

Bible Verses Addictions: Cause and Effect

(Volume One)

Gregory Madison



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Volume 1***

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AWE OF MY LIFE PUBLICATIONS

www.turningtoGodfromidols.com

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Turned to God from Idols

By Gregory Madison

As I look back over my life, it is hard to believe that I was 'hooked' on crack for 23 years. During that time, I participated in both Christian and secular programs (at least 14 or 15.) The programs included Veteran facilities, Pacific Garden Mission in Chicago, a farm program in Colorado (owned by Denver Rescue Mission), as well as many others. Very early during my struggle with my addiction to crack (and the other addictions that went with it), I sought to discover what the Bible has to say concerning addictions. In 1996, I began a personal study describing the link between addiction and idolatry. This is now a lifetime study.

Although I had begun to find the answers that I was looking for concerning addictions, I kept going back to using. During those 23 years, the longest time that I remained 'sober' was for 17 months (mainly because I lived away from the city, at that time.) I lived at different places for 7 years, going from one program to another. At other times, I lived on the streets and with friends (on and off drugs.) It was in the year of 2003 that I decided that there was no way that I was ever going to quit using drugs again. This was the first time that I had ever stooped to that level. Since I had made such a decision, I thought that it would be best for me to go to Florida where I could find what is thought to be the purest cocaine.

After spending the winter in Florida and going back north in the summer for two years, I returned to

Cleveland, Ohio. Somehow, God began to convince me that His way is best and that my actions were highly offensive towards He and my fellowman. I thought of how I was not only depriving myself, but also God (as well as others.) This led to a decision to remain in Cleveland and seek out the help of my family and the faith community. I vowed to never move away until I had thoroughly allowed God to deal with my addictions and was stable. For about the next 6 years I went into the VA several times, joined different churches, and continued to read and write bible-based material on addictions.

From 2005 until 2011 I sought to develop a consistent life of sobriety. I would sometimes go for months at a time, only to return to drugs. In January of 2011, I heard that my grandmother in Memphis, Tennessee was very ill. I knew that I could be of no help to her (or anyone) because of the investments that I was making on my addictions. I started doing everything I needed to do so that I would be able to assist my grandmother and her husband (86 and 96, at the time) as soon as possible. Through the power of Christ, the strength of His word, the prayers and support of my dad, and with the aid of a church as well as others, I was able to begin a consistent walk with Christ for 2 months before traveling to Memphis. One year after my first visit to Memphis, I moved there. And so now, the things that are most important to me are hearing God and being used by Him. True and lasting sobriety, that is pleasing to God, is found in Christ alone. To be continued...

Preface

Bible Verses Addictions is a play on words. What we really mean is Bible versus addictions. The Bible confronts addictions at every point. The Bible presents the origin of addictions. The Bible exposes the true nature of addictions. The Bible explains addictions activities (dynamics.) The Bible explains the consequences of addiction. And, of course the Bible gives us the solution to addiction, like no other source. The Bible *even* offers an alternative to addictions.

The Lord said that man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. As bread addresses and attacks the physical hunger, the word of God addresses and attacks the spiritual hunger that some of us try to fill with an addiction.

A deeper study of the word of God for addicts answers the question asked by Dr. Edward T. Welch in his illustrious book “Addictions: A Banquet in the Grave”.

“Do you have a good grasp on the wealth of biblical material that speaks precisely to the modern problems of addictions? Can you go through any book in scripture, even if it doesn’t mention alcohol, food, or sex, and see how it speaks to addictions?”

While talking with a friend, I was very much encouraged when he told me that although the program that he was in was of a secular nature, God

has been blessing him with a remembrance of scripture while sitting in the groups that he is required to attend, so that he can benefit from the housing and employment opportunities that the program has to offer. Suddenly, God reminded me of the Hebrew boys in Babylon who refused to eat the king's meat. I saw this as a symbol of the secular program that my friend was forced to participate in. In fact, as he told me about one of the 'defilements' that the program embraces, and we both agreed upon its falsehood.

A well know quote of the group my friend had to participate in is that "the Bible saves your soul; this program saves your behind". Well, my friend and I both agreed that the Bible can save your behind as well as your soul. And besides, I could see how much better off my friend is (just as the Hebrew boys) with the 'program' that God has implemented long before any of these secular programs were even dreamed of (established by the blood of Christ and administered to us through the blessed Holy Spirit, initiated and performed by His word). Again, I will say, until my dying day, **"the highest form of sobriety known unto mankind is in Jesus Christ"**.

Introduction

One thing that I want to make perfectly clear, from the very start, is that *Bible Verses Addictions* is intended to apply to any and every addiction. Whether we are addicted to drugs, pornography, gambling, overeating... the Word of God is more than adequate for guidance.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. 2 Timothy 3:16

In an article that is titled “The Distinguishing Feature of Christian Counseling”, Dr. Wayne A. Mack says that **“Christ-centered counseling involves understanding the nature and courses of our human difficulties, understanding the ways we are unlike Christ in our values, aspirations, desires, thoughts, feelings, choices, attitudes, actions, and responses. Resolving those sin-related difficulties includes being redeemed and justified through Christ, receiving God’s forgiveness through Christ, and acquiring from Christ the enabling power to replace unChristlike (sinful) patterns of life with Christlike, godly ones.”** This is what is found in a biblical approach to addictions.

First and foremost, a deeper study of the word of God for an addict is an expression of the reverence one has for God.

There are several questions that come to mind. Does the word of God really have something to say about addictions? Personally, I am almost convinced that;

If the Word of God did not have anything to say about addictions, then God would not have created us!

To think of God as the kind of God that has created us but does not give us the instructions that we need to survive, and even prosper and be at peace, is an irreverent and distorted view of God. Here is yet another question for us to consider! Is God worthy of being heard? Who would dare say no? I, also, must ask, **do we care enough about people to give them the very best?**

Our reverence for God is demonstrated by how we extend ourselves to those who were created in His image.

My attitude is as the apostle Paul's, who said, "I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you" (Acts 20:20). There is no better way to expose and dispose of addictions except through the Word of God. The word of God is the truth, addictions are but lies. So, why not give to people the very best?

Not only that, true sobriety, restoration, recovery, sanctification ... is built upon a healthy reverence for God.

There are only three basic reasons why people turn from addictions;

1. To avoid the consequences behind addictions.
2. To reap the benefits of abstinence.
3. Out of reverence for God.

Reverence for God leads us to the word of God to deal with addictions. This in turn, leads us to a reverence for God as being the first principle of concern in resolving the issue of addiction (as well as anything else).

And so, first, God is worthy of telling us His view on addictions.

Other reason for a deeper study of the Word of God for addicts is to build up their faith. We who have been in the habit of putting our trust in an addiction, need to develop and maintain faith in God. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God (Romans 10:17). As quiet as it is kept (though some may deny it) addicts have a small view of God. Addicts have trouble seeing how good God is. Addicts don't understand how merciful and forgiving God is. Addicts have trouble believing that God has all power. It is because of this deficiency of

faith that people lean upon their own understanding and put their trust in idolatrous addictions.

