

# Addictions & Footholds

Fairview Missionary Church | Angola, IN

Scripture: Joshua 7, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

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New year's is a time when a lot of people make new year's resolutions. It's actually the number one time throughout the year that many people either try to eliminate a bad habit in their life or establish a good habit in their life. And there isn't much change from year to year over the last few decades as to what the top new year's resolutions are. And so we're going to look at the top new year's resolutions for 2023. And of course, number one is to exercise more.

People want to exercise more. They want to be more active. Number two, to eat healthier. Number three, to lose weight. Are you noticing a trend here? These are our top new year's resolutions, exercise, eat healthy, lose weight. Number four is to save more money. Save more money, number 5, to spend more time with family and friends. These have actually been the top 5 for the last decade.

And different orders, but exercise eat healthier, lose weight, save money, spend more time with friends and family. This is a new one, number 6, to spend less time on social media. That would do us all well, wouldn't it, to spend less time on social media? Number 7, to reduce stress on the job. I'm not sure how you do that unless you're the boss, but to reduce stress on the job, people want to have less stress in their life. And number 8, to reduce spending on living expenses, to reduce spending on living expenses.

By the way, when I look at this list, you can tell that we live in a first world country. Can't you? I look at this list and I thought, if you went to Africa, or you went to Venezuela, and you asked them, what are your top new year's resolutions? I don't think they'd be even close to this, right? These are all first world issues that we struggle with. But the crazy thing about new year's resolutions is that they don't work. Statistics share with us that only 9% of people see their resolutions to completion.

9%. That number is pretty low for some of you. You might think, let's higher than I thought it would be. But 9%, those are not good odds. And so I look at those percentages, and I think to myself, obviously, as human beings, you and I need better motivation to stop a bad habit or start a good habit than just it being the right time of year. It's after the holidays, and so we can eat less and exercise more in all of those other things. I've also noticed, and this is just my perception.

But with every new generation, since I have been alive, I think the level of self-discipline and willpower have gone down. The level of self-discipline and willpower able to control ourselves has gone down, able to maybe give a sacrifice something that we want for somebody else. And I try to understand why that is. And there's a few reasons. One, I've mentioned before, but of course, my generation, we've not had any huge World War that we've had to deal with.

We've not had any huge world conflict that has affected necessarily our families. It's affected some families for sure. And so we haven't had to sacrifice that much. And of course, my children, the next generation haven't had that either. There's also some mantras that exist in our culture, some slogans that we teach to our children that I think add to this struggle. And necessarily really aren't good slogans at all. And this is one of them. Believe in yourself and follow your heart.

Believe in yourself and follow your heart. Now you might think, pastor, what's wrong with that? I think that's a great slogan. Let me share with you. The problem with this mantra that we are teaching our

children is that until our hearts are transformed, our hearts are evil. Until our hearts are transformed by the power of the spirit, our hearts are evil.

So if we are just broadcasting across the country to this next generation, follow your heart, then unless their hearts have been transformed, we're telling them to follow evil and you think, well, that's not nice pastor, but it's not me. I didn't come up with this, all right? This is in scripture. Look at what we read in Jeremiah. Chapter 17 verse 9, Jeremiah tells us 3000 years ago the heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure, who can understand it.

Jesus says in Matthew 15, but the things that come out of a person's mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. What are those things that come from the heart, evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander? Do you still think it's a good idea to tell our children follow your heart? This is what's inside of us as sinful people born into a sinful world, and yet we tell our children follow your hearts.

Here's one more from Romans. As it is written, there is no one righteous, not even one. There is no one who understands. No one who seeks God all have turned away they have together become worthless. There is no one who does good, not even one. Great sermon, right? This has been fun for everybody so far. This is what scripture teaches. That if you and I follow the desires of our selfish heart and we don't learn to submit to God, we're going to experience a lot of pain and suffering in our lives.

We're going to make a lot of mistakes. We're going to learn the hard way, but we also need to recognize that our decisions will also cause others a lot of pain. We don't make our choices in a vacuum, but there's good news. The message doesn't end here this morning. Fortunately for all of us, the good news is that our hearts can be transformed. Our hearts can be changed. God can give us a new heart, scripture says that God takes from us our heart of stone and replaces it with a heart of flesh.

