

Life on Life 301 Class 9

Helping Individuals Out of Addiction

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William Orth

I. Addictions – What are they?

A. Addictions (“to be given over to, devoted”) are dependencies that have become “compulsive” (I feel I cannot stop) urges to repeatedly do what a person has every reason to know is harmful to them and maybe even to others. Psychological diagnoses for addiction fall into chemical addiction (substances such as tobacco, alcohol, prescription drugs) and non-chemical addiction (impulse control behaviors such as gambling, sex, eating, shopping.) In the first 350 to 400 years of the word, it meant a “leaning towards, a penchant for” something. At the turn of the 20th century (because of opium), the word became attached forever to the idea of not merely leaning towards, but “resolute devotion.” We could say that an addiction is any dependency which “renders a person unable to stop” and negatively affects their overall physical life, work/employment, health, relationships, and/or spiritual life.

B. The compulsive nature of addictions causes many in the psychological and medical community to refer to addictions as “illness” because, for the person under consideration, the urge is “beyond their control” to resist. The medical community decided in 1956 (in the area of alcoholism) that if someone should stop something that is hurting them and they “cannot make themselves stop,” there must be a physical rationale, and it is therefore an illness. To corroborate this philosophy, as genetic studies increased, scientists are finding certain genetic markers that appear to coincide with people who have certain compulsions (e.g., in chromosome 15, GABRG3 is found to be increased in certain patients who struggle with alcoholism; or alcoholics and binge food addicts are each found to have an increased density of D2 gene markers).

C. Renewal from Sexual Addictions is a national Christian ministry dedicated to helping people break unrelenting, repeated sexual sin. They say, as Christians, we consider a person’s sexual behaviors “problematic” if the behaviors are considered sinful in God’s eyes. They define “sexual addiction” as a (repeated sexual sin) behavior causing a significant impairment in the person’s ability to fulfill their major life roles such as employee, student, husband, wife, father, mother, etc. However, the behaviors are considered “addictive” when it is clear that the person cannot stop doing them, especially in spite of negative consequences. We could extrapolate this and apply it to all addictions.

D. Biblically speaking, addictions are not an illness since there is no physical cause, but rather, a worship disorder. (Ed Welch, “Addictions: A Banquet in the Grave”)

II. Principles of Counseling an Addicted Person

A. Any addict who really wants to change can change, even without spiritual growth. Let that encourage you, but do not let it make you judge the addict.

B. Nobody can help an addict who does not want to change. They may tell you they want to change, and they may even believe it; but James 4:8 reads, “... Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.” Most addicts are double-minded in the sense that they may want to change, but they also still want their source of peace/pleasure. Nowhere is double-mindedness more apparent than with an addict who says “I want to change” as he/she is on their way to the grocery store to buy more beer.

C. Addicts are the counselees who will most make you feel an urge to rescue, but to rescue is never to allow the turning point for an addict. If their will is not engaged, they have not left their devotion.

D. If you do not engage the will/behaviors, you usually cannot help an addict. Talk therapy (i.e., discussing one's problems/truths to overcome them) alone will essentially be of no help apart from the conversation mentioned in item "II.B." above. This means that if you counsel an addict, you have to help them utilize specific behavioral steps toward change. Our "Pursuing Person Purity" course, for example, has pages of specific steps the individual needs to follow if they are going to break out of their pattern of addiction. This is a hard area for some biblical counselors, and easy for others. It sometimes involves creativity. Remember, if you do this, you must follow through. Accountability is key!

E. Secrets and deception are huge with addicts. They will deceive you and they already have deceived themselves. Accountability is important, and extremely hard to get. Most addictions occur in the dark. That is, the individual can behave "well" when around others, but when alone, which is sometimes the vast majority of the time, the addictive behavior takes over and essentially captures them. Things like a daily tracking report of the negative behaviors they are now avoiding (e.g., did they fall?, and if so, when and how?) as well as the positive behaviors they are trying to pursue (e.g., daily time with the Lord, passages being memorized, keeping the house clear of all substances that they have struggled with, being open with spouse/accountability partner, physical exercise, etc.) are important.

F. Addiction begins losing its power when a person becomes more afraid of the addiction's power over them than of living without the addiction in their life.

G. You will be helping them deal with an idol (James 4:1-10). This thing to which they have been addicted to is something they have put in the place of God. It has become their security blanket. Remember, like all false gods, idols do not die easily. It must be replaced with the Lord.

