

# **A**ddictions

What's YOUR Idol?



***A Discipleship Manual:***

*Looking at your own addictions...*

*And helping others with theirs!*

## Introduction:

I am not an addictions expert, although I have worked with many addicts. Primarily, I am a student and teacher of God's word. The greatest part of this training is taken from Ed Welch's book referenced in the Bibliography, and all credit is given to him. This material has been reviewed by an Occupational Therapist, the Pastor and a Biblical Counselor and so I am confident that despite my own limitations what is contained herein will be helpful whether you suffer from addictions yourself or are hoping to help a loved one who does.

*Jaki North*

*The 12 Ministry Co-ordinator.*

*“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”*

**2 Timothy 3:16-17**



## AIM:

To Define Addictions Biblically



## Tools:

Addictions-A Banquet in the Grave Ch1

You Can Change Ch1

## Overview:

We will be using the book Addictions, a Banquet in the Grave as the guidelines for this study. Welch is a prolific writer on subjects such as addiction and depression. There's one place that I disagree with him and its right here in chapter 1. He says we "*tend to look at scripture for the life to come, but... to secular psychotherapies for guidelines on how to live successfully now* (p5). However, I believe that we tend to look at scripture without really applying it to our lives at all, not even to the life to come! How many people do you see attending church that are really living for the future? Aren't most of them making the most of what they have now?

***Our job then, as Christians is to apply biblical principles to our lives now – but also to consider what that means in light of our future glory, living in eternity with our Lord and Father.***

### Believing The Lie:

There is often a disconnect between what we believe as a theological truth and what we actually do:

**Example 1:** *I believe Jesus is Lord, but fail to trust him with my money. When it comes to money I am in control and providing for my own future!*

**Example 2:** *A husband can say he loves his wife, but his actions reveal that he loves pornography or flirting with women at work!*

On the one hand I know that Jesus died and was raised so that I might live. So Jesus deserves my devotion and obedience. But on the other I control certain areas of my life. I make the rules, not God. Rather than walking in humility and gratefulness to God, I have made myself a god... This is exactly the same sin that brought down the whole of humanity in the story of Adam and Eve!

### Believing The Truth:

Sin promises the world, which it never actually delivers. The price we pay for pursuing it is enormous and played out in broken relationships, broken lives and broken hopes. The ultimate price of sin is death!

#### God's invitation is so much better!

*"Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come buy and eat! Come buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labour on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare."*

(Isaiah 55:1-2)

## A Definition:

Addiction is the term we will use to describe certain experiences and behaviours. We are going to use Ed's definition which is a biblical view that differs from the secular one.

### Describing Addiction:

Addicts feel as if they are trapped and out of control. They feel like worshippers of what will turn out to be a most dangerous devotion. It is a hunger and thirst that can never be quenched, as they cling to addictive behaviours even when they don't produce the relief, pleasure or excitement anticipated. Addicts feel like they are in bondage, out of control, enslaved, stuck and without any hope of ever being free!

Since we live in a culture of self absorption, it should be no surprise that addictions are everywhere:



### Towards a Solution:

All of the above sinful behaviours arise because we don't worship God as we should. The answer then, is faith and repentance!

### Oh yeah, it's that easy!

If you have ever suffered from an addiction (*and I'm sure every one of us has*), you have probably tried to stop that sinful behaviour, and you've probably done that because the consequences have started to hurt you. And, you've probably noticed that attempts in the past were always doomed to failure. We know that left to our own devices, we generally do the wrong thing! Evan Paul said he does what he does not want to do and does not do what he does want to do!

**It is God that changes us, but we participate in the process through faith & repentance.  
Addressing our hearts (what we worship), rather than the consequences of our sin.**

## Grapple with

### Facing our Addictions

---

---



#### Facing Your Own Addiction:

- 1) When do your own appetites for food, sex, drugs, control, attention (*or other things...*) grow to a point where they can control you?
- 2) Can you name occasions when you have deceived others to protect a particular behaviour that you don't want others to know about?
- 3) Where does Scripture figure in your thinking. Do you feel that addictions are physical, spiritual or a combination of the two?

#### Helping Others:

- 1) Having seen your own tendency to be ruled by your own desires, does that make it easier to understand the struggles of the person to whom you are ministering?
- 2) If addiction is a slavery to sin, do you understand how prayer must be central to your assistance to any addict?
- 3) How will you ensure that your assistance is dependant upon prayer?

*<sup>14</sup>We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. <sup>15</sup>I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. <sup>16</sup>And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. <sup>17</sup>As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. <sup>18</sup>For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. <sup>19</sup>For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. <sup>20</sup>Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. <sup>21</sup>So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. <sup>22</sup>For in my inner being I delight in God's law; <sup>23</sup>but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. <sup>24</sup>What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? <sup>25</sup>Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.*

*Romans 7:14-25*



## AIM:

Are addictions due to illness or sin?



## Tools:

Addictions-A Banquet in the Grave Ch2

## Sin Sickness or Both?

There is a debate between the secular view and Christian doctrine regarding the nature of addiction. Sin has become a dirty word in a world where self-esteem and self-worth are considered psychological essentials!

However, sin is a reality and if we ignore it we are merely engaging in self deception that will ultimately lead to destructive consequences. We have to take responsibility for ourselves and for our decisions. But as helpers we must also acknowledge that as we say that someone is wrong, we must be willing to confess our own wrongdoing, else we become hypocritical and judgementalists.

### 1 Sin is ultimately against God:

Sin can be perceived as a kind of behaviour that has the potential to ruin lives, but we have to acknowledge that ultimately all sin is against God. Sin is our primary problem and has been since Adam and Eve doubted God's word so long ago in the Garden of Eden.

### 2 The good news:

If sin is not our biggest problem, then the gospel is emptied of its power, Jesus died for nothing! His gospel of the forgiveness of sins through belief in his sacrificial death and resurrection has to be the single most important event in the history of mankind.

