

# Overcoming Addiction

## 1 Corinthians 6:12–20 (ESV)

### ANNOUNCE:

- Next Sunday **Sept. 11** - we will have a Greece informational meeting immediately following second service.
- **Sept. 18** - immediately following second service, we will have an info meeting for those wishing to go on our 2023 Israel tour.

FYI, today we are talking about Overcoming Addiction. Let me say a couple of things before I get into the text. 1. This sermon can be seen as a primer, a crash course, on overcoming addiction, but it is the front door, not the entire house. If this strikes a cord with you, you will need to talk to someone. We may be able to help you, or we can help you discern some good next steps. But if you feel like this is everything you need to find freedom, you will be discouraged in a few weeks.

**CONTEXT:** We tend to have this idealistic view of Early Christianity as this pristine movement uninfluenced by any force other than the Holy Spirit. People will often say, *“if only we could go back to the early church way of doing things...”* To which I ask, “which of the early churches are you referring to?”

- The Church at **Jerusalem** - where God had to kill a couple who was lying to the Holy Spirit?
- The Church at **Galatia** - where the people had been bewitched into believing a different Gospel?
- The Church at **Ephesus** - who had fallen from their first love and embraced the false teachings of the Nicolaitans?
- The Church at **Corinth** - where the people were consorting with prostitutes and saying that it was perfectly Biblical and Christian?

You see the Early Church was this perfect pristine movement **for about 20 mins...** By the time the sun sat on the day of Pentecost, problems had begun. Struggles from within, attacks from without.

There are no perfect churches. That is why we say, *“if you find a perfect church, don’t dare join it, you are liable to ruin it”*.

Much of the NT is written in response to the various **attacks** coming against the church and **struggles** within the church.

- We see the **Judaizers** who taught that before one could become a Christian, he must first become a Jew, be circumcised and keep the Mosaic law.
- We see the **Sadducees** who were early materialists... they did not believe in anything more than what we can see and touch. No spirit, not angel, no demon, and no

resurrection.

- Then there were the **Gnostics**. Gnosticism in its most basic sense saw the Old Testament God as distinct and very different from the God of the New Testament. OT God was angry and judgmental, NT God was approachable and all about grace.

Thus, they taught that the OT scriptures were unhelpful and even dangerous. They emphasized the Gospel of Grace. Well that's fine, until you need to make decisions about moral issues without the OT Law?

Fortunately, the Gnostics believed they had a direct line to Heaven and received special revelation about such things, so just ask them and they can tell you if what you wanted to do was good or bad. Essentially making WHO the lawgiver??? The Gnostics. Very convenient huh?

In the Corinthian Church, like our churches today - the average person was living life, seeking to honor the Lord, just trying to make good decisions about life, family, etc.

The average church member was not necessarily **WELL VERSED** in all of the tenants of any particular heretical groups seeking to influence them.

Nevertheless, they were being **HEAVILY INFLUENCED** by the *propaganda* and subtle *messaging* of these various groups.

That's how it happens you see... it is very subtle... it is woven into the books you read, the shows you watch, the music you enjoy... until without knowing it you have been seduced into a heretical perspective.

One of the ways to recognize these subtle influences is to examine the slogans that people parrot... often without thinking... Those things we say as if they are gospel truth.

**ILLUSTRATION:** Here are a few things that are very unbiblical that we hear Christians parroting all the time.

1. **God helps those who help themselves** - there is some truth to that. God doesn't typically zap people into sanctification. But when it comes to redemption, God only helps those who recognize they cannot help themselves.
2. **God wants me to be happy** - To some degree that is correct. Christ came that you may have life and life more abundant. However, God desires you to experience the healthiest form of happiness and the most sustainable form of happiness. That is why he gives you moral boundaries. If you excuse inappropriate behavior with the idea that God wants us to be happy, you are typically violating the clear revelation of truth for the sake of a short term happiness... that will ultimately cost your long term fulfillment.
3. **God won't give you more than you can handle** - Well actually, that's just what God does. Christians are sort of like my work truck... they get the most traction

when they carry a heavy load. It is typically then that we are most dependent on Him to help us carry the load.

