

## **Shattered Chains, Transformed Hearts: Counseling Women (Teens – Adults) Struggling with Addiction**

### I. Introduction

Thank you for joining us as we take a look at the power of the Holy Spirit to shatter chains and transform the hearts of women who are “addicts”.

### II. Understanding Addiction

#### A. What is Addiction

1. Biblical definition: The “persistent, *habitual* thoughts, words, and actions associated with excessive pleasure-seeking, which is *known* by the user to be harmful and is ultimately a sinful, willful choice to disobey God whether a person acknowledges it or not.” –Dr. Mark E. Shaw

*And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit...* (Ephesians 5:18)

#### Debauchery

- Sinful behavior, especially with regard to sex and alcohol. (The Complete Christian Dictionary for Home and School)

#### Comparison

- A person intoxicated with wine acts in an unnatural manner that is evil; a person filled with the Holy Spirit acts in an unnatural manner that is good. The idea is to be continuously filled with the Holy Spirit. A believer can never obtain more of the Holy Spirit, for He indwells the Christ-followers life in all His fullness, the Holy Spirit can get more of the believer ... He can exercise complete control of the life that is yielded to Him. (The New Testament and Wycliff Bible Commentary)

Think “sin” when you think “addiction.”

### III. Impact on the Addict’s Family and Loved Ones

Having a loved one who is sinking beneath the weight of addiction profoundly impacts the entire family. Substance use and addiction can change family dynamics, weaken communication, and erode trust. It can often feel like you're at a loss, unsure where to turn or what to do next.

Families affected by their loved one's addiction often experience anger, depression, anxiety, arguments, and emotional outbursts. Sometimes, they may also have to take on certain responsibilities. For example, children may have to take on parental roles to take care of a parent struggling with addiction.

Other ways addiction can affect families include physical health problems, sleep disturbances, anxiety, legal and financial troubles. The stigma around addiction can often make families feel ashamed, leading them to isolate themselves. They might minimize contact with friends or the community for fear of judgment and discrimination.

However, family members can play a crucial role in encouraging a loved one to achieve and maintain sobriety. By finding the right resources, support, and treatment, you can help your loved one overcome addiction, creating a more biblically sound environment.

#### IV. Unique Challenges Women in Addiction Face

Understanding the unique challenges in women's addiction involves recognizing several factors that distinguish their experiences from those of men. Here are some key points to consider:

##### A. Biological and Psychological Factors:

1. **Biological Differences:** Women generally metabolize alcohol and drugs differently than men due to variations in body composition, hormonal fluctuations, and enzyme activity. This can lead to differences in addiction progression, tolerance levels, and treatment response.

##### B. Psychological Differences:

1. Women may have different psychological triggers for substance use, such as trauma, interpersonal relationships, and stressors related to caregiving roles. These factors can significantly influence the development and maintenance of addiction.

C. Sociocultural Influences:

1. **Social Stigma:** Women often face more significant social stigma and shame associated with addiction, which can prevent them from seeking help or disclosing their struggles.
2. **Family and Social Roles:** Traditional gender roles may place additional pressure on women, affecting their self-esteem and coping mechanisms. Expectations related to caregiving, homemaking, and nurturing roles can contribute to stress and potentially drive substance use.

D. Treatment Barriers:

1. **Accessibility:** Women may face barriers to accessing addiction treatment, including financial constraints, lack of childcare options, and limited availability of gender-specific programs.
2. **Treatment Effectiveness:** Historically, addiction treatment has been designed primarily based on research conducted with male subjects. As a result, treatment approaches may not always address the specific needs and experiences of women effectively.

E. Social Support and Recovery Needs:

1. **Support Networks:** Women often prioritize relationships and social connections. Building and maintaining supportive networks are crucial for their recovery journey.
2. **Transformation Environment:** Creating a safe and supportive environment that addresses women's unique needs, safety, childcare facilities, enhances their recovery outcomes.

V. Wounds Addicted Women Carry

1. Spiritual Wounds

**Religious Trauma:** Spiritual wounds occur when authority figures misuse God's name for self-centered purposes or twist religious teachings to cause harm. This can lead to toxic shame, fear of God's wrath, and confusion about one's worth.

**Distrust of God:** Childhood experiences shape our perception of God. If parents talked about God's love but didn't make time for the child, they may perceive God as distant. Similarly, if love was performance-based, they might see God's love the same way.

Unresolved Pain: Specific words, spiritual practices, or Bible verses may trigger painful memories associated with spiritual wounds.

## 2. Emotional Wounds

Rejection: Being turned away or deemed not good enough can evoke intense feelings of inadequacy and loneliness. *Over time, unaddressed rejection can lead to an avoidance of risk-taking or forming deep relationships due to fear of further rejection.*

Betrayal: Betrayal shakes the very foundations of trust we build with others. Whether it's a friend sharing secrets or a partner breaking loyalty, the effects can be devastating. Healing from betrayal involves rebuilding trust, both in others and oneself<sup>1</sup>.

Abandonment: The fear of being alone is triggered by physical or emotional abandonment. Early-life absence of a parent or emotional unavailability can lead to feelings of instability and insecurity, influencing future relationships<sup>1</sup>.

Depression: Deep emotional wounds, especially those involving loss or betrayal, often lead to depression. Symptoms may include a lack of energy, changes in appetite, sleep disturbances, and loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities.

## VI. Consider These Things

### A. Is it a **disease**? Or **Personal Responsibility**?

But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death (James 1:14-15).

You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God (James 4:4).

### B. Your Identify

- a. If “addiction” is a disease, what is your identity? (12-steps) identity is in your “addiction”? “I’m Shirley. I’m an alcoholic.”

Well, if our identity is our sin, why don’t we say

- “I’m Shirley. I’m a liar.”
- “I’m Shirley, I’m a gossip.”

... or whatever else our besetting sin is.

- b. As Christ-followers, biblical principles/teachings bring hope for real change and a NEW IDENTIFY in Christ:

*Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. 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 (I Corinthians 6:9-11).*

### C. Recovery vs Transformation

- a. Recovery – regaining or recovering to where you were before your “addiction”
- b. Transformation -

*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect (Romans 12:1)*

Greek **transformed** – **metamorphoo** (μεταμορφώω).

**Metanoia** is a Greek term that denotes a transformative change of heart.

- English terms “metamorphosis” and “metamorphize.”
- An inward change brought about completely apart from the power of the individual.

- New Testament, it's used to describe the transformation of Christ-followers into the same image of excellence that shines in Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18). So, it signifies a profound and significant change!

## VII. Goal of Biblical Addictions Counseling

### Heart Transformation

- The “heart” represents the inner core of our being—the seat of desires, affections, and motivations.
- Application occurs when biblical truths move from our minds to our hearts, resulting in changed behavior and attitudes.
- It involves living out faith, obeying God’s commands, and reflecting Christ’s character in our daily lives.

## VIII. Helping Women Overcome

### A. Tools for Overcoming Their Addiction

- a. Scripture: Read, study, memorize, contemplate, and meditate. Learn to apply biblical principles practically.
- b. Prayer: For transformation and strengthening our relationship with God.
- c. Community: Finding support and accountability and engage with others who challenge and encourage you in your walk with Christ.

### B. Daily Decisions

- a. Practical examples of integrating faith into everyday choices.
- b. Balancing faith with work, relationships, and personal life.