### 3 What the Bible says:

Take a look at the following Scripture:

<b>Noah</b>	Genesis 9:18-27
<b>Lot</b>	Genesis 19:30-38
<b>Elah</b>	1 Kings 16:9
<b>Nabal</b>	1 Samuel 25:36

### 4 Proverbs 23:29-35 says:

*Who has woe? Who has sorrow?  
Who has strife? Who has complaints?  
Who has needless bruises? Who has bloodshot eyes?  
Those who linger over wine,  
who go to sample bowls of mixed wine.  
Do not gaze at wine when it is red,  
when it sparkles in the cup,  
when it goes down smoothly!  
In the end it bites like a snake  
and poisons like a viper.  
Your eyes will see strange sights,  
and your mind imagine confusing things.  
You will be like one sleeping on the high seas,  
lying on top of the rigging.  
"They hit me," you will say, "but I am not hurt!  
They beat me, but I don't feel it!  
When will I wake up  
so I can find another drink?"*

### 5 Alcoholism is a Lordship problem:

Do you desire God above all else? At the root, addicts are worshipping another god. Their idol is pursued as an indulgence to one's own desires, whether that desire is pleasure, forgetting, freedom from pain (or any number of other escapes).

## But I didn't choose to become an addict !

### *How can people be held responsible when they are not in control?*

Some would argue that addiction may start as a sin but that it transforms into a disease, but the disease model doesn't really fit - if you catch a virus, you have no choice, in fact you'd be glad to be rid of it! Drug use, porn addiction or alcoholism doesn't just happen – there is always some sort of benefit.

#### 6 The desire to drink has purpose:

- To forget
- To punish (hurt those who have hurt us)
- To cure timidity
- To boost ego / self-image
- To manage emotions
- To fit in
- To prove to yourself you're in control (no one else tells you what to do)!
- To keep loneliness at bay.

*For the addict, slavery with the object of desire is preferable to freedom without it.*

#### 7 A disease metaphor doesn't account for:

- Identical twins where one is an addict and the other is not.
- Lower socio-economic statistics which show a greater propensity for addiction, but also for abstinence.
- There can be a genetic pre-disposition for sure – *but there is a massive difference between being influenced by genetics and being determined by it!*

*The disease theory persists because secular scientists reject the concept of sin. If Scripture is going to be relevant to struggling addicts it must offer a full explanation for their experience!*

#### 8 CRAVINGS

**Cravings (desires) are very real. There are distinct types:**

- Whilst abstaining
- After the first 'hit'
- Whilst dependant



#### Cravings whilst abstaining:

A desire for the 'forbidden' can be triggered by many things; boredom, happiness, loneliness, a remembered smell – But when does a desire become overwhelming?

It is possible to say 'no' to a substance loved in the past, but doing so is difficult, where there is opportunity without accountability!

***This means it's our desires not our genes!***

#### Cravings after the first hit:

AA teaches that once you have the first drink, the second is inevitable. This motto sometimes backfires when the addict having stumbled 'gives in'!

**To drink heavily takes time, and resources, it is not inevitable after one drink!**

#### Cravings when physically dependant:

Here the physical is primary, so focussing on the spiritual would be like reading Scripture to a man dying from blood loss. The biblical approach does not deny the physical dependancy; we are not disembodied souls!

**Our body doesn't make us sin, our hearts do!**

## Physical V's Desire:

If addiction is physical it cannot be changed, merely tolerated or controlled.



If addiction is physical we are not motivated to engage in the spiritual battle. We will listen to medicine, not to the Bible.



If addiction is purely physical, we limit Jesus as our helper.

An idolatrous heart can be transformed by sanctifying grace through the Holy Spirit and can receive spiritual resources to fight the battle.



Knowing that we have a self-centered heart should compel us to examine ourselves and to repent of it.



The self-centered addict cries out to Christ the Lord, redeemer, shepherd, conqueror and king!

### 9 More on slavery!

**Sin is our conscious rebellion against God** – but it has many faces. The Bible describes sin as a power outside of ourselves that binds us, taking control and enslaving us. Without the power and grace of God we are powerless to conquer it!

**Sin victimizes and controls us (John 8:34)**

**Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin."**

**Sin captures and overtakes (Gal. 1:6)**

**Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently.**

**Sin takes control away from us (Rom 7:15, 17)**

**I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do... As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me.**

**Isaiah uses a disease metaphor (Isa. 1:5-6)**

**Why should you be beaten anymore?**

**Why do you persist in rebellion?**

**Your whole head is injured,  
your whole heart afflicted.**

**From the sole of your foot to the top of your head  
there is no soundness—**

**only wounds and welts**

**and open sores,**

**not cleansed or bandaged**

**or soothed with olive oil.**



### 10 The Good News!

Because we are responsible for the slavery of sin we can be empowered by God's grace to turn from it!

***Sin is simultaneously slavery as well as overt rebelliousness and selfishness.***

We can't deny the out-of-control nature of sin, else it would be easy to stop! We don't deny external influences such as genetics, upbringing, economics etc., but ignoring personal responsibility leaves addicts helpless!