Gives us his spirit, truly transforms us from the inside out. And because of that, I also believe then that God can grant us self-discipline. God can grant us willpower. God can grant us greater motivation to accomplish our goals. And I'm not just talking about goals to eat healthier, to exercise more. But through the power of his spirits, we can accomplish great things. This is good news. This is great news.

This is the best news, because what you and I do, the decisions we make affects everybody around us. Our sins and secret lives don't just affect us. This is one of the lies that the enemy has been spreading for a long time. That I can make my own decisions in my decisions just affect me. And so we have another mantra in our culture, another thing that is taught as truth that isn't true at all.

People say this. Let me do what I want. If it isn't hurting you, why do you care? Something along this line, you guys have heard this from somebody. Just let me do what I want. It's not affecting you. Don't worry about it, but the problem with that statement is the underlying truth that somehow what I do doesn't impact you and it does. The decisions I make affect you all, the decisions you make affect me. And we hurt each other.

So today I want to encourage us to do something that is difficult. It's hard. I want to encourage you and I to face our struggles head on. I want to encourage us to make the changes necessary to honor God with our lives. And if you're visiting today, if you're watching online or listening on the radio, this message is intended for those that are of the church that would consider themselves followers of Jesus.

That doesn't mean that this message won't impact you or won't be good for you either if you are not part of that group that considers Jesus as your savior, but this message is for the church. It's for you, and it's for me. For some, this message is going to be a wake-up call. To make the needed change in your life. For some, this isn't going to be a very fun service.

But it can be life altering. If you will humble yourself before God, my prayer is that today, starting with the church, we will humble ourselves before God, that we will admit our struggles and our sins and we will repent from those and turn towards him. And so I'm going to ask you to buckle up for the next ten to 15 minutes. As we look at some statistics, as we look at some struggles that apply to our lives, we are not immune from this.

This affects us. So let me pray and then we'll jump in. Heavenly Father, I pray that you would transform our hearts. Open our eyes to the truth. Give us the boldness, the courage, the strength, to admit our weaknesses.

And to repent before you, that we may experience your blessing and your goodness in our lives. We ask this in Jesus name, amen. This is one of those messages that God has laid on my heart that I wish I could write, but then have somebody else preach. You know what I'm talking about? This is going to be a hard message for us to hear. For some of us, it's going to be extremely hard, and it's probably going to get a little quiet in the sanctuary for a little bit.

It's probably good that there's some kids here. Maybe they'll make some funny noises or something. Because it could get awkward really fast. These are struggles that are inside of the church, not just outside of the church, as I share some of these statistics. So let's just jump right in. Let's start with pornography. These are the statistics. Most recent statistics, 65% of Christian men view pornography at least once a month.

65%. That means 6 or 7 out of ten of us men that are in the sanctuary today. This is not outside the church. This is inside the church, struggle with pornography so much so that we view it at least once a month. For that, for women, that number is 11%, but you need to know that that number is drastically increasing. Not to mention the fact that pornography has a certain definition, which doesn't include some things that I would say are pornography.

For women, the struggle is often potentially watching TV shows or movies or whatever else that would include things that just really prey on that spirit of wanting to be wanted or desirable or things like that. But for actual pornography, it's 11%. Now, just so you know, I'm not preaching at you. I'm preaching at me as well, because here's another statistic. Look at this. One in 5 youth pastors, and one in 7 lead pastors use pornography on a regular basis.

These are people that are leading churches. These are family that you may know, friends that you may know, people in the community you may know. One in 5 youth pastors and one in 7 lead pastors use pornography on a regular basis. And look at this one. I know we have the teenagers in here with us this morning. 57% of teens actively searched for pornography in the last month. Whether it was on a computer or a cell phone or an iPad or something like that, 57%.

And these are just the people that admitted to it on a random survey. If anything, the numbers could be higher than what we actually see here. The struggle is real, and the enemy is using it as a foothold in our lives. And we need to address it head on because I have seen it ruin way too many lives and way too many families. I told you it was going to be quiet. Let's go on. Adultery, 20% of men admit to cheating on their lives.