The written Word of God gives us the most accurate description there is of God. **The most vivid description of God is found in the living Word of God (Jesus Christ, also described in the written Word of God.)** Another reason why the addict needs to have their faith built up by studying the word of God is so that they can be on one accord with God as they pray.

A deeper study of the Word of God discloses and eradicates the deception and error on which addictions are rooted. Three basic areas of deceit that give addictions their strength is; the misinformation that they give concerning God, concerning ourselves, and the addiction (itself.)

Addictions discredit God. Addiction, basically, tell us that God is not to be trusted, He doesn't love us all that much, He doesn't know what He is talking about, we don't have to answer to Him (and many other lies, if we were to really think about it.) The lies that are behind addictions concerning ourselves is that we know what is best, we are not all that bad, we can handle it (and again, many, many lies.)

Addictions deceive us into thinking that they can fulfill our lives, they are harmless (or at least don't cause much harm), we could never be under their control ... Jesus said that if we continue in His word then we will know the truth, and the truth would

make us free (John 8:32). The deception behind addictions are dispelled as the Spirit of Truth (the Holy Spirit) applies the Word of truth to our lives.

A deeper study of the Word of God provides us with the greatest alternative to addictions. It is in the study of God's Word that we discover and practice the highest and purest motive behind our abstinence. That motive of remaining abstinent that surpasses any other is simply to love God. We love God because He first loved us. We don't know just how much He loves us apart from His word. We love God as we cling to and embrace His word. We love God as we converse with Him through His Word. We love Him as we obey His Word. As we embrace the things of God, the things of the world lose their grip. We delight in the word of God rather than the things of the world.

*"No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. **Matthew 6:24a***

*Praise the Lord. Blessed are those who fear the Lord, who find great delight in his commands. **Psalms 112:1***

*If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. **Colossians 3:1-3***

The alternative of loving God leads us to “put on the Lord Jesus Christ.” Putting on the Lord Jesus Christ involves being concerned with others as He was. Putting on Christ, also, means that we rely upon His power, His strength and His wisdom to make it through the difficulties of life (including the temptations of addiction.) Most importantly, *putting on Christ provides us with the highest level of sobriety known to man.*

A deeper study of the Word of God teaches us how to help others as well. A study of God’s Word teaches those who have succumb to addictions to repent from living such a self-absorbed life that they are of no good to others. As we study the word of God we are granted closer fellowship with others who do the same. A regular study of the Word of God causes us to become more skillful in its use and thereby being of greater aid to others.

To know the Word of God is to know the mind of God and thereby able to give sound advice to others. The Spirit of God teaches our hands to war (Ps. 18:34), with the sword of the Spirit (the Word of God, Eph. 6: 17), so that we may be able to restore others. The Word of God instructs us on our relationship with others. The Word of God gives wisdom.

If we do not look to the word of God for answers to addictions and rely upon other sources alone, we are acting irreverently towards God.

- a. We are saying that God doesn't know enough- He's a fool
- b. We are saying that God doesn't care enough- He is evil and can't be trusted
- c. We are saying that God doesn't have enough power- He is weak and sorry
- d. We are saying that we don't care what God has to say- I've got all the answers
- e. We are saying that we don't mind on taking a chance of being deceived
- f. We are saying that God doesn't have the right to tell me what to do

A Deeper Study of the Word of God on Addictions

1. A matter of reverence for God
2. Builds faith in God
 - a. Addicts tend to have a small view of God
 - (1) God is good
 - (2) God offer's forgiveness
 - (3) God has all power
 - b. Being on one accord with God/providing communion with God
 - (1) God speaks
 - (2) Grounds for praying according to the will of God
3. Dispels deception and error
 - a. About God
 - b. About oneself
 - c. About addiction/sin
4. Provides an alternative to the addiction
 - a. Proper motives for sobriety
 - b. Putting on Christ
5. Teaches how to help others
 - a. Provides wisdom
 - b. The sword of the Spirit (also, James 5:19f.)

Cause of addiction

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The cause of addiction lies within its definition. The attractiveness that these idols pretend to offer are an allurements for us outside of the influence of God. The statements below are not in any order and are not an exhaustive list of the causes behind addictions. They are, however, enough for one to gain a good understanding of the nature and origin, the power and effects of addictions.

Attraction

He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.
Isaiah 53:26-3

I was very much attracted to Herbert Lockyer's "All the Messianic Prophecies of the Bible" in my sobriety curriculum. According to Isaiah, Jesus would not be very attractive to us (on the surface.) Addictions sure do look good on the surface! Now where does that sound familiar?

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it.
Genesis 3:6a

Since I don't think that there is anything wrong with an occasion bag of potato chips for me, I went and purchased a bag yesterday. I could not help but notice the beautiful wrapper that the chips were sold in. It looked as though Christmas had come again!

And then, I remembered how I did some 'soul searching' years ago, while attempting to put an end

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to my cigarette smoking. I thought about how nicely the cigarettes were packaged, and it was like giving myself a present every day. On the contrary, Jesus said that if any man would come after Him, that he is to deny himself daily, take up his cross and follow Him.

A sober look at Jesus, ultimately, draws us to a sober look at addictions. While there are levels or degrees of sobriety, it doesn't get any deeper, higher, or stronger than a Christ-centered approach!

Sin

Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst.
1 Timothy 1:15

A friend of mine recently told me that he was troubled over the latest remarks of his co-workers who had questions about where Cain got his wife and the like? Immediately, I could see that all of this is just a smoke-screen so that people do not have to deal with the real issue that confronts us all. This issue is sin. If they can somehow invalidate the scriptures,

then that just might rule out sin (that's where Satan is leading people.)

In a book titled “Manhood Restored: How the Gospel makes Men Whole”, Eric Mason says that we have four options in our dealings with sin.

Option #1: You can deny that it is sin and accept it as normal behavior.

Option #2: You can attempt to excuse it or justify it.

Option #3: You can hate it and suffer under the guilt of it.

Option #4: You can repent and be cleansed from it.

Jesus is the one and only answer for sin. If we do not allow Jesus to deal with our addictions then they are not dealt with in an accurate measure.

1. We won't have God's forgiveness without Christ.
2. We won't have the wisdom and power that are available in Christ.

Do you need proof that addictions are sins? If addictions are irreverent towards God, then they are sins. The greatest need that we have is reconciliation with God (addiction or no.)

Falsity

For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of the flesh, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity—for “people are slaves to whatever has mastered them. 2 Peter 2:18-19

While this passage is initially speaking about false prophets, it is not hard to see how it applies to those who allure others to addictions.

My wife is a big Tyler Perry fan. I am greatly humored by one of Perry's characters (named Hattie) who has a funny line whenever she is faced with an enemy and about to fight. "This here not what you want", she declares. Addictions and the proponents of addictions are not as gracious. They tell you that "*this is just what you have been looking for.*" Addictions might provide us with a little pleasure for a moment, but I guarantee you that in the end they only lead to torment. Unlike Hattie, addictions claim to be your friend and they will never, ever tell you, "this here is not what you want."

Under the Influence

John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. Luke 3:16

A friend's explanation of what it means to be baptized really caught my attention. He said that being baptized not only means to be immersed, it means "to be brought under the power of." As an example, he mentioned how that when you immerse a cloth into a pool of red dye, the cloth is brought under the power of the red dye. Another definition for baptizo (Greek) according to Strong's Lexicon is "to overwhelm."