The Bible is broad in its definition of this particular sin:

*"Addiction is bondage to the rule of a substance, activity, or state of mind, which then becomes the center of life, defending itself from the truth so that even bad consequences don't bring repentance, leading to further estrangement from God."*

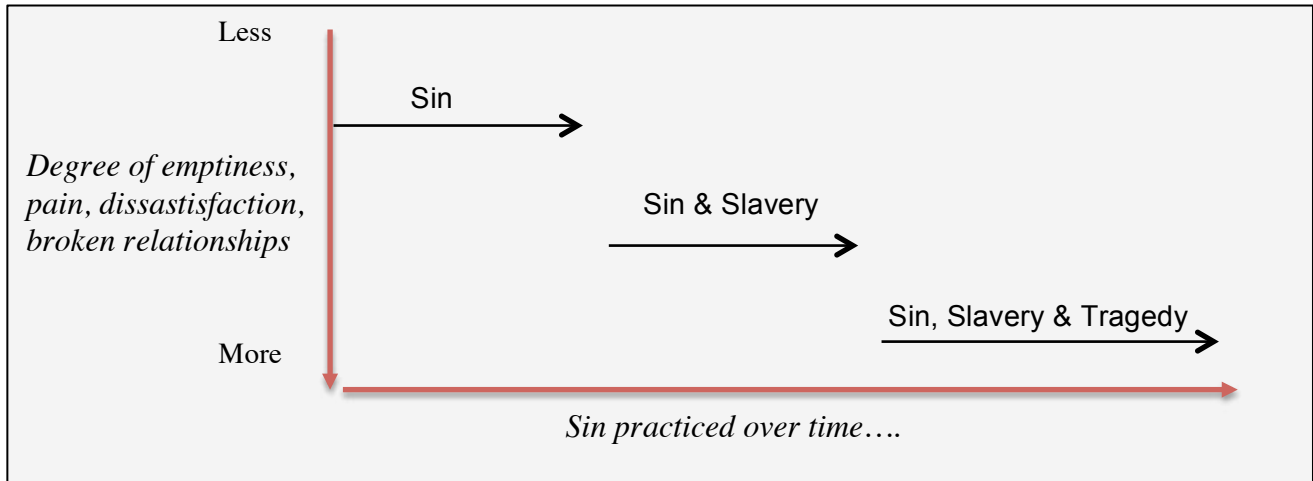


## Grapple with:

### Understanding Sin and Our Hearts



#### Sin and its Consequences:



#### Facing Your Own Addiction:

- 1) The goal of this module is not to minimize the effect of the body on addictions, but rather to emphasize the role of the heart! Look at Matthew 9:1-8 (a) What is the man's biggest problem? (b) Is his physical condition ignored?
- 2) As you struggled with addictions did you have a sense that you were still growing spiritually? Were you still growing in repentance, faith and obedience? When we have a disease we can still be growing in our Christian walk, but addictions are not compatible with spiritual growth!
- 3) Has your addictions program encouraged confession of sin to the Lord? Try each day to confess your sins, God is quick to forgive us if we do (1 John 1:9).
- 4) Do you feel hopeless and joyless all the time? Confession will help (Psalm 32).

#### Helping Others:

- 1) Do you notice a pattern in the way that sin effects us? The consequences of the person you are helping may be more obvious than your own but there will be consequences to your own sins. Take some time to consider the similarities of your own sins (pride, judgementalism, anger, envy) rather than the differences.
- 2) Have you ever approached the addict in a way that was hypocritical, judgmental, sinfully angry, or impatient? If you love someone who struggles with addictions, you have inevitably sinned against them very recently. Pursue them and ask for forgiveness..



## AIM:

Using Metaphors to increase understanding?



## Tools:

Addictions-A Banquet in the Grave Ch3

## Biblical Metaphors:

Disease has been used as the controlling metaphor, but it is not always helpful:

1

### Idolatry

Who do you worship? The Creator, the divine king or worthless idols? Idolatry is the worship of things that were created good, but that have become 'ultimate things'.

These 'things' that we worship are really satisfiers of deeper idols... Our own hearts, our own desires!

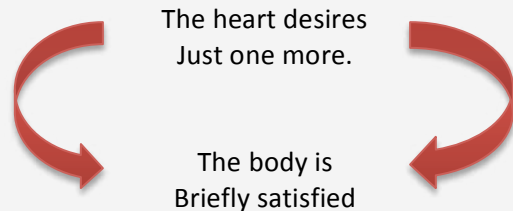
The purpose of idolatry is to manipulate the idol for our own benefit. We want to use the idols to give us 'power, acclaim, adoration, control etc.' However, rather than mastering our idols, they end up controlling us.

Our idols end up dominating us because of a powerful but quiet presence that hides behind them... Satan himself! *"Our struggle is not against flesh and blood [material substances] but against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."* (Eph. 6:12)

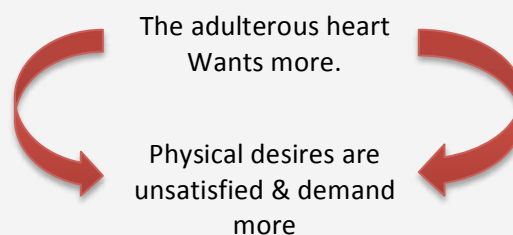
Idols that hook our bodily passions, have the potential to grasp ever more tightly.



### Stage 1: Rebellion



### Stage 2: Bondage



Sin by its nature is covert. Addicts generally don't make overt decisions. Idols have the power to hide the full force of their destructive nature from the addict.

If we are to help addicts we need something more powerful than pleading, tears, threats and arguments – we need the power of the Gospel.

**Other therapies offer sobriety, but only the good news of Jesus Christ is powerful enough to liberate us heart and soul!**

## Biblical Metaphors 2 of 3

**2 Adultery**

Adultery emphasizes the more intimate features of idolatry.

*My wife said it was either the cocaine or her! Before she had even finished, I told her to think carefully about what she was saying. It was clear to me I had no choice. I love my wife but I'm not going to choose anything over cocaine. It's sick, but that's what things had come to. Nothing and nobody comes before my coke!*

The adultery image appears repeatedly through the old testament, particularly in Samson's story (Judges 13-16). He choose foolish relationships, but with Delilah his lust defied all reason. She betrayed him over and over again, yet Samson consistently fell for her deception. His desire blinded him long before the Philistines put out his eyes!