4. **Just follow you heart** - If you are living a sanctified, holy life, and you are committed to God's word, and you are experiencing the absolute fullness of the Holy Spirit, you can follow you heart, because typically God's desires will fill your heart. But when you say, "you know my marriage isn't what I thought it would be... and God wants me to be happy... so I'll get a divorce". Well you are proving Jeremiah's words - "the heart is deceitfully wicked, above all things..."

So you see, each of these have a grain of truth, but taken at face value, they are quite dangerous.

IN today's text Paul addresses two common heretical slogans floating around the church at Corinth. Both slogans had an element of truth, but as we know - Even truth carried to an extreme is a foundation for Heresy. Now, these will not sound quite as catchy in the English, but they were very popular in Paul's day. Here are the slogans:

***"All things are lawful for me..."***

***"Food for the stomach, the stomach for food...."***

- *The first* - ***"All things are lawful for me..."*** was a recognition all of the demands of the law had been fulfilled by Christ and Christ's righteousness has been imputed to me. Therefore now, I no longer live, "under the law" hoping to win God's approval. I have been given God's approval by faith in Christ... and now I can experience ultimate freedom. That idea was summed up in the slogan, "all things are lawful for me".
- *The second* - ***"Food for the stomach, the stomach for food...."*** Conveyed the idea that our natural appetites are God given. We crave food and God has provided... not just material sustenance that fills our stomach, but particular flavors and textures of food to make filling our stomach an actual delight.

Both slogans are recognizing a very beautiful truth. However, these slogans had been commandeered by the Gnostics and were being used to further their unbiblical agenda.

***"All things are lawful for me..."*** Since, I'm no longer under the OT law of God. I should feel absolutely no conviction or struggle about sinful decisions. And remember what they Corinthians were faced with? Prostitution... why not do my civic duty and consort with the prostitutes... I won't go to hell if I do.

***"Food for the stomach, the stomach for food...."*** You see, these desires are natural, God given, therefore they must be good and appropriate. God created both my desire and the woman to indulge my desire. It's simple biology. Why not do it?

So that is the context to which Paul is referring in **1 Corinthians 6:12-20**.

NOW - remember, we have to do the difficult work of bringing the gap between first century Greece and 21st Century America.

It is not typical or normal for people to consort with Prostitutes in our area. It happens... but it's not acceptable.

**Sexual sin however is VERY common.** With the advent of the **internet** and the access to **free porn, anonymous chat spaces** and **instant messaging**, perhaps there is no time in human history that more people are experiencing sexual compulsion and addictions that in our day and time.

For most Christians this practice is accompanied with **deep guilt and shame**. When we experience guilt and shame over our behavior we tend to do one of two things.

- a. We get help to **change our behavior**
- b. We reinterpret the scripture to **accommodate our behavior**.

#### **<sup>1</sup> The statistics for Christian men between 18 and 30 years of age:**

- 77% look at pornography at least monthly (15% of women)
- 36% view pornography on a daily basis
- 32% admit being addicted to pornography (and another 12% think they may be)

The internet has increased porn addiction 8 fold. <sup>2</sup>

So as you read passages like the one we are facing today - connect the dots to your struggle, the struggles facing you children, read this as a counselor and see how to coach people through these issues. ***Keep in mind the principles I'm addressing in this text apply to any sort of addiction.***

So how does Paul address the licentious sexual behavior in the Corinthian Church? He tells them to...

## **1. Radically Commit to Purpose**

### **1 Corinthians 6:12–20 (ESV)**

<sup>12</sup> "All things are lawful for me," (that's the slogan) but not all things are **helpful**.  
"All things are lawful for me," (there it is again) but I will not be **dominated** by anything.

So there are some things that will not send you to hell... but they will not help you and they will in fact enslave you. Let's continue...

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.restoringheartscounseling.com/2020/12/21/is-porn-addiction-a-problem-in-your-church/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.life.church/media/warrior/your-battle-plan/>

<sup>13</sup> “Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food” (that’s the second slogan. How does Paul answer??) —and God will destroy both one and the other.

So while it is true that God created your desires and God created that person who can meet the desires... that does not negate that God expects His creation to operate according to his design, and if we do not, there are consequences.