And so, as Jesus baptizes every believer, we are overwhelmed by Him. Therefore, **through Christ, I do not have to be overwhelmed by addictions.** Also, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth. And so, as we are baptized with the Holy Spirit, we are brought under the power, the influence, of truth.

Not many would argue that addictions are idols. One of the Hebrew words for an idol is "a lie". And so, **if I am under the influence of an addiction, I am under the power of a lie.**

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Error

Jesus replied, "Are you not in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God?"
Mark 12:24

Every addiction can be traced to erroneous thinking.

Just as the people had so many questions for Jesus in regards to various issues, there are many questions that one must face in terms of addictions. **Unless we learn what, God has to say about a manner and recognize His ability to deal with whatever situation we may encounter, we will be only left with darkness and confusion.**

Worship

And you, my son Solomon, acknowledge the God of your father, and serve Him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will reject you forever. 1 Chronicles 28:9

That which we worship we commit ourselves to.

And what we commit ourselves to we worship. I am forever grateful for the footnote by C.R. Ryrie in his study bible from John 4:24 which explains that, "The English word "worship" was originally spelled "worthship" and means to acknowledge the worth of the object worshiped.

The fact that we are willing to commit ourselves to that which we are addicted to is proof enough that addictions are idols. And whereas these addictions are not worthy of our commitment, God is! Whereas an addiction does not give just reward for our commitment, God does.

Ignorance and Apathy

He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? Micah 6:8 (KJV)

God speaks very clearly (especially as we are truly seeking answers)

There is a joke about a pastor asking a deacon, "Do you know what the main problem in the church

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is?". The deacon's responded, "I don't know, and I don't care". The pastor fired back, "You're right, ignorance and apathy". Don't expect God to show you something if you don't really want to know! (Sometimes, He is gracious in showing us anyway.)

Edward T. Welch offers the following on addictions in his pamphlet titled, "Just One More."

“Human beings want freedom. Change means putting up boundaries, and that doesn’t feel very free. Add to this the fact that we crave something because we like it. Do you really think that a casual flirting with change will be enough? So, think about it. Are you ready to change? Do you actually want to change? You are open to the idea of change, but what are your conditions?”

- You want it, but without having to break a sweat.
- You want it because you are supposed to want it.
- You want it, but not at the cost of saying goodbye to something you love.
- You want it—sometimes
- You want it—tomorrow.
- You want it simply because it will make life a little easier or bring hope back to a relationship.
- You want it, but you are waiting for God to take away your cravings.

The Real Us

This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. 1 John 4:10

“It may be shocking to some, but the fact is, **it is in our natures to seek after addictions/idols**. John Calvin is quoted as saying that **the heart of man is an idol factory**. It is normal for people to be involved with addictions. But for the grace of God, anyone can become addicted to one thing or another. It is within the nature of man to sin. Given the right circumstances, any of us could become guilty of some of the most detestable acts of sins. Faith in Christ, on the other hand, is a supernatural act produced by the Spirit of God.”

Turning to God from Idols- Madison

Stubborn vs. Broken

Yet they would not listen to their judges but prostituted themselves to other gods and worshiped them. Unlike their fathers, they quickly turned from the way in which their fathers had walked, the way of obedience to the Lord's commands. Whenever the Lord raised up a judge for them, He was with the judge and saved them out of the hands of their enemies as long as the

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judge lived; for the Lord had compassion on them as they groaned under those who oppressed and afflicted them. But when the judge died, the people returned to ways even more corrupt than those of their fathers, following other gods and serving and worshiping them. They refused to give up their evil practices and stubborn ways.
Judges 2:17-19

This is just one example of **the cycle of idolatry** practiced by the nation of Israel. **Addictions can run in cycles as well.**

At the core of any addiction is stubbornness.

Stubbornness rejects reason. And reason is the place where God wants to meet so that we can see the way He wants us to go. A broken heart is the cure for stubbornness. I once heard that the greeting among believers in Christ in a certain nation was to ask the other person, "Are you still broken?".

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise. Psalm 51:17

While God leads us in establishing and maintaining an intimate relationship with Himself, our brokenness becomes one of the greatest attitudes.

Brokenness requires humility. Brokenness gives us insight. Most importantly, God approves (even seeks) our brokenness.

There is a direct correlation between idolatry and hardheartedness. Since, the opposite of a hard heart is a broken heart, then for us to thoroughly repent from idolatry we must have a broken heart.

The true aim of brokenness is to make us humble enough to side with God. Pride is the one thing that prevents us from humbling ourselves. In a book titled “Idolatry and the Hardening of the Heart”, Edward P. Meadors wisely states;

“We usually do not think of pride as an idol. And yet the inclination to place one’s self in the place of God is endemic to human nature. All human beings have the natural inclination to think a lot more about themselves than they think about God. It is therefore true that human beings in practice think and act as if they themselves are more important than God. Thus, if thinking and acting are valid indicators, human beings attribute more worth to themselves than to God.”

Meadors goes on to say that “repentance thus occurs out of an awareness that one’s true value and worth is only discovered in a peaceful and honest relationship with one’s Creator and not from servitude to one’s own creation—whether material or mental.”

Deceived by Satan

*And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.
Luke 2:7-9 (KJV)*

Some would argue whether the birth of Christ was the most glorious moment in history, or whether the day that He paid for our sins on the cross was the most glorious. One thing that we all can pretty much agree on is **that there is no glory in an addiction.** Unfortunately, the devil wants us to believe that there is. I still remember my very first encounter with crack cocaine, and how I felt that it was what I had been looking for all my life. I did not realize how deeply I had been deceived by Satan and my own flesh. We are warned of this in Isaiah 5:20.

*Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil;
that put darkness for light, and light for darkness;
that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!*

Praise God for the light that is in Christ! John said that Jesus was the true light (John 1:9). Praise God

for showing us that light! Jesus Himself said, "many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them."

*Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.
Hebrews 2:1 (KJV)*

Pronounced

*Now the Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the Name of the Lord. And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation.
Exodus 34:5-7*

If there is one thing that I know for sure, it is that whenever we give ourselves to an addiction, we have an inaccurate view of the true and living God, ourselves, and the idol/addiction that we pursue.

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No one can define either like God Himself. No one can define addictions like God. No one can define you and I like God. And, no one can define the solution to addictions like God either.

However, I found a piece of writing by an unknown author on heroin to be quite interesting in defining an addiction that matches God's description (it doesn't just apply to heroin.)

“King Heroin”

“King Heroin is my shepherd; I shall always want. It maketh me to lie down in gutters: it leadeth me beside troubled waters. It destroyeth my soul: it leadeth me in the paths of wickedness for its own sake. Yea, I shall walk through the valley of poverty and will fear all evil: for thou, Heroin, art with me; thy needle and thy capsule try to comfort me. Thou strippest the table of groceries in the presence of my family: thou robbest my head of reason; my cup runneth over with sorrow. Surely heroin addiction shall stalk me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the damned for ever.”

Decisions

*So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do,
do it all for the glory of God.*

1 Corinthians 10:31

How do we glorify God by indulging in an addiction?
Now, that should be one of the first questions we ask
ourselves!

**Ralph O. Burns gives five basic questions that we
need to ask ourselves with each decision that we
make.**

1. Does it glorify God?
2. Is this thing a weight?
3. Is it becoming a habit?
4. Is this thing a stumbling block to others?
5. Is it a wise thing to do?

For Such a Time as This

*For if you remain silent at this time, relief and
deliverance for the Jews will arise from another
place, but you and your father's family will perish.
And who knows but that you have come to your
royal position for such a time as this?"*

Esther 4:14

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We have been really, really blessed with some of the most tremendous Bible-based resources on addictions over the last 20 years. There was a time that I would search bookstores and libraries for the resources that we are now endowed with (during my struggle with crack.) It was in the mid to late 1990's that God began to lead me into such writing.

Because I had no means of publishing my work, I started asking that God would give us people who would bring such an approach to the masses. In my most recent search on "Google", I am pleased to find that God has gone so far beyond my expectations that it is 'intimidating'. I was especially pleased over my new Facebook friend Michael Ray Dixon who has authored "Casting Down Idols."

In such a time as this we need people who will present a biblical approach to addictions (especially as to the true nature of addictions, which is the offensiveness of idolatry.)

“Idolatry is far the most frequently discussed problem in the scriptures” - *Idols of the Heart*, David Powlinson

Perhaps, this is because the One who inspired the scriptures knew that idolatry would be an ever-increasing problem.

The Futility of Idolatry

O God, you are my God, earnestly (early, KJV) I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water. Psalms 63:1

Although this verse was written by David hundreds of years before Jeremiah, Jeremiah 2:13 has a similar theme.

My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.

*"What fault did your fathers find in me, that they strayed so far from me? They followed worthless idols and became worthless themselves."
(v.9).*

The point is that **addictions never truly satisfy**, they never will. I (myself) and multitude are here to testify. Some died in testifying. 1 Corinthians 6:13 says that "the body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body". Allow me a little poetic license stating that the body is not meant for addictions, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.

Insanity

The Lord said to him, "Who gave human beings their mouths? Who makes them deaf or mute? Who gives them sight or makes them blind? Is it not I, the Lord?"

Exodus 4:11

It is as though God is asking Moses, "Have you lost your mind?". And so, it is anytime we cannot see our way out of an addiction. Except we see God for who He is... we are only shortsighted.

And not only that, our view of the Lord is even greater than what was shown to Moses. Jesus said to his disciples, "blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." Those things that Jesus spoke of have been passed down to us over the centuries.

The ultimate answer to addictions is a God who would reveal Himself to man in person (Jesus), live a holy life, take the penalty for our rebellious idolatry (death), and come back to life afterwards.

This is complete recovery. Paradise found as John Milton would say. And so, it is that Isaiah asked the question that reflects Exodus 4:11.

*Have ye not known? have ye not heard?
hath it not been told you from the
beginning? have ye not understood from
the foundations of the earth? Do you not
know? Have you not heard?
The Lord is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.
He will not grow tired or weary,
and his understanding no one can
fathom. He gives strength to the weary
and increases the power of the weak,
Isaiah 40:21, 29-29*

*Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong
and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.
Psalms 24:8*

Just the other day, I cried. I cried in anguish for the first time in years. Many of my tears until that time had been out of joy. I could not remember the last time I had cried in anguish. I was out of my mind (though some would not define the incident as such). But then, my thoughts were not sane because I was not focused on the Lord at that time. And it was at that time that God reminded me of Who He is and what He does as He did with Moses, and from there I was filled with joy.

The Heart is Deceitful

And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly. Matthew 26:75

Peter thought he knew his own heart. When Jesus said that everyone would be offended because of him, Peter said that though everyone else might be offended of Christ, he would never be offended (Matthew 26:31-35).

Have you ever said that you would never indulge again?

Never put anything beyond your selfish, sinful nature. But for the grace of God, anyone can become involved with or return to drugs, alcohol, prostitution, sodomy, theft, murder, rape, etc. Anyone.

Peter, later, found out the weakness of his flesh, as he denied Christ three times (Matthew 26:69-75). We can easily deceive ourselves into thinking that we love God as we should, until our faith is put to the test. John Piper has stated that, "God wills to know the actual, lived-out reality of our preference for him over all things. And he wills that we have the testimony of our own authenticity through acts of actual preference of God over his gifts." This is why

I recommend fasting for those who are working on breaking the chains of addiction as well.

(An excerpt from *Turning to God from Idols: A Biblical Approach to Addictions* by Gregory Madison)

Humility: Christlike

So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said to him, "This is what the Lord, the God of the Hebrews, says: 'How long will you refuse to humble yourself before me? Let my people go, so that they may worship me.

Exodus 10:3

"How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me?"

This is a question that God asked Pharaoh. It is, also, a question that can be very well asked of someone who is engaged in the pursuit of an addiction (or is not seeking the Lord in their abstinence of an addiction.)

James 4:10 says, "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up." The only way to deal with addictions is to humble ourselves. It is in humbling ourselves that God gives to us His direction and power to do the things that are pleasing

Cause of addictions

in His sight. It is in humbling ourselves that we become more like Christ.

As quiet as it is kept, God does not just want us to be free of addictions, but to become more and more of a reflection of Christ.

Addiction: Perversion

*When He came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen: "Blessed is the King Who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke Your disciples!" "I tell you," He replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out." **Luke 19:37-40***

You have been created to give honor, glory, and praise to the Most High as He reveals Himself. The most distinct revelation of God is Jesus Christ (He is the exact image of the Father.) An addiction is a perversion. Perversion- the alteration of something from its original course, meaning, or state to a distortion or corruption of what was first intended.

While God has created all things for a certain use and enjoyment, it is perverse for us to allow them to

be our 'king'. Many, many have said, in so ways, that if we do not bow to the true of living God, then we will bow down to something else (false gods.) Throughout the history of man, there have been hordes of addictions.

As quiet as it is kept, the most hideous and perverse addiction that one may practice is the constant and systematic rejection of Jesus Christ. It is from this addiction that every other addiction is derived.

I can offer you many proofs behind this statement. Here is just one:

Jesus is the truth. If you reject the truth, what do you have left? A lie. Right? Well, addictions are but lies.

Reverence vs. Idolatry

*The fear of the Lord leads to life,
And he who has it will abide in satisfaction;
He will not be visited with evil.*
Proverbs 19:23

***Reverencing God is a perfect counteraction
to addictions.***

Cause of addictions

The fear of the Lord is everything that addictions is not. Addictions lead to death. Addictions do not satisfy. And, addictions bring many evils. It is no wonder why Ed Welch has titled one of his books on addictions, "Addictions: A Banquet in the Grave".

In my own writing, "Turning to God from Idols", God has shown me that the two basic reasons that we can accurately label addictions as idols are because they dishonor God and they have no lasting value. Although the first principle bears the greatest importance, we shall consider the second.

“In the previous chapter, we exposed how addiction is wrong because it is an act of false worship (which is an insult to God.) By the same token, people disrespect themselves and others by relishing addictions. The very nature of idolatry is impractical. One of the definitions for an idol comes from the New Unger’s Bible Dictionary. An idol is “an empty thing, rendered elsewhere ‘trouble,’ ‘iniquity,’ ‘vanity,’ ‘wickedness,’ etc. The primary idea of the root word seems to be emptiness, nothingness, as a breath or a vapor. The Hebrew word for idol (*awen*) denotes a vain, false, wicked thing and expresses at once the essential nature of idols and the consequences of their worth.” Just like idols, addictions have an emptiness about them.” (an excerpt from *Turning to God from Idols*)

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The effect of an addiction is the absorption of our attention. Addictions, also, devour our time, resources, relationships... our lives. They cause us to be unstable and unfruitful in many areas. Addictions cause us to be less human and are a threat to society.

One Thing

*One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in His temple.
Psalms 27:4*

I used to go to Narcotics Anonymous meetings. It took me years of prayer, study, and conviction to completely reject the 'disease concept'. And so, I cannot endorse every word of their philosophy. But there is a passage on page 3 titled "Who is an Addict?" that applies to the text I have chosen.

"Most of us do not have to think twice about this question. WE KNOW! Our whole life and thinking was centered in drugs in one form or another-- the getting and using and finding ways and means to get more. We lived to use and used to live. Very simple, an addict is man or woman whose life is controlled by drugs".

One thing has the addict desired. One thing, the servant of God desires. Kind of reminds me of a statement by Edward T. Welch that I often quote (from *Addictions: A Banquet in the Grave.*)

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"Imagine having drug cravings subdued by the joy of knowing and obeying Christ. Imagine having temptations lose their allure because there is more pleasure in walking humbly with our God. Imagine waking up and strategizing how to please the God who loves you rather than where you will get your next drink."

Laying Down Our Lives

This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. 1 John 3:16

Years ago, there was a commercial which gave an accurate description of the interaction between an addict and their addiction. For the life of me, I don't know why it was ever discontinued. There was a voice that asked a person, "Would you steal for me?" The person would then answer 'yes'. Another person would appear. The same voice would ask, "Would you desert your family for me?" The person would hesitate and then say yes. There were perhaps several other questions of that nature, until the voice would finally ask, "Would you die for me?" And the person would answer (with hesitation) yes. Then the same

voice that would say that this was the voice of addiction.

That's just not what God has call us to. **We all have something to offer to others.** I used to tell a friend who “see-sawed” with sobriety that he had to stay clean because he "owed" me (I got something from him whenever he was sober.) Often, people say "I'm not hurting anyone." Well, that's not true, we hurt people by not helping people. And there are so many people that need our help.

I remember years ago, having about \$700-\$1000, about to go get some crack, I came across a man in a wheelchair with no legs who was holding a can. Immediately, I decided that at least the \$50 that I gave to him would not be wasted on crack! I only wish that I had of given myself to the Lord at that time.

Addiction: An Unreasonable Master

Then the officers of the children of Israel came and cried unto Pharaoh, saying, Wherefore dealest thou thus with thy servants? Exodus 5:15

Pharaoh and the demands that he placed on the Israelites were beyond reason. It appears there was no reasoning with Pharaoh. It was the same way for me, as I engage in the practice of various addictions. God would often remind me of Psalms 32:9a.

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Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding. (KJV)

I, in turn, would go my own way. I was being unreasonable.

Addiction makes unreasonable demands on people, just as Pharaoh the Israelites.

The old folks used to say that "sin is a cruel taskmaster". Now, don't get me wrong! I am the last one who will tell someone that they should turn from their addiction for what they can get out of it alone. I believe that **the number one reason for abstinence should be out of reverence towards God**. But, it is within that reverence that I am stating that God desires to bless me with the benefits that come with sobriety. It is within that reverence for God that I am looking for God to be glorified through the benefits that I reap.

Idolatry: Inhumane

So they took the bull given them and prepared it. Then they called on the name of Baal from morning till noon. "Baal, answer us!" they shouted. But there was no response; no one answered. And they danced around the altar they had made. At noon Elijah began to taunt them. "Shout louder!" he said. "Surely he is a god!

Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened." So they shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed. Midday passed, and they continued their frantic prophesying until the time for the evening sacrifice. But there was no response, no one answered, no one paid attention. 1 Kings 18:26-29

During the days of Elijah, there were those who chased after a false and lifeless god named Baal. Today, there are those of us who chase after a false and lifeless god called addiction. After 7 years clean and sober, I can still recall shouting for my addiction, just as these Baal worshippers. Though I never slashed myself physically, I injured myself spiritual, emotionally, and mentally in many ways in the name of my addictions. And, just as the Baal worshippers I engaged in frantic behavior (an understatement.).

The beautiful thing about clinging to the true of living God is that we become more and more like Him through the intimacy that He affords. It would stand to reason that since God is the Creator, then not only does life come from Him, but He knows more about life than anyone else.

Looking for life in an idol is beneath us.

As we are created in the image of God, God wants to fellowship with us. To deny Him of this is irreverent. Not only is idolatry irreverent towards

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God, it robs your fellow man of what you would be able to give to him because of the relationship that you would have with a God who wants to use you for His glory.

Barren/Fruitful

Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; Genesis 1:28a

The fruit that addictions bear is totally different than what God had in mind when He created us. One of the greatest fears that I had while "frolicking" with all my addictions was that when I died people would go to my gravesite and say, "He wasn't about nothing. He did nothing. He helped no one." One of my greatest fears while being absorbed in my addictions is that I would be fruitless.

The contrast between the fruit that addictions offer and the fruit that comes through an ongoing relationship with Jesus Christ is incomparable. We have at least two verses in the scriptures that present the difference.

What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now

having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.

Romans 5:21-22

*By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples... You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. **John 15:8, 16***

(I encourage you to read vv. 1-17 for yourself)

Stability

*And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation: the fear of the LORD is his treasure. **Isaiah 33:6***

What a comfort, a joy it is to have the **stability** that the Lord promises to those who acknowledge and honor Him. On the other hand, addictions/idols only provide empty promises.

One of the promises that addictions are sure to deliver is instability.

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An example is the description of what happened whenever Israel turned from the living God to lifeless idols as stated in Deuteronomy 28:66-67.

And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life: In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see. (KJV)

Life and Death

*You boast, "We have entered into a covenant with death, with the grave we have made an agreement. When an overwhelming scourge sweeps by it cannot touch us, for we have made a lie our refuge and falsehood our hiding place. **Isaiah 28:15***

Does not this describe addiction? In a study which I have titled "Marks of Idolatry" there are probably over 800 such references on idolatry found in the scriptures (mostly out of Isaiah and Jeremiah.) It has been wisely said by many that one of the biggest lies that Satan tell us is that we can find life in an

idol/addiction. John 1:4 tells us that life is found in Christ.

About 700 hundred years before Isaiah penned the verse above, God told Israel that He had set life and death before them (blessings and curses) and told them to choose life. He said for them to love the LORD God, listen to His voice, and hold fast to Him. "For the LORD is your life" (Deut. 30:19-20).

When we look at addictions in this manner, we see a choice that is clear, plain, and simple that we are all called to make. Romans 6:23 conveys that clear and simple choice as well, "For the wages of sin (idolatry) is death, but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord" (emphasis, mine.)

The Brevity of Life

Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. James 4:14 (KJV)

Last week I was sitting in the sun waiting for a bus to come. Since it was a bit cold outside, I decided to wait where the sun was shining. After a few moments, when I started getting cold, I discovered that I was in the shade. Now, how did that happen? (thought I) Well, I guess that within that brief period of time the sun had moved enough to put me in the shade. It made me think of how brief our lives are

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and the fact that **addictions are such a waste of time.**

I have recently been thinking about an experience that I had with the Lord as I 'hunkered' at a shelter 8 years ago for a weekend of recuperation, before going on another drug-run. The Lord started convincing me that I should stay at the shelter and help others, while He would provide the restoration that I needed. I'm glad that I took Him up on the offer! That was the end a homeless cycle that probably lasted for about 18 years.

However, it is unfortunate that after God had blessed me with housing, for 7 months, I went back to using drugs (for 6 months), It is only by the grace of God that I was able to keep the apartment and once again start a life of sobriety which has now lasted for 7 years. Yet and still, I will always remember how God was telling me that I had better things to do with my time through a passage in Ecclesiastes that is related to the verse that we looked at in James.

*So, I commend the enjoyment of life, because there is nothing better for a person under the sun than to eat and drink and be glad. Then joy will accompany them in their toil all the days of the life God has given them under the sun.
Eccl. 8:15*

The Pride of Addiction

*At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. **Daniel 4:34***

It is justly believed that **addictive behavior is insane**. Nebuchadnezzar's sanity was restored as he gave credit where credit is due. ***Pride is at the heart of every addiction. At the least we are saying "I'm in control", "I do what I want."***

The irony of addiction is that we start by trying to control a substance, behavior, or whatever it is that we are attracted to, and in the long run- it controls us. We are only in our right minds when we are fully surrendered and in agreement with the Lord of heaven.

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Temptation

*Does not wisdom call out? Does not understanding raise her voice? **Proverbs 8:1***

It can never be said that God does not allow us a way to escape temptation. Another well-known verse says;

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 you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it.

1 Corinthians 10:13 (KJV)

But even before then God gave us Deut. 30:14

But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it. (Read vv. 11-14, KJV)

We can even go back as far as Genesis 4:7

If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it.

The voice of wisdom is strong and powerful. It is available to all. It is calling to you, it is calling to me. Wisdom reflects the gospel which tells us that whosoever believeth on Him (Christ) has everlasting life. It is no wonder why Christ is also called the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:24).

There is no higher form of sobriety known unto mankind than that which is found in Jesus Christ.

Addiction's Liabilities

For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall man give in exchange for his soul?
Matthew 16:26

While Jesus was commenting on the futility of wealth, his words, also, can be applied to the futility of addictions. The following is a list of at least a few of the liabilities of addictions:

1. Addiction is idolatry
2. Addiction is a poor use of energy
3. Addiction is a waste of time
4. Addiction is a waste of money
5. Addiction endangers your health

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6. Addiction endangers your safety
7. Addiction endangers the safety of others
8. Addiction is non-productive
9. Addiction tears relationships apart
10. Addiction is a bad example to others
11. Addiction is the improper use of God's creation
12. Addiction supports those who supply others with harmful substances
13. Addiction reinforces a false sense of security
14. Addiction is a stumbling block to others
15. Addiction gives a bad testimony

The Price of Freedom

*Didn't we say to you in Egypt, 'Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians'? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!" **Exodus 14:12***

As I read this verse, I was immediately reminded of the Mississippi Mass Choir presentation of "The Birds".

In a small town in Georgia, a man met a little boy with a cage of birds in his hand. He said, "Son, what you have there?"

He said, "I have a cage full of wild birds". The man said, "well what are you gonna do with them, son?"

He said, "oh, I'm just gonna take them and I'm gonna play with them, and I'm gonna tease them, and I'm gonna taken them in the woods and kill every one of them".

The man's heart was touched with compassion. He said, "What you take for them, son?"

"Mister, they ain't no good."

"I didn't ask you that. I asked you what would you take for them?"

"Mister, they just a cage of wild birds."

"What's your price, son?"

And the little boy thought he'd make a killing. He said, "Alright, mister. If you want them then the price is high. They're gonna cost you a dollar a piece."

The man said, "You got a deal."

So he paid it and carried the birds on the outskirts of town on a little hill. And he opened the door to the cage and said, "Little birdies, I paid the price. You're free." But the birds had been in the cage so long, and the door was wide open. They wouldn't come out. So he took his hand and put it in the cage. And the birds would fly on his hand and he would bring them to safety. And he'd hold them up and say, "Little birdies, you're free because I paid the price."

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Picture with me nearly
2000 years ago, Satan met
Jesus. And Jesus asked
Satan, "Satan, what do you
have there?"
Satan said, "I got a world
full of sinners."
"What you gonna do
with them?"
"Oh, I'm just gonna
play with them, I'm gonna
tease them, fill them full
of the world, and I'm gonna kill them."
Jesus' heart was touched
with love and compassion.
"What you take for them, Satan?"
He said, "Oh, they ain't
no good. You got a lot
of liars, adulterers, people
that's perverted, whore
mongers. They no good, I tell ya. "
"What's your price?"
He said, "Alright. If you
want them then the
price is gonna be high. It's
gonna take your sweat, it's
gonna take you giving up
your omnipresence. It's
gonna take your very life."
"You made a deal, Satan."
Nearly 2000 years ago,
He took his cross on the
outskirts of Jerusalem
on a hill called Mount
Calvary. He said to you
and to me,

"I paid the price. I was
wounded in my head
for your evil thoughts.
Wounded in my hands
for your evil touch.
Wounded in my feet for
your evil walk. Wounded
in my side for that
inordinate affection
toward lust. Bled in my
mouth for your evil talk."
He says to you
and to me, "I paid the price."

Influencing Others

*Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who
spoke of the grace that was to come to you,
searched intently and with the greatest care,
trying to find out the time and circumstances to
which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing
when He predicted the sufferings of the Messiah
and the glories that would follow.*
1 Peter 1:10-11

Peter is describing the noble and worthy preoccupation that enveloped the distinguishable prophets of old who diligently pursued the things of God.

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What a contrast this is to the pursuit that I once practiced in what appeared to be the glories of an addiction and my own sufferings which would follow.

But let's not just consider the effect that addictions have on ourselves! Just as the prophets of old, we are all given the responsibility of sharing the truth of God to the next generation (even if we have no offspring.) I heard of a study that shows us the significance of passing noble values.

Leaving a godly legacy for your children should be the goal of all Christian parenting. Although the faith and godliness of your children is ultimately the work of the Holy Spirit, God often uses the influence of parents to make a great impact on their children. A great example of this is Jonathan Edwards, the Puritan Preacher from the 1700s. Jonathan and his wife Sarah left a great godly legacy for his 11 children.

At the turn of the 20th century, American educator and pastor A.E. Winship decided to trace out the descendants of Jonathan Edwards almost 150 years after his death. His findings are astounding, especially when compared to a man known as Max Jukes. Jukes' legacy came to the forefront when the family trees of 42 different men in the New York prison system traced back to him.

Jonathan Edwards' godly legacy includes: 1 U.S. Vice-President, 3 U.S. Senators, 3 governors, 3 mayors, 13 college presidents, 30 judges, 65 professors, 80 public office holders, 100 lawyers and 100 missionaries.

Max Jukes' descendants included: 7 murderers, 60 thieves, 50 women of debauchery, 130 other convicts. 310 paupers (with over 2,300 years lived in poorhouses) 400 who were physically wrecked by indulgent living. It was estimated that Max Juke's descendants cost the state more than \$1,250,000.

This is a powerful example showing how a parent's leadership can have a profound effect on their children.

Eyes Fixed on Jesus

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith. Hebrews 12:2a.

At times, I am shocked, really shocked over my wife's attitudes towards me. Just yesterday, she and I had a casual discussion of how blinding the lights are at our church in the choir loft, as she sings. She said that every once and awhile a friend will ask if she saw them in the audience while she was in the choir loft. My wife then said to me, "The only one that I look for is you " (me)

The 'lights' of the world (addictions included) have the potential of blinding us. We must determine that our focus will be upon He alone who is worthy of our complete attention and adoration!

Another time that I was shocked over my wife's attitude towards me, came within the conversion of a

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mutual friend (in my wife's absence.) As I encountered this acquaintance that I had not seen in a long time, I mentioned my wife. Though, he and my wife had been close for years, he did not know that she and I were related to one another (in any shape, form or fashion.) And so, when I said something about "Joanna", he asked, "Joanna who?" After I told him who I was talking about, I was really, really shocked by his response. "Oh, you're *the husband*, she speaks very highly of you", he said. I am ever grateful for a wife who respects me as the Church should respect its Head.

Addictions are very highly spoken of. They are given much respect. The best plans for dealing with addictions is to render unto Jesus the honor and reverence that He deserves and to think and speak very highly of Him!

Mother's Approval

Then said his servants unto him, What thing is this that thou hast done? thou didst fast and weep for the child, while it was alive; but when the child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread. And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead,

wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me. 2 Samuel 12:21-23

As I approached eminent defeat in a recent contest, **I was reminded of all the times that I had to face up to the wreckage of my addiction and go on.** I vividly remember how I used to be so concerned about the strain that my actions had placed on the relationship that I had with my parents and would pray that God would heal. Many, many years later my mother died. I did not grieve initially. It was probably about 3-6 months later, I experienced something that I will never forget.

My mother died before I had been clean and sober for any length at one time. It was while I was at Opportunity Farm in Warsaw, Missouri at (at Christian rehab. owned by City Union Mission in Kansas City, Missouri) that I had this strange occurrence. The director (Ted Grable) had a unique gift of explaining things in such a way that you don't see the connection until the very end.

As Ted shared the devotion that day there was something that he said that suddenly caused the image of my mother's face to come to my mind with sorrow and disapproval (I think that she was even crying, I never could stand to see my mother cry.) This image, immediately caused my head to bend downward and forced my tears so vehemently that I ran out of the room.

That was 20 years ago. Just today, I understand a little more about it. This was a moment of resolution for me (at least in part.) As I am writing this daily entry for Bible Verses Addiction **after being clean**

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and sober for 7 years and losing that crazy contest, I can see the image of my mother's smile.

Denial/Insanity

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness. Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, Who is blessed for ever. Amen. Romans 1:18-19, 25 KJV

Unlike many of my colleagues, I do not endorse every term or phrase that the general community uses in reference to addictions. Denial and insanity are two words that I agree to be an accurate description in defining the persistence of addictions. In *Running in Circles* by Gary Steven Shogren and Dr. Edward T. Welch remark:

Arising out of our alienation from the Living God, 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, and leading to further estrangement from God's kingdom. (key words "defending itself from the truth")

Romans 1:18-32 gives us an extreme view of denial. Denial can be measured in degrees just as sobriety and sanity/insanity. But, whatever the degree, denial holds distinct characteristics.

**Denial- to refuse to believe a teaching.
Denial- refusal to admit the truth or to call something true that is not.**

Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. Isaiah 5:20

Denial is based on a lie. "A lie" is the translation of just one of the Hebrew words in the Bible for an idol. That is just one of the reasons why I believe that addictions should be dealt with in this context.

Insanity is filled with lies as well. Denial and insanity are so closely related that they are hard to separate. I will go more into detail later. Just before writing this entry, I came across a verse that illustrates our discussion quite well.

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And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? Numbers 21:5a KJV

Here we see the denial of the people that God is capable of intervening upon their situation (as He had before) and that He cares enough to do so, followed by the lying accusations. One might say that they were 'losing their mind' (becoming insane.) This is not much different when we look to the idols of addiction while thinking that the true and living God is not able and caring enough to intervene upon our lives.

Insanity-

1. the condition of being insane; a derangement of the mind.
2. extreme foolishness; folly; senselessness; foolhardiness.

Doesn't that sound like the idolatry of addictions? **One of the marks of insanity is to be unreasonable.** Believe me, I know! I have been there in great depths during my life (both while bond to addiction and while not bond.) Within this lack of reasoning is the refusal to acknowledge what is evident along with a distortion of the truth (denial.) It is well said that insanity is doing the same thing

and expecting different results. But it gets much deeper than that!

By my estimation, insanity is very closely related to irreverence for God.

Have you ever been insane or encounter someone in this state? When someone is insane there is a lack of communication somewhere along the way. The insanity of irreverence is a lack of communication. It is not that God has not spoken. The individual has not spoken back. God is saying, “here I am”, our insanity is saying, “no you’re not, so just shut up!”.

A word from God cures us of denial and insanity.

The clarity that is presented in Jesus Christ is beyond compare. As I mentioned, there are degrees of denial and sanity. There are degrees of sobriety, as well. The highest degree of sobriety is Jesus Christ!

Your God

You shall fear the Lord your God. You shall serve Him and hold fast to Him, and by His name you shall swear. He is your praise. He is your God, who has done for you these great and terrifying things that your eyes have seen. Deuteronomy 10:20-21

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Don't you just love chocolate? You have a fondness for sweets? On an elementary level we can say that when we love something or someone because we have a fondness. The same can be true whenever we make something or someone our god. Not only that, we place a value on what we love. This is the core of worship. But we decide of how far we want things to go. (That is, if we will allow ourselves to worship something or someone outside of God.)

Though our chosen text is rich in knowledge, my comments are centered around the phrase "He is your God."

***A god is distinguished by its rule or dominion.
If it has power over you, then it is 'above' you.
If it controls you it is your god!***

Praise is an expression of worship as well. Praise begins within. True praise begins as we think of something or someone in a magnificent manner. Praise continues as we think of the object of our praise frequently. For instance, when someone allows an addiction to become their god, they think about the object of their addiction 'all of the time'.

But praise does not only express itself internally. Praise is most often meant as a verbal expression of the magnificence of a person or object. A god ought to be trusted. Even pagan gods were created for the patrons to have a bumper crop, lots of children, good health... We look to gods to do something towards our benefit. But only the true and living God is worthy of our love and affection, dominion, trust and praise!