Why do adulterers risk everything for an inconsequential fling? It all seems so foolish afterwards, and there is no satisfactory answer because sin is not rational. It doesn't look ahead, and it doesn't consider consequences all it knows - **I WANT MORE!**

**4 Being attacked by a beast**

One metaphor that emphasizes the victimising nature of idolatry is of being captured by a wild beast. "The devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8), and likewise, "Sin crouches at the door and desires to master us" (Genesis 4:7). Sin and Satan victimise us, they enslave us to their will and dominion.

**At first glance the beast could be alcohol, pornography or Tik but when we look more closely we recognise that the enemy is within. It is the sin in our own hearts, especially when we allow our hearts to be influenced by Satan himself. We must therefore gear ourselves up for a fight – a fight for which God has prepared us, and given us all that we need to conquer (Eph. 6).**

**3 Foolishness**

The book of Proverbs shows us that in contrast to the wise person, the fool, though wise in his own eyes, acts in ways that are completely ridiculous.

*They know nothing, they understand nothing; their eyes are plastered over so they cannot see, and their minds closed so they cannot understand.. He feeds on ashes, a deluded heart misleads him! (Isa. 44:18, 20).*

- The fools attention wanders never focused on wisdom (Prov 17:24).
- The fool ignores all consequences (Prov 9).
- The fool is persuaded that their way is right, so there is no need to listen to others (Prov 14:12, 28:26).
- The fool thinks they will get away with it, however exposure is inevitable (Prov 15:3).
- He goes with his feelings, rather than reason (Prov 14:8).
- Sometimes the fool feels both consequences, and the pain (s)he has caused others (Prov 17:25), but even these don't serve to deter (Prov 27:22).
- Their destructive behaviour continues because folly is enjoyed (Prov 26:11).

## Biblical Metaphors 3 of 3

5 As an Illness

Scripture also uses illness as a metaphor for sin:

*Your whole head is injured, your whole heart afflicted.*

*From the sole of your foot to the top of your head there is no soundness –  
only wounds and welts and open sores,  
not cleansed or bandaged or soothed with oil* (Isaiah 1:5-7)

*But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities;  
the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed*  
(Isaiah 53:5-6)

**Sin has many things in common with sickness; it is painful and leads to death. Yet in many ways it is unlike an illness. It is something we do rather than catch, it is a disease of hearts, not our bodies.**

**Finding Healing:**

- Confess your sin against God.
- Learn to delight in obedience defined in Scripture.
- Don't excuse your sin, doing so increases self deception.
- Look to Jesus as the one who shows grace and mercy to idolaters.
- Grow in faith by knowing God through his self-revelation in Scripture.
- Pursue wisdom (godly living) and pursue it – don't just avoid sin, hate it!
- Don't rely on yourself – find an accountability partner who will hold you accountable.
- Realise that addiction, like all sin, doesn't impose itself on us unless we have been willing to entertain it in our imaginations. Change will therefore only come from targetting our hearts and desires (not the outward manifestation of idolatry).



## Grapple with:

Our view of addictions?

---

---



### Facing Your Own Addiction:

- 1) Take a look at the bullet pointed list on the previous page – where are you strong and weak areas? Attempt to grow in the areas in which you are weaker.
- 2) Do you see how Scripture relates to the issues you face in your own life as well as what it says about the person you're trying to help? In light of Scripture's relevance, seek to arm yourself with the full arsenal of God's Word; immerse yourself in the Bible.
- 3) Does what we've covered so far make you angry because you feel it's harsh or irrelevant to the reality you face with your loved one? Perhaps you still have a problem with calling addictions sinful.

Try looking at what we've discussed from a different perspective: – it's not so much about how sinful we are, but rather how gracious God is to rescue us from it. The Gospel is the answer because only in Christ can we be truly liberated.

### Helping Others:

- 1) Scripture has one answer – Jesus Christ, in fact most of the Old Testament is spent showing us just why we need him so much. Left to our own devices we fail every time!

Can you take each of the metaphors in this module and apply them into the experience of the person whom you are attempting to help? Show them the truth and relevance of Scripture.

- 2) Our helping must seem like a gift, not condemnation. It should feel like we offering hope, not despair! Ensure the person you are helping feels loved rather than judged by you!



## AIM:

The Descent into Addiction



## Tools:

Addictions-A Banquet in the Grave Ch4

## Idolatry Helps Understanding:

Idolatry helps us analyse the gradual descent from experimenter to addict. We are all idolaters, but some of our idols have more tragic consequences than others. The descent should be familiar to us all, and should enable us to be more patient with those whom we are helping.

### I Israel – Our first example:

The first two commandments warn against idolatry: Israel's first task as they enter the land is to remove the existing nations, because allowing them to remain would result in them forsaking the Lord:

- You will place nothing before me (no idols). Exodus 20:3; Deuteronomy 4:32-40, 5:7, 6:4-5.
- You will worship nothing other than me (no idols). Exodus 20:4; Deuteronomy 4:15-19, 5:8-10.
- Drive out the nations of the Promised Land so that you won't be ensnared by their gods. Deut. 7:16.

What is the first thing they do? They make a treaty with the Gibeonites (Joshua 9:16), and then not trusting in the Lord to aid them become unable to take further areas (Judges 1:19-21, 27-35) leading them into idolatry (Judges 2:12, 3:5). \*This is the way sin deceives, it slips past our conscience by beginning with small steps of disobedience.

### 1 First Steps:

Alcohol: "I began drinking with friends at parties, then I began drinking before the parties, just so I would be more relaxed as I arrived. It wasn't a problem, it made me a happier, friendlier person, it reduced my anxiety."

Drugs: "My friend pulled out a bag of pot, and there was no reason to say no, I mean pot isn't that big a deal. I felt older and wiser, part of the 'in crowd'".