That's one out of every 5. And the number is 10% for women. One out of every ten. And if you take this outside of the marriage kind of boundaries or guidelines, the numbers go way up and just dating situations, that you're dating somebody and whether you remain faithful to them or not, the numbers skyrocket outside of that. But even inside of marriage, it's 20% and 10% who struggle with adultery. Let's go on to another one. Drunkenness. Now you guys know I've done messages on alcohol before.

And so this has nothing to do with whether it's okay or not okay to have a casual drink of alcohol. That's not what we're talking about here. We're talking about very specifically in scripture, which says, do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery, scripture is clear about drinking in excess. So this is drunkenness. 30% of men and 22% of women admit to binge drinking or heavy drinking, alcohol use in the last month. All right? So this is heavy drinking. This is not just casual.

30% of men, 22% of women, one in 8 adults meet the criteria for having alcohol use disorder. One out of every 8 adults in America have the characteristics of somebody that would be labeled as an alcoholic, somebody that cannot control their drinking. In other words, they don't choose to drink, they have to drink. It's part of who they are. They need counseling. They need therapy. They need help to get over it. It is a struggle for them. One in 8 adults.

Over 50% of adults. This is inside the church and outside the church, admit to getting drunk in the last 6 months. Again, we're not talking about casual drinking. This is getting drunk. This is what scripture says we're not supposed to do. We're not supposed to surrender our will and spirit to anything else besides the Holy Spirit. And of course, when we get drunk, we are allowing that to overtake our mind. Let's go on, cussing, swearing.

62% of 18 to 34 year olds admit to swearing, at least a few times per week, 39% for those 35 and older. So I guess when you get older, you get better at not swearing. I don't know. That's what the statistics show. 62%, though, of 18 to 34 year olds admit to swearing at least a few times per week. All right. The average American cusses 21 times a day. Now, depending on where you work, this is either shocking or not shocking, right?

For someone that works in the church, I'm kind of like, okay, this is a little shocking, but I have family. I have friends that aren't believers, you know, I worked in a factory for a little bit. And so it's not surprising when I think about that. For those of you that work in factories, you're thinking only 21, that's not a lot at all, right? 21 times a day. This is the average American. And of course, this is a struggle for men. Again, more than women, more men, statistically, swear, more often than women do. All right, let's go on. I told you this is going to be fun. You're liking this, right? All right, stealing.

There are 27 million people that would be identified as shoplifters in the U.S., or one out of every 9 people. Shoplifters. Look at this. Over 49% of Americans have had a package stolen from their front door. Half. Over half of us have had something that has been stolen from the front door. Theft is a real problem, of course, in our country. Look at this. 75% of employees admit to stealing from their employer.

Now, I assume this is more than like a pen or a paper clip, right? And this is, those are just, these are people that are willing to admit it. 75%. Look at this. It is estimated that an average 2 million people a year lie on their taxes, which is also stealing. Now, I am just like you, I will do everything legal I can to not pay an extra penny, right? I will take all the deductions I can and everything that is legal.

I don't want to pay taxes as much as anybody else, but 2 million people will actually lie on their taxes, steal from what they owe to the government so that they have to pay less, which then brings us to our next one lying. The average American tells four lies per year. Or per day. Yeah, sorry, I gave him a lot of credit there. For per day, four per day four per year is not that bad, right? We can deal with that.

Four per day, 40% of Americans admit to lying in the past 24 hours, which makes sense if they lie more than four times per day, right? So 40% of Americans admit to lying. And over half of Americans admit to lying on their resume, which is shocking to me because you can't even find anybody to work right now, right? But yet, they're willing to lie on their resume to get a job. Now, you might be sitting there this morning and thinking, this is great pastor.

I know we're not supposed to do these things. I don't know if you're trying to convict me or whatever else, but you say, I'm good on all these things. I don't struggle with pornography or drinking or adultery or lying or stealing or any of that stuff, swearing, not a problem, but I got one that's going to nail you. Here we go, gluttony. Right after the holidays, this is good, isn't it? January 1st. Nearly 100% of Americans admit to overeating in the last 30 days if they've had easy access to food.

So if you have access to it, nearly 100% admits to overeating, 38% admit to overeating because of stress. And so you're using food as a way to deal with stress, just like using alcohol or drugs or anything else. Now, what was my point? What's the point in sharing all of these fund statistics on a Sunday morning? Besides making everybody sad, right? First, I want you to know you're not alone.