H. Some addicts have been believers for a long time. Perhaps they believed the gospel as children before their addictive behaviors began. Sometimes, in such situations, it is hard for the addict to understand the great change that Christ did in their lives when they believed. However, when an addict comes to faith in Christ after addiction, they sometimes stop using immediately and therefore manifest a more dramatic and lifechanging response to their faith in Christ. After all, in conversion, everything necessary for change is included: conviction of sin, knowing and being truly known and loved, forgiveness, hope, new identity, broken power of sin, new reason to live, and the implanted Holy Spirit.

III. Key passages

A. Take the next 30 minutes in your group to discuss and jot down what each passage adds to the concept of addiction and to helping addicted people.

1. Proverbs 5:22 reads "His own iniquities entrap the wicked man, and he is caught in the cords of his sin."

2. Proverbs 18:1 reads "A man who isolates himself seeks his own desire; he rages against all wise judgment."

3. Isaiah 5:11 reads "Woe to those who rise early in the morning, that they may follow intoxicating drink; who continue until night, till wine inflames them!"
4. Romans 6:16 reads "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?"
5. Romans 7:14-15, 18-19 read "For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for the will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice."
6. I Corinthians 6:12 reads "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."
7. 2 Timothy 2:24-26 read "And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will."
8. 1 Corinthians 10:13 reads "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."
9. 2 Corinthians 5:17 reads "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."
10. Titus 2:11-13 read "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,"
11. James 1:12-15 read "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."

IV. Resources

- A. Ed Welch's booklet entitled "Just One More" and book entitled "Addictions: A Banquet in the Grave".
- B. "A Biblical approach to addictions" found at <https://www.lifeway.com/en/articles/pastoral-care-counseling-biblical-approach-to-addictions>

V. Homework

- A. Read the essay "Steps Which Help an Addicted Person".
- B. Take one of the case studies on page 7 and write a one-page T-chart summary (see page 8 for an example) of what you think is going wrong with the counselee and what the right direction for them is from a biblical stance.
- C. Optional: Write a one-page homework assignment for the counselee from your above chosen case study.

Steps Which Help an Addicted Person

1. Get them into community. They need healthy relationships/friendships. Ideally, these relationships will (1) be open and honest and (2) not be one way (i.e., all about them).
2. Help them identify every compulsive urge that captures them, and every behavior which is in service to satisfy the urge. This is the behavioral level that you need to help with. If they confess “compulsive immoral thoughts,” for example, is it accompanied by images or by masturbation or by inappropriate email or phone activity? If it is drinking, what do they drink the most, specifically when and what steps do they take to get it? They like beer, ok; but do they store two cases at a time in the basement or garage? Do they get some on the way home from work each day? Do they drink with someone or alone? Etc. If they commit to changing, and they say they want to stop going this way, they will have to stop specific behaviors which feed the addiction.
3. Help them see that addictive behaviors are choices. Even when they feel compelled (and they may be more physically compelled than other people), they have to see that each (fill in the blank: drink, sexual image on a computer, pill, flirtatious or intimate conversation with a member of the attracted sex not their spouse, cigarette, source of excess calories, manipulative effort at gaining control or influence, etc.) is a choice. They need to see and admit that to refrain from a drink (or whatever addictive tendency is theirs), is a choice available to them. They have to see that beating this thing involves saying “no” to their own desires (see, for example, Galatians 6:8 and/or Titus 2:12).
4. Help them personalize their relationship with God.
 - a. First, learn whether they have been born again. Ask them, “how did your life with Christ begin?” or “when did you come to know the Lord?” or “if you were to die tonight, would the Lord let you into heaven, and if so, why?”
 - b. If they say, “I grew up Methodist or Baptist or whatever, or was baptized at age 13, or realized I needed God in my life when I was 24 and...”, you have no indication that they are born again. This is essential because you are counting on the Holy Spirit convicting them and them understanding and being able to apply the Word of God, but they cannot if they do not know Him in the first place (see, for example, 1 Corinthians 2:11-14).
 - c. If they do not know the Lord, that is where to start. If they do, find out about their walk with God. Are they in the Word regularly? Do they have a regular time with God on a daily or near daily basis? What is their prayer life like? How personal is He to them, and how are they juggling life between this spiritual life that draws them towards humility and righteousness and this physical life that draws them towards willfulness and a destructive life that is anything but righteous?
 - d. Find out if they have been convicted by the Lord about this struggle, and if so, how they have responded to the Spirit. You may need to work with them about what conviction is (since you know that the Holy Spirit has been convicting them about this life-controlling sin).