Adultery: "Everyone flirts at work, I mean that's just part of getting through a boring work day"

*\*There are exceptions to this gradual descent. Some addicts make a self-conscious, self-destructive decision to aggressively pursue sex, drugs, alcohol or food to escape from a difficult home, to relieve emotional pain, express anger or to keep hopelessness at bay.*

2

## Friendship

There comes a point in every addict's life where experience and truth part ways. The object of desire is now taking hold. Good friends are left behind, as more time is spent with the object of affection, or others that are also devoted to the object of desire.

Money is spent where there is none, the idol takes up more time in our thoughts and we are now losing our clarity of judgement.

After the initial step, there is no longer a reason to say no! For those who continue, the substance begins to satisfy the desires of their hearts. At this stage the addict still feels they are in control, they think they have found some secret power, apart from God.

*Any time we are finding life, meaning or joy apart from the Creator, our growing alienation from him will only lead to misery!*

**They've already fallen further than they know!**

3

## Infatuation

At this point the secret relationship has costs, it could be effecting work, finances or marriages. But reason does not figure and bad consequences are not bad enough! The addict begins to blame others: Problems at work are blamed on co-workers or bosses, problems at home on a lack of understanding, and money problems on unexpected expenses.

At the same time, additional stresses caused by the consequences drive the addict towards more regular use of their 'antidote'.

Assuming availability and opportunity the addict's use will escalate. Alcoholics for example will devise occasions to drink and avoid places where they can't.

**When the addict is found out, they will expertly make friends and loved ones feel guilty.**

**But what about me... I am an integral part of this crazy relationship but I'm completely excluded from it?**

I

### **How to help amidst the chaos!**

At the point of infatuation, your friendship or homelife will be characterised by 'chaos'. Our natural response is to smooth things over, to be a peace-maker. The term for this 'helping' behaviour is 'enabler'. Enablers are not trying to deal with the problem, but to reduce the effect of the consequences!

Christians live life in the open, they hold each other accountable. If you don't know how to help, get help yourself.

*"Bill I don't know what's happening right now, I seem only to be able to irritate you. You're always hiding from me and you're drinking more than ever. I can't handle it any more, so I'm going to get help. I'd love it if you'd come with me – but at this point I need help too."*

Talk to your pastor, to an understanding friend, or find a local organisation such as AA that meets regularly. Don't isolate yourself, you're probably not equipped to deal with this yourself!

II

### **Is it my fault?**

Addicts are master manipulators, and will use guilt to get you off their back! There is often truth in their accusations, and so as a Christian we genuinely need to look at ourselves, repent of our sins and confess it to our Lord who is quick to forgive.

But, although we acknowledge our own faults, we are also called to confront others in love. Indeed having confessed our own sin places us in the right position to speak into others' lives.

Experience tells us the best form of defence is attack, so don't be surprised by a strong or overwhelming response when you speak out.

4

## Love & Betrayal

Now the addiction is taking full control. It becomes a near daily feature in the person's life and the solution for everything. It can vent anger alleviate depression, and quiet the emptiness of loss, failure and so on.

*Hiding is difficult now that Friends & family are aware of the addiction. But rather than confront the problem they will do anything to avoid conflict – because that intensifies the chaos or provokes anger.*

As friends and family rally around to defend the addict (hiding car keys, phoning in sick at work for them etc.) the addict will be going out of their way to provoke tension giving them an excuse to binge. Lying is now a way of life and excuses will become increasingly bizzare.

*Addictive behaviour (especially in younger people) shields them from learning how to handle life. Instead of learning how to deal with conflict they lose themselves in their substance of choice.*

*Enablers prevent addicts from using key skills and deny them opportunities to grow in wisdom.*



At this stage consequences of the addiction are quickly forgotten. In their idolatry the user may realise some cost, but they don't care because the perceived benefits of forbidden sex, drugs, food etc., outweighs the disadvantages.

5

## Worship

The final stage of idolatry is bondage! Idols promise freedom... the gods at your disposal, but all they deliver is slavery! Adulterers become obsessed, paranoid about what the other person is doing when you're not around. Substance abusers are permanently distracted about where their next hit will come from, entrenched in a daily obsession, and physical dependence.

At this stage nothing comes before the obsession and denial reigns. The addict will still think they don't have a problem and others will be blamed for the bad consequences. However, you may find that the addict feels much more guilty than you might at first think. They know they are hurting others... and the only way to deal with that guilt is... you guessed it, to self-medicate!

For those who love the addict only drastic intervention is going to help!

*Blind to the consequences of sin*

*No fear of the LORD*

*Lying!*

*Blaming Others*



## Grapple with:

### The Slavery of Addiction

---

---



#### Facing Your Own Addiction:

1) You may see a different pattern to the one outlined here in your own addiction experience – but try to look at the themes that we have encountered along the way.

1. First Steps
2. Friendship
3. Infatuation
4. Love & Betrayal
5. Worship

These themes are true of all addictions: blaming others, lying, increasing blindness or lack of insight into yourself and the consequences of your addiction.

All these are of course energised by the desire to be as far from God as possible. Since God is light, any time we try to live apart from him, we will be in darkness.

#### Helping Others:

- 1) If you are helping someone else – GET HELP FOR YOURSELF first! A wise person seeks good counsel (Prov. 20:18) and listens to wise advice (Prov. 19:20). Gifts have been given to the church, and it is a blessing to others to enable (and allow) them to serve you. It is our love and service to one another that equips the church towards growth and maturity (1 Cor. 12).
- 2) Love the person you are helping (1 Cor. 13). The greatest challenge is how to love – tough love will be the order of the day, but more of that in the following chapters.



## AIM:

Confronting the Addict



## Tools:

Addictions-A Banquet in the Grave Ch5

## Speaking the Truth in Love:

Brothers if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted (Galatians 6:1)

### 1 Detection:

Sin by its very nature tries to stay out of sight, but because God love us he often exposes our sin so that others can see the danger we're in.

#### **Changes in Relationships:**

- Peers change.
- Lots of time spent alone.
- New friends (of the wrong kind).

#### **Changes in Spiritual Life:**

- Deception and lie telling.
- Breaking commitments.
- NOTE: Check the heart, not the outward signs.

#### **Changes in Physical and Emotional Health:**

- Weight gain / loss.
- Lots of tiredness and more prone to sickness.
- Eyelids are droopy / bloodshot
- Moodswings including depression
- Strange smells (alcohol / pot)

#### **Using Legal Drugs:**

- Cigarettes & alcohol are gateways into illegal drugs.

#### **Drug Paraphernalia:**

- Rolling cigarettes, aluminium foil, small plastic bags, pipes, straw-like objects, spoons, syringes; if you are unsure what you are looking for (or have found) ask for help.

### 2 Confrontation:

Check your own heart first... What are your idols? Considering your own secret desires before confronting will lead to gentleness & compassion.

#### **Seek Wisdom:**

- Pray for God to give you boldness, gentleness and truth in your speech.
- Ask an experienced negotiator, (a pastor, or a biblical counsellor).

#### **Check your own Heart:**

- Create a context for truth telling: Does the addict believe that you don't want to know the truth, or that you will get angry or hurt.

#### **Remember the Truth of the Situation:**

- If someone persists in addiction, he or she is in danger of being estranged and alienated from God, under his judgement.

#### **Matthew Principle:**

- Don't wait for rock-bottom, it never comes, rather use the Matthew 18:15-17 principle, we call it 'church discipline', the world calls it 'intervention'.
- This approach says we can't wait for people to destroy themselves and those around them, and that they need to be challenged by a group of people who love them.

# Helping our Children?



3

### A one-to-one confrontation may start like this:

*"I've really been wanting to speak with you, but I didn't want to upset you. But I know if I stay silent any longer I would wrong you. You say you're not taking drugs, but I found a pipe in your room, and money has been taken from my purse. Sometimes I don't even recognise you, you're angry one minute and calm the next..."*

This kind of approach is necessary, but will elicit either anger or denial. Your next step then is to tell them why you are raising this issue. You love them, you are not confronting them for your own benefit but for theirs. Don't allow them to place the blame on you. Stay on track, keep hold of your emotions – do this by not taking their insults or disrespect personally.

4

### If you are able, the conversation may continue... Or you may need a follow up to include:

*"You are telling me it wasn't you that took the money, so I will report it to the police today. But it's not the money that's important. Have you noticed that you are constantly attacking the whole family, you're defensive, and disrespectful. I really love you, and was even afraid to speak to you because I know that it will end with you being angry. Whether you are using drugs or not I think you are carrying around a world of secrets. There is only so much I can do about that... But I can keep trying to talk to you when you especially when you are trashing relationships with people who love you dearly. I'm also thinking about where to go next for help."*

#### On a Practical Level:

- **Finding drugs or drug paraphernalia** – It is illegal, remove it from your home! If the law is being broken in your home you have every right to invade your child's space – even older children. Do not allow the child to request a right to privacy.
- **Dealing with mood swings** – Seek experienced counsel. Try not to respond in anger, rather use gentleness. To help you to do this, pray beforehand and perhaps take a third party to support you.
- **Establish new rules** – The child needs to learn the consequences of their sin. The rules and consequences of infractions must be absolutely clear.
  - **NOT:** *"Be nicer to your brother"* rather *"demeaning comments to anyone in the house will not be tolerated. Anyone speaking disrespectfully to one another will be asked to deal with that relationship by requesting forgiveness. We will meet once a week as a family to do this"*.
  - **More severe consequences**, such as asking the child to move out, or transferring guardianship, or reporting the child to the police should be reserved for especially serious infractions of the rules. Where the child is physically violent, or blatantly ignoring the safety of the family or is unwilling to be part of the family the child should not receive the protection of the family.

*The method is to allow them to experience the consequences of their demand for independence.*

# Helping our Spouses?



5

## Isolation:

With children it is easier not to take things personally, but with a spouse everything feels personal. The addict will be making decisions in favour of their beloved addiction rather than for you. You therefore need to keep in mind the larger purpose which is the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31). The deepest problem is the addict's relationship with God himself.

If you have made your spouse your idol, repent of it! If you love someone for the glory of God, you will be less controlled by his/her erratic or ungodly behaviour.

Don't be your spouse's addiction police – see if you can agree with the spouse to engage a friend, relative, church-worker who will maintain accountability with the addict.

6

## Guard Your Own Heart First:

- God is with you (Jeremiah 23:1-8).
- You are God's ambassador, so be salt and light to all who are around you.
- Keep a check on your own heart (rather than your spouses):
  - **Remember the Gospel** – the forgiveness of your sin, this will drive your response to everything else. God forgave you, and welcomed you even as you were his enemy (Rom 5:10).
  - **Seek to find forgiveness in others**, whilst holding them accountable for their sin (Matt. 6:14-15).
  - **Don't engage when the person is intoxicated**, have patience (Prov. 26:4, 9).
  - **Remind the addict of harmful consequences:** *“Since alcohol keeps you from seeing the consequences of your behaviour, I want you to know what you did last night... “ OR “Melissa was very upset when you got angry during story-time yesterday”.*
- Don't be persuaded to keep secrets. Don't become an enabler for his/her addiction.

7

## Confrontation:

- The first step is to confront the sinful behaviour privately confronting the addict:

*“ Jason, I want to talk about some things that are difficult for me to discuss with you. I want you to know that I'm doing it because I care about you. I love you. Whenever you go out you are drinking too much. You don't limit your intake, and you are either rude to your friends, or flirting with other women. You're driving under the influence and have lost your phone twice. We have ignored the consequences of your drinking until now, but this can't go on”.*

*I'm particularly concerned about your relationship with God. Your drinking says you're running away from him, ignoring him and turning to alcohol instead.”*

8

## **Intervention:**

Using the Matthew principle (Matt 18:17), if the person refuses to listen, then take along a couple of other people to also confront your spouse. If this doesn't work either then include the church, either a Pastor or an Elder. It will also be useful to include a Biblical Counsellor, we have two that are trained in conflict resolution and addiction counselling. Having others with you, will lessen the guilt that addicts are masters at invoking.

9

## **Steps of Intervention:**

- 1) **PREPARE:** If the addict refuses help:
  - Cutting of funds.
  - Imposing curfews, and post-curfew lockout.
  - Asking the addict to move out.
  - Taking away care of children unsupervised.
  - Getting police involved.
  - Invoking church discipline.
- 2) **PREPARE:** If the addict accepts help:
  - Get a list of counsellors.
  - Get a list of Christian self-help groups.
  - \*Discuss hospital detoxification.
  - Get an accountability partner.
  - Obtain agreement for random testing.
  - Go with them to tell addict friends they won't be seeing them anymore.
  - Taking temporary guardianship of finances.

*\* Addiction is a spiritual problem, but in the initial stages, the physical consequences will probably need to be dealt with first. This means only dealing with the spiritual once the addict has detoxed.*

- 3) **PREPARE:** Set up the Intervention:
  - Once you have your people and plan in place, find a time that everyone will be available on neutral ground.
  - It is probably better not to tell the addict that an intervention is about to be held.
- 4) **POST INTERVENTION:** Stay strong:
  - Enforce your consequences/rules.
  - Keep pursuing the addict to change (in love).
  - Expect disappointment.
  - If necessary escalate the consequences of refusal to comply with house rules.

**For some reason, we tend to think wrongly that immediate liberation from the slavery of addiction is more glamorous than the gradual process of sanctification.**

**Such expectations have implicitly encouraged addicts to tell amazing, but fabricated stories of liberation instead of simply being honest about their struggles, and finding in that honesty something praiseworthy.**



## Grapple with:

### How to Intervene

---

#### Facing Your Own Addiction:

**1) Who are the people God has used to change you?**

- How did they love you?
- What was their attitude towards you?
- Did you see God's grace at work?

**2) Do you feel judged by others?**

- Does that feeling cause you to withdraw?
- Are you certain that it's not a rebuke, rather than judgement?
- Consider the allegations, are there elements of truth within them?
- Consider that a rebuke is the most loving thing another person can do for you. (They are risking your entire relationship to help you out of a situation in which you have lost control).

**3) Do you yearn for the good old days?**

- If your addiction is being challenged by others – are you yearning for the former days when you could enjoy your addiction in privacy and secrecy? If the answer is yes, you need to repent of it.
- Are you more troubled by the consequences of the addiction than by the sin itself? If the answer is yes, you are still in bondage to sin. Again repent of it - to God and also to a close friend whom you know will still love you.

#### Helping Others:

1) To rebuke a brother or sister is perhaps the most loving thing that you can do. Ignoring or enabling the addict merely protects them within their sin.

2) If you are helping / intervening but are not a family member try to understand the motivations of the family :

- Enabling Behaviour: attempts to bring order to chaos.
- Loose Boundaries: attempts to limit consequences.
- Guilt is often borne out of our own 'perceived failures' which is then manipulated by the addict for their own leverage.

**3) PRAY!** We are engaged in a spiritual battle. You will need to put your full amour on (Ephesians 6).

**4) Hold yourself accountable:**

- As you are helping the other person, you should be reflecting upon your own sin (as iron sharpens iron).
- You will find your own sin highlighted in response to the extreme circumstances, and you will find yourself dependant on God like never before!
- Remember that God works all things to the good for those who love him. This is true for both you and the addict.



## AIM:

The Long Walk to Freedom

## Tools:

Addictions-A Banquet in the Grave Ch6 to 10.



## Sanctification is Lifelong

- 1 Prepare yourself for the long haul, because recovering from addiction is likely to be a life-long process. There are lots of organisations available that offer support and assistance to both the addict and their helpers. Ensure that you choose wisely. We saw in the first module that a secular, rather than spiritual view of addiction can lead to wrong thinking.

There is no miracle cure for addictions and much of the work that needs to be done will involve predominantly talking and listening. Counselling will get to what our hearts are really hurting from and desiring. A skilled biblical counsellor will focus on these types of question: 1) What was it that you initially sought from your object of desire? 2) Did it deliver what was promised? 3) What is your hearts desire now? 4) How does (or how should) Jesus speak into your desires now?

Remember that the Gospel is the answer to a Christian who is struggling as well as to the unconverted, or the nominal Christian who thinks they are saved. Keep returning to the cross and what it achieved for all. The Bible is full of exhortions to encourage and to build up. Ensure that you are looking forward in hope.

Chapters 7 and 8 of *'Addictions A Banquet in the Grave'* focusses completely on God the Father, and the person and work of Christ. That is where your focus needs to be too!

## More Tools

- 2 Chapters 9 and 10 give us a few more tools to arm ourselves as addicts and as helpers of addicts. If you want to know more buy the book! Here are the topics covered – we won't have time to cover them in this course.

- 1) Overcoming lies and deceit (that for the addict have become second nature).
- 2) How to keep saying 'no'.

## Grapple with:

Taking the time to walk the long road

---

---



### Facing Your Own Addiction:

- 1) Be honest with where you are at – don't pretend to be the latest Christian success story. Share the struggle.
- 2) Remember that nobody is worthy of God's grace. We stand on Jesus' obedience not our own. If you still feel you have something you need to do to please God you haven't understood the gospel. That is pride!
- 3) Find some Scriptures which speak into your situation.
- 4) Learn more about Jesus and about God (i.e. Knowing God by JI Packer or Desiring God by J Piper).
- 5) Seek forgiveness from those you have wronged and repent for the Lord.

