

# What Does the Bible Teach About Christians and Drug Addiction?

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of the Trilacoochee church of Christ

# What Does the Bible Teach About Christians and Drug Addiction?

- Prov. 14:12 - “There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.”
- One person described her addiction this way: “It was the best thing in my life until it became the worst thing in my life.”
- Most Christians believe that the drug is the problem. It is not the problem, but rather than the means of facilitating the problem.
- The addiction is the real issue. We are meant to worship God and God alone, and instead have allowed something else to take His place.

# What Does the Bible Teach About Christians and Drug Addiction?

- The word addiction is from the Latin word *addictus*, which means “to surrender to the gods; to devote, sacrifice, betray, or abandon.” (Sharon Hersh, *The Last Addiction*)
- The habit becomes one’s worship, and the substance becomes the idol.

# What Does the Bible Teach About Christians and Drug Addiction?

- “An addiction is any pleasure that becomes an obsession (a mental preoccupation) which often then results in a compulsion (a behavior that acts out the obsession). Addictions can be chemically based, but they can also be emotionally or behaviorally based as well. An addiction is not a disease. You can't catch an addiction. An addiction is a sinful disorder which therefore stresses responsibility for your addiction, but also gives hope for recovery from your addiction. An addiction is anything we depend on that draws us away from giving greater dependence on God. An addiction is not trusting in the sufficiency of Christ. An addiction is a false god. An addiction is an idol.” (Randy Smith, Overcoming Addictions)

# What Does the Bible Teach About Christians and Drug Addiction?

- Addictions take multiple forms (the list is not comprehensive): Hobbies, Smart phones, Social media, Texting, Television, Entertainment, Video games, Drugs, Alcohol, Sugar, Chocolate, Eating, Caffeine, Nicotine, Athletics, Exercise, Shopping, Politics, Pornography, Gambling, Money, Work, etc.

# The Problem Of Addiction

- The cost to society
  - The annual cost of drug abuse is over \$100 billion. It costs every US taxpayer more than \$700 per year.
  - 70,630 Americans died from drug-involved overdose in 2019, including illicit drugs and prescription opioids, 68% men, 32% women.
  - Drug overdose deaths involving prescription opioids rose from 3,442 in 1999 to 17,029 in 2017. (CDC)

# The Problem Of Addiction

- The pharmaceutical companies have cynically structured a profiteering scheme that makes money at both ends of this issue. First, they manufacture prescription opioids at an incredible rate and distribute them to pill vending doctors with little or no oversight. When caught and fined, the companies factor the fine into their overhead costs without changing policy or production. Then, they develop and manufacture methadone and narcan to treat opioid addiction and overdose. So, they make the addicting drugs, and they make the drugs to treat the addiction. They create the problem so that they can profit from the solution. (Summary of Frontline episode: "Opioids, Inc." June 23, 2020)

# The Problem Of Addiction

- The cost to families
  - 2004 report by Robert Perkinson: “There is not a family in America that has not been impacted by addiction in one form or another.”
  - A family is a system, and when the system runs properly it is a beautiful thing. Members have a safe place to come home, they love and support each other, and everyone does their part



# The Problem Of Addiction

- Addiction breaks down the system and adds to the burden of responsibility of other members of the family.
  - Home is no longer a safe place; family members are focused on surviving
  - Children have to take on the responsibilities of their parents
  - Families learn to live with deception and denial and develop unhealthy coping mechanisms that crop up in other areas of life.

# The Problem Of Addiction

- The children usually suffer the most. They don't understand why their parents continue to do something so damaging to themselves and to the home.
- Children in addicted households usually experience greater levels of anger or abuse than those in other households.
- Often, babies are born already physically dependent on drugs.
- Most families struggling with addiction eventually come apart. There is the added trauma of divorce or separation.

# The Problem Of Addiction

- The cost to the soul
  - Prov. 23:19-21 - “Hear, my son, and be wise; And guide your heart in the way. 20 Do not mix with winebibbers, Or with gluttonous eaters of meat; 21 For the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, And drowsiness will clothe a man with rags.”
  - 1Cor. 6:9-10 - “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, 10 nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.”

# Questions That Determine If One Is Addicted

- Is there anything that you believe you “really need”?
- Is there anything that you could not imagine losing for a few weeks?
- Do you plan your life around the ability to get or use something?
- Is there any behavior, habit, unhealthy desire or self-destructive behavior that you can't stop?
- Are other areas of your life suffering (family, friends, career, finances, health) because of a certain behavior?
- Is a certain behavior preventing you from growing in Christ?
- Do thoughts of a certain item, action, or person consume you and bring more pleasure than thoughts about God?

# Questions That Determine If One Is Addicted

- Is there anything that is wasting your money and time?
- Is there anything in your life that you keep hidden from others?
- Is there anything in your life that leaves you anxious, guilty or empty, but yet you still desire more of it?
- Is there anything that you feel controls your life?
- When depressed, scared, bored, stressed, or irritable, where is the first place or the first thing to which you turn?
- What or whom do you trust for comfort, protection, adventure, satisfaction, purpose, and pleasure?

# Understanding The Process Of Addiction

- Pain

- Prov. 18:14 - “The spirit of a man will sustain him in sickness, But who can bear a broken spirit?”
- Prov. 31:6-7 - “Give strong drink to him who is perishing, And wine to those who are bitter of heart. 7 Let him drink and forget his poverty, And remember his misery no more.”
- Addiction often begins with hurt: loneliness, guilt, shame, pain, depression, fear.

# Understanding The Process Of Addiction

- God offers a means of bearing with all of these matters, but humankind often chooses to go to a source of comfort of their own choosing
  - 1Cor. 10:13 - “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”
  - 2Peter 2:9 - “The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations...”

# Understanding The Process Of Addiction

- Avoidance
  - James 1:13-14 - “But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. 15 Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death”
  - The substance becomes the means by which the person in pain attempts to escape the problem.



# Understanding The Process Of Addiction

- Some folks cannot bear the emotional pain, so they seek escape in addiction to something else
  - In the beginning, it numbs the pain and distracts the mind.
  - Over time, it takes over the mind and generates a new form of suffering, often greater and always more harmful and difficult overcome than the original problem
  - Eventually, the addict despairs of breaking the cycle

# Understanding The Process Of Addiction

- Deceit/denial
  - Jer. 17:9 - “The heart is deceitful above all things,  
And desperately wicked; Who can know it?”
- The user becomes expert at hiding the addiction. He hides it because he is afraid it will be taken away from him if it is discovered.

# Understanding The Process Of Addiction

- Addicts are master manipulators. When confronting them with their addiction, one will often hear an unending stream of deflection and excuses expertly designed to prevent others from taking away their idol. They may even verbally attack those who ask.
  - “One drink isn’t going to hurt.”
  - “I just need a little something to relax me.”
  - “I’ve worked hard and I deserve this.”
  - “I can handle it.”
  - “It’s not that big a deal.”
  - “This will be the last time.”
  - “I can stop anytime I want.”
  - “I can’t stop anyway, so why even try?”

# Understanding The Process Of Addiction

- Enslavement

- “Physical addiction occurs when you repeatedly satisfy a natural appetite and desire with a temporary pleasure until you become the servant of the temporary object of pleasure rather than its master.” (Mark Shaw, The Heart of Addiction)
- Dopamine receptors and rewiring the brain

# Understanding The Process Of Addiction

- Gen. 4:7 - “If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.”
- Rom. 6:16 - “Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?”

# Understanding The Process Of Addiction

- Prov. 23:29-35 - “Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaints? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? 30 Those who linger long at the wine, Those who go in search of mixed wine. 31 Do not look on the wine when it is red, When it sparkles in the cup, When it swirls around smoothly; 32 At the last it bites like a serpent, And stings like a viper. 33 Your eyes will see strange things, And your heart will utter perverse things. 34 Yes, you will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, Or like one who lies at the top of the mast, saying: 35 ‘They have struck me, but I was not hurt; They have beaten me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake, that I may seek another drink?’”

# Overcoming Addiction

- God knows and loves us
  - Heb. 4:13 - “There is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.”
  - Rom. 5:8 - “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”
  - We don’t have to clean ourselves in order to come to God; we come to God in order to clean ourselves.

# Overcoming Addiction

- At the center of this issue is a spiritual battle
  - Eph. 6:12 - “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”
  - 1Peter 5:8 - “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.”



# Overcoming Addiction

- There is hope in God
  - Psalm 25:3 - “Indeed, let no one who waits on You be ashamed...”
  - John 10:10 - “...I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”
  - 1Cor. 6:11 - “...And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.”

# Overcoming Addiction

- We need God's help
  - Rom. 7:22-25 - “For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. 23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. 24 O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? 25 I thank God--through Jesus Christ our Lord!...”
  - Matt. 6:24 - “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”

# Overcoming Addiction

- We need to admit our need for His help
  - Psalm 119:133 - “Direct my steps by Your word, And let no iniquity have dominion over me.”
- We must trust the help He gives
  - 1Cor. 6:12 - “All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.”
  - 1Cor. 10:13 - “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”

# Overcoming Addiction

- We need honorable influences
  - 1Cor. 15:33 - “Do not be deceived: Evil company corrupts good habits.”
  - Heb. 3:13 - “Exhort one another daily, while it is called ‘Today,’ lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.”
  - Heb. 10:24 - “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works”

# Overcoming Addiction

- We must confess the truth
  - John 8:31-36 - “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free... Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.”
  - 1John 1:8-9 - “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”
- Lies bring slavery; the truth brings freedom. Truth begins with confession.

# Overcoming Addiction

- We need to view ourselves as dead to sin but alive to God
  - Rom. 6:11-13 - “Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. 12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. 13 And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.”

# Overcoming Addiction

- We must grow in the fruit of the Spirit
  - Gal. 5:22-23 - “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.”
- Especially self-control
  - Eph. 5:18 - “And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit”

# Overcoming Addiction

- Illustration: Ulysses Vs. Jason
- Addiction is a serious problem that adversely impacts churches, society, families, and individuals.
- There is no quick fix to the problem. It will take time and determination, but with God's help and by applying these principles from God's Word to the matter, we can overcome it.