The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.  
<sup>14</sup> And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power.

He is saying.. remember your ultimate **meaning**, your **purpose**, why are you here on earth anyway?

Unwanted sexual behavior tends to happen when we are not clear about our direction, intent on our purpose, and focused on why God put us here.

**ILLUSTRATION:** Remember **David’s sin with Bathsheba**? There is a verse there that is often overlooked. **2 Samuel 11:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle...

So that is what Kings are supposed to do, go out and protect and defend their people. But David didn’t do that... he stayed home.. wasn’t gripped by a higher calling. It was then that he saw Bathsheba bathing.

What about you? Do you understand that God put you here with a purpose?

Pastor, how do I find my purpose? It begins with understanding **WHO you are**.

- You were created to know and **worship your Creator**. In other words, if you don’t do anything else tomorrow - you should get to know God and worship Him.
- If you have a family. Your second purpose is to **serve you family** in whatever role you have. If you are a dad, scripture calls you the head of the home. You are ultimately responsible for the direction of your family. If you are a wife and mom, you are the heart of your home. You have great control over the spiritual thermostat of your family. Kids, obey and honor your parents. That is part of your role.
- You are a **member of the body of Christ**. You are to do life in the context of a Christian community. You have responsibilities to use your gifts to serve the body of Christ.
- After all of those other things are healthy and in order... God probably has a **vocation** or a calling that you are supposed to engage in .

What do we do? We throw all of our effort into finding that vocation, then living out that vocation.. and we become very unhealthy in the process. **Reorder your life around God’s priorities**. He will make sure you find you're calling and have what it takes to live it out.

Perhaps you are here today and you have neglected your walk with the Lord, neglected your family, neglected your place in the church, maybe even became lazy and unengaged at work... ***no wonder you are struggling with a compulsion or addiction.***

Then what happens?

- Well now your wife is concerned about your marriage she's asking you to step up and lead... anxiety goes up... where do you turn? The addiction.. that one thing you can control.
- The boss is floating the idea of downsizing as the economy is struggling...anxiety increases... where do you turn? That thing that allows you to have some measure of control.
- For younger people, you go to school and you see that socialization is not easy. You dealing with a lot of immature people. Conflicts arise... where do you turn? To that app you parents don't know about. See how it works?

After it is over how do you feel? Clean? Accomplished? Better? No, you feel dirty and guilty... oh you don't want to feel that way, so where do you go? Back to the "fix".

The first principle is to radically commit to your purpose....live with intentionality.

**Aristotle said**, *"If a man knows not where he goes, no wind is favorable". By committing to your purpose, you will find that Heaven conspires to assist you.*

*Decide where you a going and get busy...*

## **2. Constantly Assess Your Identity in Christ**

<sup>15</sup> Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! <sup>16</sup> Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, "The two will become one flesh." <sup>17</sup> But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.

Ok, so think about this... two of the most important things for people to understand are: **who they are apart from Jesus and who they are in Jesus.**

This text emphasizes our union with Christ. That is very important.

You see, most unwanted compulsive behaviors find their roots in an **early sin we committed or a sin committed against us.** Typically, it was pretty traumatic. That is why christian counseling is very helpful. It typically begins by taking a journey through some dark places in our past.

- **CHILDHOOD TRAUMA** - We delve into early childhood trauma, we examine our relationship with our parents.

You see, your Father and Mother had a purpose and a calling... they were supposed to provide emotional and spiritual support for you. It may not be that they did anything abusive... but if they didn't engage you in conversation, if they didn't express acceptance and unconditional love... it can have a traumatic effect on a person.

That is not to say that your sin is their fault. But it is certainly a contributing factor that needs to be examined.

- **ABUSE - What if you experienced physical or sexual abuse?** No little girl or boy is designed to cope with that... that is NOT supposed to happen. So it is necessary to lance that wound and allow it to drain at times.

**ILLUSTRATION:** This is especially true for girls - if they were abused as a child, there is a tendency for them to become sexually compulsive as a way to gain control in an area where they felt no power.