### Helping Others:

- 1) First you confronted and you thought that was hard! Actually the hardest part starts now as you persevere with your brother / sister. Speak truth and love constantly and consistently.
- 2) Encourage the person you are helping to memorise a couple of verses of Scripture that really speak into their situation – Scripture that will counter Satan's lies with God's truth.
- 3) Learn more about Jesus and about God (i.e. Knowing God by JI Packer or Desiring God by J Piper).
- 4) Pray together regularly and speak truth to each other (hold each other accountable).





## AIM:

Persevering in our walk



## Tools:

Addictions-A Banquet in the Grave Ch11 & 12.

## Fighting the Good Fight!

I will never forget hearing a talk by John Piper on missions at St James, Kenilworth. He asked us the following question: *“we Christians are at war, what are you doing buying cushions?”* Ephesians 6:12-13 reminds us :

*“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.”*

1

### Stand Firm:

As Christians then, we have been given everything we need with which to ‘stand firm’. Truth, Righteousness, Gospel Readiness, Faith, Salvation, The Holy Spirit – The Word of God and Prayer (Eph. 6:14-18).

The battle is a good one, it not a sign of failure, it is a sign that God is at work within us – we are spiritually alive and engaged with the process of sanctification.

Even those who had dramatic conversions (including Paul on the Damascus Road) were unable to claim complete victory. Paul was constantly engaged in the battle *“For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing”* (Rom. 7:18b-19).

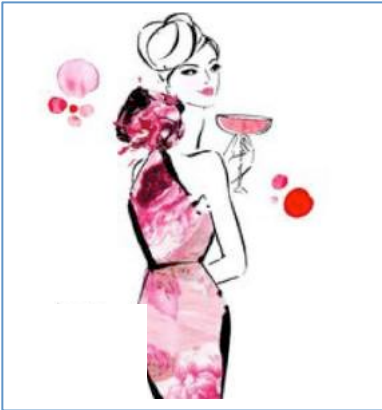
And the purpose of this battle is ultimately to glorify God *“Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!”* (Rom. 7:24-25a).

My favourite verse in the Bible is Romans 8:1-2 *“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do.”*

God himself came in the person of Jesus to free us from the bondage of sin. A belief in Jesus as our rescuer, binds us to him through his Spirit, making God our master rather than sin. *“But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification & its end, eternal life”.* (Rom 6:22).

In our everyday lives, this means that the object of our worship has shifted. We have moved from wanting our idol to **serve us**, past the addiction in which our idol **controlled** us and towards a new way in which we **serve God**, as we walk in the power of his Spirit.

## Journey Overview:



### First Steps

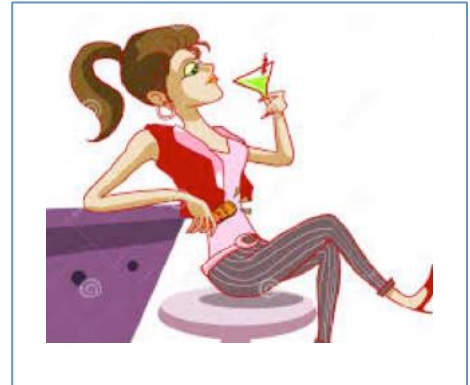
#### Desire for control

*"I have a Manhattan before I go out, so that I can enter the room with confidence and pzazz".*

### Friendship:

#### Desire for the Idol

*"I couldn't possibly go a whole week without a cheeky glass of wine".*



### Infatuation:

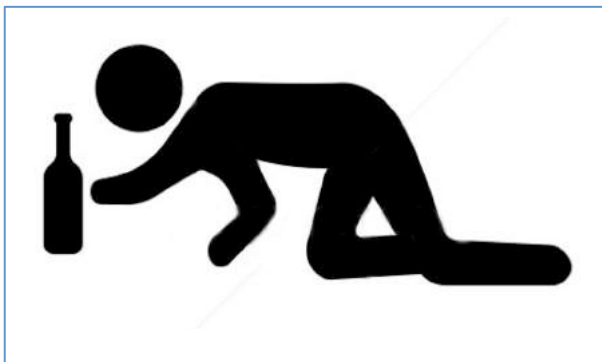
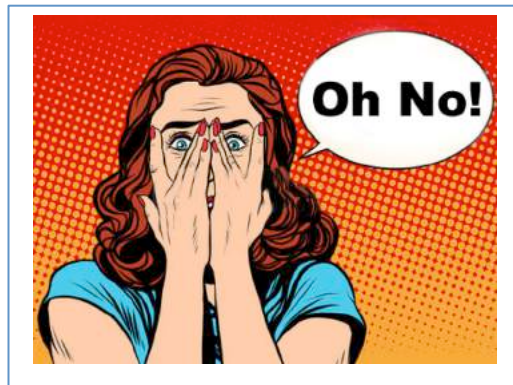
#### Exclusive desire for the Idol

*"I need to have a drink before I go into that important sales meeting this afternoon".*

### Love & Betrayal:

#### Control by the Idol

*"I cant' go to work today, I have a hangover from hell and my boss is going to kill me for not finishing last week's audit".*



### Worship:

#### Bondage to the Idol

*"I can't live without you!".*



*The majority of the material in this workbook was taken from Edward T Welch's book (Addictions a Banquet in the Grave). If you enjoyed the course, and would like to know more I would encourage you to buy the book which is available from the Christian Book Discounters bookstore on Belvedere Road.*

## **Bibliography:**

WELCH, E.T. (2001). *ADDICTIONS. A banquet in the grave. Finding hope in the power of the gospel.* P&R Publishing.

CHESTER, T. (2008). *You can change.* Inter-Varsity Press.

## **Recommended Reading:**

MACK, W. (2006). *A fight to the death. Taking aim at sin within.* P&R Publishing.

St Stephen's

**12**

*A Ministry of The 12:*

Because faith without works is dead!  
James 2:14-18