

Series: **Rising Above**

Title: **“Addiction”**

Text: **Romans 6:12-16**

Common addictions: Nicotine, alcohol, prescription drugs, illegal drugs, caffeine, gambling, food, internet, social media, gaming, shopping, pornography, entertainment, work.



- At its root, an addiction is a spiritual problem. It begins as an issue of the heart, as Jesus described in *Mark 7:20-23*: "And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man."
- The individual, from his heart, makes a bad choice which is followed by many more bad choices until a stronghold develops. Although addiction starts off as a spiritual heart condition, the addictive behavior quickly overtakes other aspects of the person's life, including creating psychological and physical dependencies.
- Addiction is a form of distorted worship. The individual worships or loves the addictive item, at the time of use, more than they do the Lord. This distorted worship leads to a disrupted decision-making process which keeps the person in bondage. The person desires freedom from his addictive lifestyle and many times will attempt to break free on his own with no long-lasting success. This leads to a self-defeating thought process which brings the sense of helplessness and hopelessness.
- **People in bondage to an addictive behavior primarily need Bible truth to discover the wonderful freedom that is found only in the Lord Jesus Christ.**

Scripture Passages

Isaiah 61:1 "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; Because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to them that are bound;"

John 8:32 "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

1 Corinthians 9:26-27 "26 I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: 27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

Galatians 5:1 "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."

Practical Ways to Rise Above Addiction

1. Know that Christ can _____ you from the _____ of addiction.

The cycle of addiction feeds on hopelessness. And each time a person caves to his addictive desires after trying to break free, the sense of powerlessness and hopelessness intensifies.

Christ, however, has the power to give freedom. He can and will help those who turn to Him in repentance and humility.

2. Turn to Jesus for real and true _____.

At its core, addiction is a search for a satisfaction that never comes and instead leaves shame and ruin in its wake. But Jesus does satisfy. As he told the woman at the well, "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14). And He tells us in John 10:10, "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." A significant part of overcoming addiction is growing in your relationship with God and discovering satisfaction in Him.

3. Confess the _____ involved and seek forgiveness.

The world tells us that addiction is only a physiological sickness and that the shame that comes with it is misplaced guilt. This view is demoralizing and hopeless for those who long for victory. Although Scripture does not directly name every form of addiction people experience, it does directly deal with the sinful desires and behaviors that are behind addictions.

Confessing these to God as sin and asking for His forgiveness is the only real answer to the shame of addictions. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). In most cases, there are also people who have been wronged through your sin. You need to seek their forgiveness as well.

4. Identify the _____ issues driving the outward behavior.

Addiction is a problem of the heart and reveals heart issues that need to be dealt with. For instance, someone who is addicted to pornography does not simply need to stop looking at porn; he needs to deal with the lust in his heart. Someone who is addicted to self-harm does not only need to stop cutting; he needs to identify and deal with the root issues that make cutting appealing--perhaps a desire for control or a way of dealing with guilt. Identifying heart issues will take time and may come in layers. The help of a Scripture-filled, discerning Christian and a reliance on the Holy Spirit will be needed.

5. Develop a biblical strategy to _____ temptation.

As you identify the specific temptations that point you toward addictive behaviors, you can develop a response to those before yielding to the temptation to engage in the addiction. The Bible promises, *"There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it"* (1 Corinthians 10:13).

A biblical strategy for dealing with temptation includes:

- **Memorizing Scripture** related to one's area of struggle and turning to it in the moment of temptation.
- **Identifying times, places, people, or other triggers** that lead to temptation and either avoiding them or preparing ahead how to respond to them. Romans 13:14 instructs, "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."
- **Committing to accountability** with a godly Christian regarding this struggle.

6. Replace _____ habits with God-honoring _____.

Throughout the New Testament, believers are commanded to put off sins and then put on godly habits.

-Ephesians 4:22-32, Colossians 3:8-10

Develop God-honoring habits that will replace and displace your previous addictive habits. You might replace nights at the bar with a planned service project with friends. Or you might create a physical replacement of cigarettes in your pocket with cards with Scripture verses.

7. Strive for _____.

Some addictions won't disappear overnight even with the strongest of resolutions. Each day, strive to do better than the day before. You'll find that with time and consistently saying no to temptation, you will eventually overcome your addiction. Strive for progress, not perfection.

8. Get _____ when you _____.

Consider your journey of overcoming addiction as scaling a mountain. In this climb, you'll encounter sections more treacherous than others. It's crucial to stay resolute and continue your ascent, even if you find yourself slipping or falling. Each step, no matter how challenging, brings you closer to the summit of recovery.

Proverbs 24:16 "For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief."