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“Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise” (Proverbs 20:1).

## **When A Family Member Is Addicted**

**Central Truth:** The family should help rescue an addicted member.

**L126. Date:** October 1994. **Text:** Proverbs 23:29-35; Romans 13:13, 14.

**Topic:** Addiction; Family.

We are living in an addictive society. This is due to two things: (1) addictive substances are readily available, even to children; (2) our society is sense driven, desiring a present sensation without regard to the ultimate cost. That creates a problem for our families and all the institutions of society. Christian families and churches are not exempt. Therefore, this subject is included in a study of “Living Together in the Home.”

The problem is increased by a permissive society which accepts as “normal” the lifestyle which results from addiction. One form of addiction is called a disease. Another is called an alternate lifestyle. But if “a rose by any other name would smell as sweet,” so addiction by any other name is still addiction.

Christians must take care not to be judgmental in dealing with addicted persons. We must learn to hate the sin while loving the sinner. The grace of God is extended to the drug addict and the sex pervert the same as to the “respectable” sinner to whom you show courtesy. May God help the family with an addicted member.

## **Areas of Addiction**

The very mention of addiction brings to mind the various forms of habit-forming, narcotic drugs. That includes alcoholic beverages in its various forms, as well as different kinds of hallucinogenic drugs. Alcoholic beverages begin with the less potent forms of beer and move upward to hard

liquors. The number of alcoholics in our nation is appalling. The financial cost of alcoholic beverages in lost wages, automobile accidents, health care, etc., is staggering. The social costs in broken homes, abused mates, and abused children is inexcusable. Abraham Lincoln is reported to have said of alcoholic beverages, "What fools men are to put into their mouths that which will take away their brains."

Tobacco is another addictive item. Whether it is smoked, chewed, or dipped, the user becomes addicted to it. Warnings on the packages that it is hazardous to one's health do not deter multitudes from its use. Someone has observed that its use will not send you to hell, but it will make you smell like you have been there.

Narcotic drugs are very addictive. That includes all forms of drugs from lesser drugs like marijuana to more potent forms like cocaine and heroin [and methamphetamine]. The laws of the land forbid the non-medical use of such drugs, but the traffickers continue to peddle it. Again, the cost of its use is beyond estimation.

It is possible to be addicted to things otherwise good and harmless. One may be addicted to food or to certain types of food. (We call that gluttony.) One may be addicted to visual sexual stimulation. (We call that pornography.) One may be addicted to television or certain types of music. No one is exempt from possible addiction to something. The "up and in" people can be addicted the same as the "down and out." Beware.

## **Principles Which Relate to Addiction**

**The body is sacred and belongs to God.** Read 1 Corinthians 6:9-20. Note what it says about your body. (1) Your body can be used for depraving and improper practices (verses 9, 10). (2) Your body can be sanctified and its practices purified (verse 11). (3) Every need of your body is honorable as designed by the Lord (verses 12-14). (4) Your body will be raised up in the last day (verse 14). (5) Your body is a limb of Christ (verse 15). (6) Your body is not to be used in sexual immorality (verses 13, 18). (7) Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (verse 19). (8) Your body is redeemed by the blood of Christ (verse 20). (9) You can glorify God in your body and in your spirit, for both belong to God (verse 20). What a challenge! Your body was made by God, for God, and will go to be with God. Therefore, "*Glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's*" (1 Corinthians 6:20).

**Your body has an influence on your spirit, and your spirit has an influence on your body.** Have you tried to worship God when your tooth, your foot, or your back was hurting severely? It makes a difference, doesn't

it? On the other hand, an elderly lady was complimented upon her faithfulness in church attendance. She said, “My heart gets there first, and these old legs just have to follow along.”

What you do with your body definitely affects your spiritual life. No one can be a spiritually minded person while living a life of sexual promiscuity. No one can be a spiritually minded person while filling his mind with sensual thoughts by watching certain types of television or movie programs or reading certain types of literature. To be spiritually strong, a person must be physically disciplined in moral and ethical principles.

**It is possible to maintain physical health by refraining from harmful and addictive substances.** God requires balance in all things. Every addiction interferes with good health. You must guard against excesses in any area if you would be healthy in body, mind, and spirit. It is possible to return to health after certain addictions have harmed you. But it is not possible to restore health after certain addictions. Alcohol kills brain cells, for instance, which can never be restored. Certain drugs interfere with the genes, the reproductive system, or other parts of the body and do damage which can never be repaired. The best policy is never to become addicted to anything unless you follow the example of the household of Stephanas, who “*addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints*” (1 Corinthians 16:15).

