

## DOING AWAY WITH ADDICTION

*The power to break an addiction comes through understanding the problem and depending on God.*

### What is an addiction?

A technical definition of an addiction might be this: “A pathological relationship to a substance or activity.” This means that the addiction is in charge of a person’s life. A certain practice or substance has mastered him. He is no longer in control. So overwhelming is the pull of the addiction that the person can’t resist it. He cannot keep from doing it.

### What are recognized addictions?

Overeating Gambling

Drug use

Sex Smoking Alcohol Shoplifting Pornography Compulsive spending

A person who is controlled by a practice or substance has been fooling himself, sometimes for years, so it’s hard for him to admit that he is addicted. Here are some typical marks of an addict:

1. **Distortion.** The fantasy world of an addict is more important to him than the real world. As he lets his thoughts go, he becomes convinced that the scenario he constructs to support his addiction is true. When shoplifters are caught, for example, they are often startled. The reality of the truth that they were stealing had been distorted. They had not realistically considered that they might face arrest or jail or embarrassment – the real consequences of their behavior.

2. **Wrong thinking.** Along with distortion is a breakdown in logical thinking. The addicted person, for example, refuses to link alcohol

abuse with impaired driving. Or sexual sin with a threat to his marriage. Or compulsive spending with bankruptcy.

The Lord was crystal-clear in the Scriptures in setting forth the principle of sowing and reaping. But the addicted person won’t accept it because he isn’t thinking straight. He may often say when caught, “I can’t believe it was me doing this.”

3. **Denial.** The person who is addicted will go through an elaborate process to deny the reality of his addiction. He may justify his behavior on the basis of a difficult job, an illness, or his past. Or he will say that he can control his habit or that he can stop it whenever he wants. If suspected, he may lie about his involvement. Only a crisis will force him to admit his condition.

4. **Delusion.** The addicted person actually begins to believe the lies he tells himself to justify his habit. He will believe his statements to himself such as, “A little drink never hurt anyone.” “I’ve been working hard, I’ve earned it.” “Most women are asking to be raped.” “I can take it

or leave it.” “I’m not really as heavy as people say I am.” “If you had to live with my wife, you’d drink too.”

The person can no longer manage his own thoughts. He is living a double life - the life of an addict. He says and believes and thinks one thing - but does another.

### **The Four Phases of Addiction**

Most persons who are addicted go through a cycle that leads to their downfall.

1. **Preoccupation.** While the addict is at work or home or school, the addiction begins to control his mind. His thoughts become completely absorbed with the next drink, the next shoplifting foray, or the next eating binge.

2. **Ritualization.** The addicted person will often follow the same pattern of behavior leading to an indulgence.

3. **Indulgence.** This is the actual participation in the addiction. Drinking the booze. Using the crack. Taking the merchandise. Viewing the pornography. The addict can’t stop doing it. Can’t control it. It happens.

4. **Despair.** Once the act is committed, a feeling of hopelessness sweeps over the person. He feels guilt. Self-pity. Often self-hatred. It lasts for awhile. Then the addict’s thoughts begin to turn again to his addiction, and the cycle repeats itself.

### **Breaking the Addiction**

An addiction can be broken, but it takes

humility, determination, effort, and help from others. The hope for a person who is addicted comes from two principles of the Bible.

1. **The presence of the Holy Spirit.** Paul wrote, “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?” (1 Corinthians 6:19). The believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit – by God Himself. This means that God Himself is his ally in fighting his addiction.

2. **The promise of victory** Paul also wrote, “For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace” (Romans 6:14).

The promise of the Bible is that we do not need to be dominated by sin. The power of Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit within can help us overcome every sin.

Some organizations and counselors have made tremendous progress in helping people break free from an addiction. Here are the general steps these groups or individuals recommend.

1. **Admit that you have an addiction and that you are powerless to break it.** Apply Paul's words "For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10) to your situation.
2. **Believe in the power of God.**
3. **Turn yourself over to Him.**
4. **Be specific in confessing to Him.** Say, "I stole that blouse." "I am a drunk." "I am addicted to pornography." Don't stop with anything short of calling your sin exactly what it is.
5. **Ask God for help.**
6. **Stop blaming others.**
7. **Make amends for all wrongs.**
8. **Promptly admit all relapses.**

You cannot conquer an addiction by yourself.

You need help. Your husband, your wife, your pastor, or a Christian counselor will give you that help. So will a group that specializes in your problem.

Don't wait another moment. Humble yourself. Be honest with God. Take the first step. Call someone for help. Do it now! You can overcome the despair of addiction.

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