I share these statistics, because if you struggle with one of these things, odds are that there's somebody in your same pew, and if not your pew, your section that is struggling with the exact same thing. You are not alone, don't believe the lie of the enemy, that you're the only person that is struggling with this area of your life. Second, my prayer, of course, is that you would be vulnerable and that you would be honest and that you would get help. That you would go before God and humility.

Not to be judged by others, but to say, God, I need help in this area of my life. Third, I want you to know that just having a new year's resolution is not going to help you overcome this. There needs to be a greater reason to overcome your struggle. And finally, as a spiritual leader in this community, I want everyone to realize that our individual sin affects everyone around us. It affects everyone around us.

And I don't believe that we will receive the lord's blessings and favor if we as his church are harboring secret sins and living fake lives. Some of you may be wondering, pastor, how can you make a statement like that that? You don't believe the Lord's going to bless us just because one person in the congregation has a struggle that they're hiding? Why would you believe that? Well, I believe that because that's what scripture teaches. So I want to share with you just two of these areas real fast.

One's in the Old Testament, one's in the New Testament. So the Old Testament takes place in Joshua. You don't have to open your bibles there. You can, but it'll be on the screen. And in Joshua chapter 7, we know that of course between exodus Leviticus numbers Deuteronomy, Joshua, between Deuteronomy and Joshua, Moses has handed off leadership to Joshua. He is supposed to lead the Israelites into the promised land. He is going to be a military leader or ruler, and he's going to conquer the nations there because of their disobedience to God.

And so we enter Joshua chapter 7. The Israelites have crossed the Jordan River. They have just a defeated Jericho. You remember they marched around the walls? They're all excited. They're happy. They're conquering the land. They're doing things only by God's power and mercy. And then we get to Joshua chapter 7 one. Where we read the Israelites were unfaithful in regard to the devoted things, Achan, son of Karmin, the son of Zimri, the son of Zerah of the tribe of Judah, took some of these devoted things, so the lord's anger burned against Israel.

Achan was disobedient to the lord's command. He had commanded them that there were devoted things that were of the peoples they were going to conquer that they were not supposed to take for themselves. They were not supposed to gather the plunder as often was the situation when one nation would conquer another. But Achan was disobedient to the lord's command. And so as you continue in the story in Joshua chapter 7, I wish we had time to read the whole thing, but according to verse 5, if you don't believe me, read it later.

Because of Achan's disobedience, when Israel went on to conquer the next nation, the nation of I, the people of I, we read that 36 men were killed because of Achan's disobedience. So of course, Joshua panics,

because rumor is going to spread that the Israelites don't have God on their side. Look, 36 men were killed. And so we read in versus 11 and 12, God tells the Israelites Israel has sinned.

They have violated my covenant, which I commanded them to keep. They have taken some of the devoted things. They have stolen. They have lied. They have put them with their own possessions. That is why the Israelites cannot stand against their enemies. They turn their backs and run. Why? Because they have been made liable to destruction. I will not be with you anymore unless you destroy whatever among you is devoted to destruction. God would not be with Israel until they rooted out the evil from among them.

They would continue to be defeated, and so we continue on in verse 16 early the next morning. Joshua then has Israel come forward by tribes and Judah out of all the tribes was selected. The clans of Judah came forward and the Sarah heights were chosen. He had the Klan of the Sarah heights come forward by families in Zimri was chosen. You see this getting narrowed down. Joshua had his family come forward, man by man, and Achan, son of kami, the son of Zimri, the son of Zerah of the tribe of Judah was chosen.

Can you imagine being Achan? The numbers are dwindling down. You think you're going to get away with it, but the numbers keep getting dwindled and you keep finding yourself in the group that is found guilty until it comes down to you. And so what has he done? He admits to in verse 20 Achan replied. It is true. I have sinned against the lord, the God of Israel. This is what I have done. When I saw the plunder, a beautiful robe from Babylonia, 200 shekels of silver and a bar of gold weighing 50 shekels.

I coveted them. And so I took them. They are hidden in the ground inside my tent with the silver underneath. Achan admits to what he had done wrong. He had stolen some of the plunder. And when I read the story and I get to that verse in 20 and 21, when Achan admits to his faults. I can't help but think of the 36 families in verse 5 who lost their dad, their husband, their brother, because of the sin of Achan. Did you ever think about that?

