chambers of death. Proverbs 7:24-27

Beyond Addictions

Wait a minute! You and I thought her house was the way to pleasure, and that Internet porn sight would give us a little thrill. We thought the dope and booze would *add* something to life. Guess what? You and I were wrong! Proverbs 7:25-27 says that it all leads to death.

You and I are fortunate. Many who have gone into the depths of addiction never came out. By God's grace, we have been given another chance and a new life in Christ Jesus. Knowing what we know now, we do well to listen to this warning in Proverbs and stay away from the alluring sin that might entice us into a deadly trap.

Fortunately, God also offers hope for those who have committed idolatry and adultery against Him. The entire book of Hosea deals with a man who was married to a harlot. She continued in sin and he continued loving her. Eventually, she was sold by her master and Hosea paid the price to buy her out of whoredom. He forgave her and restored her as his bride. This is a picture of God's grace for the nation of Israel, and for us as lost souls who were caught up in the cares of this idolatrous, adulterous world.

Jesus paid the price to rescue us from sin and He has made a way for us to be set free from its bondage. The price was high, it cost His life. But He willingly paid it to bring us out of our adultery, to wash us clean and forgive us. So your spiritual adultery has been completely forgiven by the blood of Jesus. All you have to do is admit your sin, repent and ask Jesus to forgive you.

Life-dominating Sins

Remember what Jesus said about sin in John 8:34, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin." Slavery isn't a part-time occupation; it is constant forced servitude. As a slave to addiction, you were in constant forced servitude to it. Sin dominated your life.

Remember Dr. Welch's definition of addiction as *bondage* to the rule of a substance, activity, or state of mind, *which then becomes the center of life*, defending itself from the truth so that even bad consequences don't bring repentance, and *leading to further estrangement from God*. Addiction is sinful. It brings you into bondage, becomes the center of your life, and it leads to further estrangement from God.² It is a sinful attachment that dominates your life.

The Biblical Counseling Foundation's *Self-Confrontation: A Manual for In-Depth Biblical Discipleship* has this to say about addiction:

When you willingly or unknowingly are under the control of any power other than God's Holy Spirit (e.g. drugs, alcohol, sex, another person, your peer group, a false religion, a self-centered habit such as gossip or laziness, or a self-oriented desire

² Welch, Dr. Edward, *Addictions: A Banquet in the Grave*

for power, food or wealth) you are in bondage to sin. However God has broken the power of sin through the Lord Jesus Christ, and you can overcome sinful habits by depending on His strength and being obedient to His Word.³

The authors of *Self-Confrontation* call addictions what they are; they refer to them as life-dominating sins.⁴ John C. Broger developed this manual to enable Christians to Biblically examine our lives to see if we are truly living what we say we believe. Mr. Broger was a devout Christian who served for twenty-three years as a civilian officer in the Pentagon with the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff. In 1974, he began to develop Biblical counseling training material for the Chiefs of Chaplains of the US Armed Forces. He developed the Self Confrontation manual following his retirement in 1977. It is a rich resource that provides scriptural direction for real change in many areas of life. In one part of this manual, Mr. Broger provides a guide to help you determine if you are entertaining life-dominating sins. If you examine your heart and find that there are thoughts or actions that can be described by more than a few of these statements, then you can identify them as addictions or life-dominating sins.

1. You practice this sin even though you have tried repeatedly to stop.
2. You practice this sin and blame others or circumstances for your failure to stop.
3. You deny that what you are doing is sin.
4. You convince yourself that you are not enslaved to this sin and “can stop at any time” even though you continue in this sin.
5. You convince yourself that this sin has no power over you since you do not commit this sin as much as you once did.
6. You repeat the sin even though any pleasure or satisfaction to yourself is short-lived while the harm to yourself and others is considerable and long term.
7. You seek to hide your sin.
8. You revile or slander the very people who are seeking to restore you to the Lord and others.
9. You continue in this sin although you know that it is not edifying to do so.
10. You still commit this sin although you know that it obscures the testimony of Jesus Christ in your life and is a stumbling block to others.

³ Broger, John C., *Self-Confrontation: A Manual for In-Depth Biblical Discipleship*

⁴ Ibid

Beyond Addictions

11. You continue in this sin despite the knowledge that God's Word tells you to stop sinning and that God's provisions are sufficient to release you from this bondage.
12. You repeatedly commit this sin while knowing that this does not please the Lord nor bring glory to God.
13. You continue in this sin even though you realize that your deeds (thoughts, words and actions) do not conform to the character of Christ. ⁵

Do you recognize any sinful attachments in your life that fit the description of characteristics in this list? If so, then you are already entertaining life-dominating sins (addictions) or you are at risk of doing so. Thinking back to the last chapter, you will also recognize these sinful attachments as idols that you are beginning to form in your heart.