- **UNHEALTHY ATTACHMENT** - Equally damaging is the parent who meets all of their emotional needs through their kids. Perhaps mom and dad's marriage isn't that great, so rather than getting help they begin to FIXATE on the kids and disorder their own lives. This can great damage a son's self image, understanding of women, and future marriage.
- **A NARCISSISTIC PARENT** - This is the parent that is so full of themselves that your existence is basically to make them feel better about their insufficiencies. So what do they do? They push you HARD. You are to be the best at EVERYTHING. Why? Maybe because they want you to meet your potential, or maybe because mom's ego is damaged and she is trying to relive life through you.

You have to examine these things... then you have to hold them into constant comparison to Christ and His work.

You see, he came to forgive you for sins you committed and to heal you from sins committed against you. He can show you how to deal with a difficult past.

*radically commit to your purpose.. assess your identity in Christ...*

### **3. Cultivate Cowardly Humility**

<sup>18</sup> Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.

You see, you are not called to stand boldly up to sexual sin and FIGHT. You are commanded to FLEE - run for your life.

The same is true for every other addiction.

- **Gambling** for some is a chemical dependency. They get a huge rush. That's why they can make enough money to live the rest of their life, but they will keep playing till it is all gone.

A gambling addict can't play the lottery, they can't dine in a casino, they can't download apps that allow them to play. They should put as much distance between themselves and that temptation as is possible.

- **Drugs and Alcohol** - Is it permissible biblical for a sober minded person to have a glass of wine? Certainly. There is no moral problem with that. But if you have developed an addiction and you find yourself coping with your problems through a bottle. FOR YOU IT IS NOT OK TO HAVE EVEN A GLASS.

Don't go to drinking parties, don't golf with friends who are always offering you a beer. Run from it.

- **Sexual Sin** - Remember Joseph and Potiphers wife? She made an advance and he RAN FOR HIS LIFE.

Why? Because you don't stand and fight such things... ***you flee***.

And here's the deal - don't assume that everyone has the same struggles you have. That is where legalism comes from.

I can't be around \_\_\_\_\_ so no body else should either.

If you have a hangup, have some humility enough to recognize that you have to order your life differently from other people.

That's what Jesus meant when he said, "If your eye offends thee, pluck it out".

### **Hebrews 12:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

*radically commit to your purpose.. assess your identity in Christ...cultivate cowardly humility...*

## **4. Experience the Fullness of the Holy Spirit**

<sup>19</sup> Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, <sup>20</sup> for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.



**A temple mindset is essential.** You see, because your body is a temple... everything you do with it touches the sacred. The food you eat, the books you read, the people you are intimate with.

Ultimately, addiction begins as a moral problem.. then it grows into a spiritual problem... then it evolves into a neurological problem.

Our brains are designed to simplify. We look for patterns. In many ways this is helpful.

**EXAMPLE:** If you have met 5 or 6 engineers in your life and you meet a 7th, what do you do? Your brain borrows from all of those previous experiences with engineers, copies and pastes a certain portion of data into this new relationship. You find yourself speaking a bit differently, maybe giving more support to your data, explaining things step by step.

But this tendency can also be unhelpful. I deal with this all the time. People meet me as a Pastor, and they immediately think back to the other 5 or 6 priests or pastor they have known, they copy and paste... and maybe never take the time to discover... I'm an anomaly. I'm a very unusual case for a Pastor.

Well what happens with addiction... when we perform a behavior little spider webs of electricity fire through neuropathways in our brain. With certain types of behavior this is accompanied with a rush of adrenaline or dopamine... and the threads grow larger.

**ILLUSTRATION:** have you ever seen kids sledding down a hill after a snow storm? You see this happen, eventually tracks form on the hill and all of the kids fall into the tracks.

That's is sort of like what's happening in your brain... A daily experience of the fullness of the Spirit... is like a fresh snow. The track is still there, but you have a fighting chance.

Now - notice how Paul connects addictive behavior to the fullness of the Spirit.

**Ephesians 5:18 (ESV)**

<sup>18</sup> And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit,

This is the sort of sermon that many of you need to listen to over and over and over.

Some of you - will need to call a counselor this week and make an appointment. Just making the call will make you feel different. Don't delay.