36 families lost somebody because of Aken's, sin, you see, our sin affects everybody around us. We may think that they are just personal. But they always hurt the people around us, and that's why God is so serious about sin because our sins have consequences. Not just for us. And you might say passionate. That's great. That's the Old Testament. That's how things used to be.

But that's not the way it is anymore, so I bring you to 1 Corinthians, chapter 6, for the apostle Paul says, or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived, neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters nor adulterers, nor men who have sex with men, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor slanderers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God, but I love that it doesn't stop there.

He goes on and says, and that is what some of you were. That's what you were, that was what your heart was like, but you were washed. You were sanctified. You were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the spirit of our God. There is grace and forgiveness available to all of us, but we're called to change. Paul says that's what some of you were, but you're not that way anymore.

It reminds me of when the woman was caught in adultery and the spiritual leaders bring her before Jesus because they want her to be stoned because that's what the law calls for. And so Jesus says, let he who has not sinned, cast the first stone. And by one by one, they walk away until she's left by herself. And they have this conversation between Jesus and this woman caught in adultery and he says, I don't hold this against you. Now go and sin, no more.

There was a change that was to take place. He offered forgiveness. He offered grace, but she was to go away, changed. This doesn't mean that we never make mistakes again. It doesn't mean that we don't have an error in our life, but there's a huge difference between a mistake and a willful hidden sin as an act of

disobedience. Like Achan. These hidden sins become footholds for the enemy to use against us, and against others.

So what are we to do? My first prayer is that you and I would be cut to the heart. This is a phrase that's used in scripture that simply means that our hearts would be opened up to God, and we would allow him to do surgery in our lives. To cut out the garbage, to cut out the sin so that we could be made pure before him. This is something that I cannot do for you.

It's only available to you if you will submit to the spirit. It's so much more than just a new year's resolution. Those only have 9% success rate. They don't work. This is honestly an opportunity for you to be humble before God. It's an opportunity for you to take that which is secret and bring it into the light because I truly believe you will not conquer anything. Any struggle, any sin until it is brought in the lights.

I think of even the world system of how to overcome addictions and strongholds and the very first step of any of those programs is to admit you have a problem. That's bringing it to the light. I got a problem. I need help. Don't believe the lie that this only affects you. This is affecting everyone around you. It affects your family. It affects the church, and you're going to need help to overcome.

And that's why the church exists not to judge you to walk with you and to help you. I truly believe as a church. That our family of believers is going to be stuck where we are spiritually speaking. Until our secret sins are dealt with. We can't fake it anymore. So when should we do this? Of course, the answer is no.

Don't delay, don't believe the lie that tomorrow will be the day that it's going to change. Today is the day. This is the spot right now. I'm going to open the altar. For those of you that would like to come and if you're new here today and you don't know how this whole thing works, I know that there's fear. I grew up going to church and sometimes you went to the altar and you don't want somebody to come up and pray with you. You'd be petrified by that. For other people, your fear is you're going to come up to the altar and no one's going to come up and you're going to be left alone.

So we kind of split up our altar here. Here on the south side, if you just want to come and do your business with God, you come up here and nobody's going to bother you. There might be people next to you, but that's because they're doing their business with God. But maybe you do want somebody to talk to. Maybe you have some questions. Maybe you just want somebody to pray for you. You can come to this side of the sanctuary and somebody will come and pray with you. Whether it's myself and other pastor and elder at the church, we'll come up and just say, how can we pray for you? We will be there with you so you're not alone.

But I encourage you to do your business with God, nobody's going to judge, you're not going to be less than, this isn't about perfection. It's about your heart before God. Are you truly submitting to him? The worship team is going to come back up and lead us in a closing song. And the song is meant as a reflection. You don't need to sing the words to the song.

You can just take time to do your business with him. You can just listen. But do your business with God. Let me pray. Heavenly Father, this isn't an easy message to listen to. It's not necessarily uplifting and encouraging. It's difficult, but God, you call us to difficult things. And so I pray that you would speak to our hearts this morning.

That we would be cut to the heart. We would admit our struggles to you and to family and friends. So that we can get help. We don't have to keep living this life, the secret life of sin and of hurt and of pain. But instead, we can be healed. And so we asked this in Jesus name.

Amen,