What is the solution to this problem?

The prophecy of the Messiah says that it is by his stripes that we are healed.

But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. Isaiah 53:5-6

The cure for addiction and all sin is found in the shed blood, death and resurrection of Jesus. Apart from Jesus Christ, we are powerless to be cured. We may trade one addiction for another (drugs, alcohol, overeating, violence, smoking, sex, etc.) but we are powerless to overcome without Him.

Jesus Christ can set you free from the sin that once dominated your life. There have been many times as I have struggled with temptation or with thoughts from the past that I have prayed and simply thanked God for the blood of Jesus that has cleansed me from all sin. I could not seem to wrestle the temptation to the ground nor outrun it but I could thank Jesus for the blood that forgave my sin. At that moment, I knew that I was forgiven and that Satan has no hold on me anymore. As I submit my life to the leading of the Holy Spirit, I have victory over sin. There is great power in the name of Jesus, in the blood of Jesus, and the work of the Holy Spirit. No one else and nothing else can cure you from sin or keep you from temptation.

Conclusion

⁵ Ibid

If you are like me, you probably see your past reflected in this chapter and the two previous ones we have studied – we entered into voluntary slavery and adultery; we were dominated by sin. Thank God that does not have to be the case any longer because Jesus Christ has not only provided the solution; He IS the solution.

I pray that you have emerged from the cloud of addiction and realize that what you were doing was an offence against God. You need to know that in spite of your sin and rebellion, God still loves you so much that He made a way for your sins to be forgiven and your life to be redeemed. Jesus provided the way through His own blood and sacrificial death for sin to be removed. When God's wrath was poured out on Jesus at the cross, He took the wrath that you and I deserved. His resurrection from the grave proved that the price paid in His blood was sufficient to redeem and forgive us. We are forgiven. Now we know that if we confess our sin to the Lord and ask for His forgiveness, He is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (I John 1:9). We are free to live a new life in Jesus Christ.

Now that you are free, do not let those old sins come back into your life. Prayerfully examine your lifestyle and open your heart to the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Like David prayed in Psalm 139, ask the Lord to search your heart and mind, to see if there is any wicked way in you, and lead you in the way that is everlasting. See if there are any ungodly habits that you may have tried to give up to God in prayer but are still secretly in love with. Admit your weakness to God. This may be the beginning of being set free from this sin that plagues your life. Praise God that He IS the cure for all of our ills, even the ones that are self-inflicted. He came to set us free. And he whom the Son sets free is free indeed!

Foundational Scriptures ...

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. II Corinthians 5:17

The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. John 10:10

Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's. I Corinthians 6:19-20

But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. James 1:14-15

Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. Luke 9:23-24

Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. James 1:21-22

Beyond Addictions
Free to Live a New Life In Christ



Other Biblical Views of Addiction

Assignment 4

Name: _____

1. This lesson begins with the story of a man named Jim who was asking the Lord to remove a sinful habit from his life but still secretly loved the habit. Are there any addictions in your life that you have asked God to remove but are still secretly enjoying? _____. What should you do about them? _____

2. How can an addiction be considered “voluntary slavery”? _____

Are there any scripture passages from the lesson that help to explain it in this light? _____

3. Read John 8:36 and tell me how this solves the problem created by John 8:34 _____

4. How can a sinful attachment to something be considered as an act of spiritual adultery against the Lord? _____

5. The lesson includes a long passage from Proverbs 7. Read Proverbs 7:1-5 and tell me how applying God’s Word can protect you from someone or something that wants to flatter you into doing something that you know you should not do. _____

Beyond Addictions

6. Finish this statement: “You will never receive true happiness through _____”.

7. Define “unrighteousness”. _____

8. What does the book *Self Confrontation: A Manual for In-Depth Biblical Discipleship* call addictions? _____

Review the list on pgs. 16-17 in the lesson and tell me if you are currently engaged in any habits that fit four or more of the descriptions in this list of thirteen characteristics. _____

9. How does Isaiah 53:5-6 provide a solution to this problem of life-dominating sin? _____

10. Read the five foundational scriptures at the end of the lesson and tell me which of these is most meaningful to you at this point. _____

Why? _____

Once you complete this worksheet, mail it to:

Free In Christ Prison Ministries
PO Box 1492
Yanceyville, NC 27379

We will review your answers and return this sheet to you along with the next lesson. Study the Foundational verses included in this chapter and continue to allow the Lord to transform you by the renewing of your mind. People are praying for you!