Case Studies

1. Jerry Gray is 42 and is a maintenance engineer for Hood Dairy. He admits he drinks but does not think it is a problem except for his wife. He says both his parents drank excessively and so did one of his grandfathers, so he knows what a real drunk is. He has been told by his family doctor that alcoholism is in his genes, and to not be surprised if he becomes an alcoholic. He says he is better than he used to be. After his DUI five years ago, now he does not drink Sunday night to Tuesday night at all because he has to leave for work before 5am Monday through Wednesday. Jerry feels like his wife is way too picky and demanding, and just because she is religious, she thinks he has to be. He has tried church but does not care for it a lot. He says he became a Christian when he was 9 or 10 at his grandmother's church. They explained to him how Jesus had died on the cross for his sins, and that He offered eternal life to all who believe. He believes – he did then, and he does now; and when he was a teenager, he liked going to church. That is where he met his wife, but he does not want to take up his whole life with church like his wife does. He does not want to give up hunting and playing cards with friends. His wife has threatened to leave him if he does not stop drinking. He says that does not help. It just feels like control. He says he rarely drives if he drinks and will not drive if he is drunk. Staying at his brother's house a few times a month when they have been drinking is part of the problem with his wife, but he is trying to be safe...that is his motivation. He is coming to counseling to get his wife off his back.
2. Lisa Gray is 41 and has three children at home and a husband, Jerry. She works as a school nurse at the middle school near their house where their youngest daughter goes. She is thinking of leaving Jerry because she is tired of his drinking. He stays out 1 to 2 times per week at his brother's house – who he works with. He sometimes goes to the horse races at Charles Town. Twice in the past seven years, he lost his Christmas bonus (he gives her half). She is tired of his goofy humor when he has had 5 to 6 beers, and she feels like he does not take his responsibilities with their kids seriously. He did help coach their oldest son in baseball for a few years and is now the high school team's dugout score keeper, but he hardly does anything with their daughters other than attend the older one's basketball games and play video games with their younger. She has told him he better stop drinking or else she will not stay after June. Lisa's sister and best friend at work have told her that they would not blame her for leaving. They have told her that she should not waste her whole life sitting around with a guy who is going nowhere, and who would rather drink than be married. That has helped her confidence that she is doing the right thing. She even had a friend at church give her a book that talks about how divorce can be a necessary way of getting the attention of a guy who never listens.

T-Chart Summary

<i>Things they are doing, thinking, believing, or saying that are not biblical and not accurate</i> That is, the problem	<i>Things you could teach them, remind them, pray for, and show them which might help them</i> That is, biblical and practical direction/solution

Fellowship Bible Church
3217 Middle Road Winchester, VA 22602 (540) 662-7743 www.fbcva.org

1. Pray *specifically* for the counseling process at least 3x this week

- Pray for yourself** that God would help you see what He wants you to see about Him and His heart for you. Also pray that He would help you see yourself as He wants you to, including your true identity in Christ and where you may need to repent, change and grow.
- Pray for your counselor** to have wisdom and insight – to know where to work/what to do.
- Pray for your spouse** to be encouraged in the process and to see the changes being made in your life and pray as a couple (husband – you initiate).

Name(s):	
Date:	Session #:

2. Set up a journal to jot down things you are learning, specific prayers and Bible passages being read. Homework (unless it is to be turned in) should be done in this journal. In your journal, record principles you can apply to your life now. Be ready to share.

3. Attend: Sunday Worship Small Group Other _____
At next meeting, share very briefly from your journal what you got out of each of these.

4. Bible Reading: _____

Read the scripture passage(s) at least ___ different times (don't read it all in one sitting). **Record in journal** when you read and principles you can apply to your life right now.

5. Memorize word perfect and be ready to explain how it relates: _____

6. Read _____ **Listen to** _____ **Watch:** _____

- If reading, underline the _____ most important sentences to you and be prepared to share at next meeting what were your most important and why.
- If listening or watching, write a 100 word summary of the CD or DVD in your journal and share at the next meeting how it applies to your life.

7. Other: _____

Charges/Materials:
Next Appointment:

Our Part in Biblical Change: Trust + Prayer + Bible Study + Correct Thinking + Effort (I Tim. 4:6-10)