**Develop a conscience which is sensitive to God, and you will not suffer addiction.** “*Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth*” (Romans 14:22). Only one person can truly blame another for personal addiction. That is an infant born to a mother who abused drugs while she was carrying the pre-born baby. Otherwise, every person is responsible for himself. But God will keep you pure if you submit to the lordship of Jesus Christ.

## **Resistance to Addiction**

**Follow a wholesome, well-balanced diet of foods.** One who is severely addicted often neglects to eat in order to satisfy the craving of his addiction. When the body is well supplied with proper nutrients, it is able to better control wrong impulses.

**Get sufficient exercise.** Concentrating on exercise (walking; swimming; aerobics, sports, or whatever) will take your mind off the desires your body might otherwise insist upon. And a strong body will not demand artificial supplements as much as one that is weaker.

**Get adequate rest.** Some people take drugs to give them extra energy. An athlete may take it to gain strength for his game. A businessman may

take it to “get started” in the morning or to “slow down” in the evening. That is not necessary. The Lord designed the body so that it provides all that is necessary when it is cared for in the proper way.

**Practice clean living.** Addiction starts with a person and a thing. Those who follow a holy lifestyle will keep from temptation by the place, the person, and the substance which will lead to addiction. The principle to follow was expressed by Paul: “Exercise thyself . . . unto godliness” (I Timothy 4:7).

**Engage in productive labor.** Few things give as much meaning to life as providing goods or services to people who need them. God ordained work as a blessing to mankind, not a curse as a consequence of sin. Unproductive time is often a time of temptation. Use your time wisely.

**Learn to relax when you are tense.** Talk it out. Have some fun. Take a walk. Try a massage. Take a hot bath. Practice breathing slowly and deeply. Have a good cry. Turn to a Christian friend. Learn to pray.

You are not a helpless pawn to depend on artificial substances to supply your need. You are made in the image and likeness of God. He is your supply; turn to Him for every need. He supplies plentifully and without rebuke.

## **Helpers of the Addicted**

**A caring family helps one who is addicted.** It is essential that the family empathize rather than criticize. However, a warning must be given here. The family must not become a crutch upon which the addicted person leans, thus helping him continue in his addiction. Show love, but let it be “tough love.” Make this approach: “I love you too much to condone this behavior. I will do all I can to help you overcome this, but I will not support you in it.” The addicted person might rebel and lash out at the family; but you should stand your ground and speak “*the truth in love*” (Ephesians 4:15).

**A praying church helps one who is addicted.** The church must not appear to condone sin. But neither must she so isolate the sinner that there is no recourse for him to receive help from the church. Prayer is the most effective thing a church can do for an addicted person. Along with prayer, offer counsel and other forms of help. But nothing is effective without prayer.

**A supporting group helps one who is addicted.** There are many support groups available who deal with different types of problems. Find a Christian group (beware of non-Christian groups) which deals with your

specific addiction. They will support you and encourage you as you move from addiction to freedom.

**A guiding counselor helps one who is addicted.** Seek a professionally trained person to help you. But be sure that person is a Christian. It might be your pastor, a Sunday School teacher, a mature Christian friend, or some other counselor. But you need the help of one who knows biblical principles and can apply them to you.

**A healing institution helps one who is addicted.** Sometimes the addiction is of the nature that a person needs to be institutionalized (in a hospital or other special institution). If so, commit yourself to a hospital or clinic which specializes in your particular problem, but always seek the help of a Christian who is trained in the area of your need. They are available and only need to be sought out.

Addiction will probably get worse before it gets better. As you seek to move away from it, its demands will intensify. Your church is commissioned under God to help you. Seek help. The addiction will not go away because it is ignored. Go to your pastor or other trusted Christian friend and ask for help. Then follow through until you are free in the Lord.

### **Questions for Discussion**

1. What is addiction?
2. Why is addiction so prevalent in our society?
3. What are some of the areas of addiction?
4. Why should you guard your body against addiction?
5. How can you protect your family or friends against addiction?
6. How does Romans 14:22 relate to a study of addiction?
7. How can a caring family help one who is addicted?
8. How can you develop a prayer ministry for addicted persons?
9. What Christian resources are available in your community?
10. How can your church get involved in this ministry?