

My Friend is Hooked and Struggling to Break Free

I. Defining the Terms

A. Addiction -

- Webster's Dictionary To give one's self up to a strong habit
- Addiction is 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.

B. Disease – Encarta Dictionary

- Medical condition a condition in humans, plants, or animals that results in pathological symptoms and is not the direct result of physical injury
- Specific disorder a disorder in humans, animals, or plants with recognizable signs and often having a known cause
- Problem in society a serious problem in society or with a group of people

C. Sin

- Missing the mark
- Willful breaking of God's Law (Duet 5.7-21)
- Any offense or fault
- Unrighteousness not what Jesus would do
- D. Is addiction a disease or illness? Sin has many things in common with a disease.
 - it affects our entire body
 - It is painful
 - It leads to death, and it is absolutely tragic

Yet there are also ways sin is not like a disease

- It is something we do, not something we catch
- We confess it rather than treat it
- A disease of our hearts rather than our bodies. And only forgiveness and cleansing found in the blood of the great physician is sufficient to bring thorough healing.

II. Basic Theological or Biblical principles -

- We are sinners (Romans 3.23)

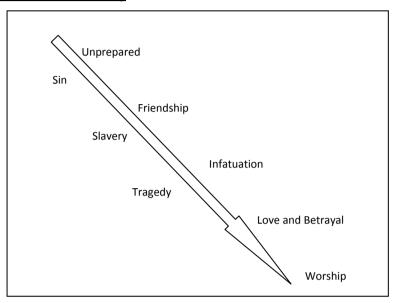
- Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead (Mark 16.6; Phil 2.8-11)
- Jesus is Lord (Phil 2.11)
- "His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1.3) If this is true we should be pursuing it. Accurate theology is like a treasure map. It guides us and compels us to relentlessly search scripture for more and more relevant, penetrating, enlightening, life changing truth...
- The knowledge we gain from our pursuit of the gospel reveals the Character of Christ. It is enacted in our lives by the Spirit of Christ, and the reason we pursue it is for the Glory of Christ...
- Our liberation comes through a person, not a system of ideas and principles "all things that pertain to life and godliness..." ultimately come "through the knowledge of Him [Jesus Christ]..."
- "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled." Matt 5.6
- A. Practical Theology How I live day to day often says:
 - The bible talks about heaven as my hope for the future but it doesn't apply to my struggles and temptations today.
 - What I say isn't necessarily what I believe; what I do is what I believe [knowing doing gap] (James 1.22-25; John 13.17)
 - I am not willing to change
- B. Is it wrong to have habits or to want things?
 - Wants, desires, or habits only become a problem if I am willing to sin to get them

III. Addictions are ultimately a worship disorder

- A. Idolatry All idolatry is sin (Deuteronomy 4.23; 5.7-10; Eph 5.5; 1 John 2.16, 5.21)
 - Idolatry includes anything we worship: the lust for pleasure, respect, love, power, money, control, or freedom from pain
 - The problem is not the substance or the behavior (liquor store, internet, TV), the problem is within us.
 - As obedience to God demonstrates our allegiance to God, so when we set our affections on created objects we demonstrate our affinity for Satan (Eph 6.12)
- B. Drunkenness, the biblical prototype for all addiction, is always called sin never sickness...
 - Noah (Gen 9.18-27)
 - Lot (Gen 19.30-38)
 - Nabal (1 Sam 25.36)
 - Elah (1 Kings 16.9-10)
 - Prov 23.29-35

- C. Addiction is a Lordship problem
- D. How do we reconcile the out of control nature of addiction and the apparent self-conscious, intentional nature of sin? Addiction, although perhaps out of control in the end, is established or a result of many many choices along the way.

IV. Descent of idolatry



A. Unprepared

- Someone offers you a drink, marijuana or some other drug
- Someone other than your spouse gives you attention or shows you affection

B. Friendship

- Spending more time doing it, looking for opportunities to do it
- Small steps of spiritual callousness or indifference. A lack of sensitivity to right and wrong (James 1.22)

C. Infatuation

- More and more risk, more and more and more...

D. Love and Betrayal

- The addictive behavior becomes the treatment for everything
- Addictive behaviors shield abusers from learning how to live (deal, cope). Slowly abusers lose their ability to deal with life without their substance.
- Maybe they realize the greater costs of their addiction, maybe they don't either way they don't care.

E. Worship

- Addicts become hopeless worshippers "you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness" Rom 6.19

- The downward spiral of idolatry finally comes to rest at slavery. All of the things the idol promised freedom, pleasure, power, life, camaraderie... all they deliver is slavery. 2 peter 2.19 says "While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage (slavery)."
- Denial reigns. Lies to others, lies to themselves self deception
- It may seem the person has no guilt. The truth is they feel much more guilt than you might think.
- All this guilt, and the only way there seems to deal with it is more slavery.

V. Features of ALL addictions



- A. Addicts even though they are hopeless and in great pain still prefer covering up their problem. Why?
 - Shame...
 - The possibility they will have to give up their addiction
 - Fear that they don't know how to live without it
- B. The nature of sin is to stay out of sight for as long as possible.
 - We must understand the difference between seeing addiction as a victimizing physical weakness versus and expression of a self focused heart.
 - Martin Luther in "The Bondage of the Will" wrote "man ...does not do evil against his will, under pressure, as though he were taken by the scruff of the neck and dragged into it, like a thief...being dragged off against his will to punishment; but he does it spontaneously and voluntarily. And this willingness or volition is something which he cannot in his own strength eliminate, restrain or alter..."

VI. WANT SOME HOPE?

A. Principles for change

- Don't excuse it that would simply encourage the self deceptive consequences of sin
- Confess it as sin against God
- Look to Jesus as the One who shows grace and mercy to idolaters
- Grow in faith by knowing God as He reveals Himself in scripture
- Learn to delight in obedience search out scripture to find ways to obey
- Don't rely on yourself but partner with and be accountable to wise people
- Pursue wisdom the skill of godly living that comes out of reverence for the Lord and pursue it aggressively. Don't just avoid sin HATE IT (2 Cor 7.9-11)
- Realize that addiction, like all sin, doesn't impose itself on us unless we have been willing to entertain the seeds of it in our imaginations. Therefore change must be deeper than overt behavior change. We are targeting the heart.

B. Jesus Christ is the answer

- **C. Confrontation** One of the clearest principles in scripture: friends, parents and counselors must search their own hearts before any confrontation.
 - Not all of us are addicted to an intoxicating substance, or drug, or pornography, or sex but all of us have private idols.
 - Perhaps you have never been controlled by alcohol or another addictive substance, but we all know what it's like to be mastered by our own desires rather than by Christ
 - o Desires for love,
 - Desires to be accepted, appreciated or respected
 - Desires for wealth or success
 - Interestingly enough we sometimes forget that scripture does not separate drunkenness, the prototype for addictions, as a sin that is worse than any other sin. Instead it is placed beside many others that many of us would think are lesser sins (envy, jealousy, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions) and other sins we might think are worse (sorcery, hatred, murder) Gal 5.19-21
 - Prayer and confession of sin should precede any confrontation.
 - Recognizing that although the sin may have affected many, ultimately sin is against God. (Psalm 51.4)
 - Rescue Proverbs 24.11 says "deliver those who are drawn toward death, and hold back those stumbling to the slaughter."
 - Galatians 6.1 says, "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted."
 - Gentleness meekness. A humble and gentle attitude that is patiently submissive in every offense, while having no desire for revenge or retribution.
 - o It is only through our own confession of sin that we can approach a person with gentleness, especially if we have been wronged, hurt, lied to, or betrayed.

- Matthew 18.15-17 lays out the process for "restoring". "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every work may be established. And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector."
- o Biblically love... The goal is always restoration