The sources of addictions (part 1)

Woe to her that is filthy and polluted, to the oppressing city! Zephaniah 3:1 KJV

Woe to her who is rebellious and defiled, the oppressing city! Zephaniah 3:1 ESV

Filth, pollution, oppressing, rebellious and defiled are all words that describe idolatry in the Old Testament. In my studies on idolatry I have found that the phrases of this nature could conservatively be stretched to six to eight hundred phrases that refer to the expressions of idolatry. Idolatry is the work of the devil, but in my preparation for a workshop to Turning to God from Idols, I was reminded of a quote.

(Satan) "can only overcome him who yields, not him who resists; and hurts him who puts his weapons into his hand, not him who keeps them in his own".
- *The Wiles of the Devil*, 1662, William Spurstowe

The sources of addictions (part 2)

*She listens to no voice;
she accepts no correction.*

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*She does not trust in the Lord;
she does not draw near to her God.
Zephaniah 3:2 ESV*

God is always willing and able to show us the way (Much like He told the Israelites in their exile from Egypt).

*For this commandment that I command you today is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will ascend to heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' But the word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it. **Deuteronomy 30:11-14** (some titled vv.11-20 as "The Choice of Life and Death")*

I am tremendously grateful for a workbook by Edward T. Welch that God used in the first few months of my 7 years of sobriety which first step is "Listen". (Crossroads: a step-by-step guide away from addiction) Here's the bottom line:

Reverence for God has the capacity of turning people from sin. Where there is a disregard for God, people either ignore sin or seek to justify sin. Sometimes, they even deny sin, claiming that what the Bible says about a matter has no validity. They

are saying that it's not a matter of what God says, everything is judged based on what I think, how I feel; whether it will fulfill my needs.

If you look at most of the programs that address addictions, you will notice that most of them say that the reason people should change is "for themselves". "You've got to do it for yourself", they say. Yet, **the word of God tells us that everything is to be done to glory of God.**

He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.
2 Corinthians 5:15

Furthermore, without the proper motives for doing what's right, people put limitations on the extent of their actions. Oh, we'll do what is required if it's to our advantage. Improper motives provide guidelines which are based on our own understanding- this we will tolerate, that we won't...

Here is a question asked from Reverential Quest:
Is irreverence synonymous with insanity?

For our answer, let's just look at the definition of insanity from the start!

Some of the definitions for insanity are:

1. the condition of being insane; a derangement of the mind.

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2. extreme foolishness; folly; senselessness; foolhardiness.

Romans 1:25 says that people who rejected God changed the truth of God into a lie. Have you ever noticed how someone who is insane makes things up? People who are insane distort the truth. We have a warped imagination when insane.

And so, is irreverence synonymous with insanity? If not, they are inseparably related just the same!

The sources of addictions (part 3)

*Her officials within her
are roaring lions;
her judges are evening wolves
that leave nothing till the morning.
Zephaniah 3:3 ESV*

Governments can become a source of addictions because of the various policies and laws that they fail to set in regards to a certain practice. Should they condone that which is in violation of God's standards thereby are providing easier access to a specific addiction. For instance, pornography may be legal within a country, but not in the kingdom of God.

Another way that governments become a source to addictions is by not providing adequate education and prevention nor proper retribution for violators in every case. Our text even indicates that there are officials who are offenders themselves.

The source of addictions (part 4)

*Her prophets are fickle, treacherous men;
her priests profane what is holy;
they do violence to the law.
Zephaniah 3:4*

So long as there are people who misrepresent the true and living God, there will be people who turn to other gods who they consider to be more worthy of their life and affections. I'll not go into describing how some distort the image of the true and living God except to mention the most important of all. There are many who make little of the blood of Christ. The sacrifice that was made in covering our sins. (In fact, many don't even discuss sin.) A God who does not love us to the degree that He gave His only begotten Son is not as attractive as one who can give to me the momentary thrill of an addiction! So it is that by belittling the sacrifice of Christ that these 'prophets and priests' provide a source for addictions.

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As quiet as it is kept, though some may claim to have the greatest of intentions, this is a rejection of Christ.

"Rejecting Christ is worst habit there is. Hebrews 11:6 says that without faith it is impossible to please God. Jesus said that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:20). We cannot rely upon our own righteousness to save us. We need the righteousness of Christ to be saved from the wrath of God and to live a life that is pleasing to God.

*For He (God) hath made Him who knew no sin (Christ) to be sin for us, that we might be the righteousness of God in Him.
2 Corinthians 5:21(KJV)*

I am inclined to believe that the rejection of Jesus Christ is the worst addiction there is from which all other addictions are born and firmly rooted.

Third world

*"None is righteous, no, not one;
no one understands;
no one seeks for God.
All have turned aside;*

*together they have become worthless;
no one does good, not even one.”
“Their throat is an open grave;
they use their tongues to deceive.”
“The venom of asps is under their lips.”
“Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.”
“Their feet are swift to shed blood;
in their paths are ruin and misery,
and the way of peace they have not known.”
“There is no fear of God before their eyes.”
Romans 3:10-18 ESV*

For years I have longed to write a book that I would title "The Third World of the United States of America." In this book, I would describe the degradation of society. The idea came as I witnessed the conditions of drug infested environments during my drug using days. As I have thought upon the idea for many, many years, underdevelopment is one word that I have found to best describe a third world environment.

When we look at Romans 3:18 we see that there is an underdevelopment in man's relationship with God and with his fellowman. If we would go down the list of characteristics in the entire passage, many of the traits of addiction can be found. The point is—outside of the fear of God, what we “the civilized world” would not exist. I would be the first to admit that whenever I allow an addiction to rule my life, then I am just as uncivilized as the “witch doctor” and outside of Christ I have no righteousness and have the propensity to be as selfish as all the world.

Counterfeit

*So Moses and Aaron went in to Pharaoh, and they did so, just as the Lord commanded. And Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh and before his servants, and it became a serpent. But Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers; so the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments. For every man threw down his rod, and they became serpents. But Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods. And Pharaoh's heart grew hard, and he did not heed them, as the Lord had said. Exodus 7:10-13
NKJV*

Addictions pretend to do the things that only God can do for us.

Everybody knows that it's a lie. God has made this just as evident as when He caused Aaron's rod to swallow the magicians rod. God doesn't offer magic, He does miracles. Magic is an illusion. God is real. The one thing that God asks of us is humility. Pharaoh became hardened when confronted with the truth of God. If he had only repented from the start, then he would not have become more hard-hearted to the point of ruin. Many times, in my addiction, and even now, at times, I to pause and ask myself when will the activity end (if I continue to engage.)

Counterfeits are founded on lies. Lies grow deeper and deeper, bigger and bigger. Jesus has promised that if we continue in His word that we are

His disciples and that we would know and truth, and the truth would make us free.

Preoccupation

the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. Galatians 5:22-23, 25 ESV

Collins Dictionary defines preoccupation as a state of mind in which you think about something so much that you do not consider other things to be important. Contrary to what the world may say, the Scriptures tell us that there is nothing wrong with being preoccupied with God (against such there is no law.)

In many cases, preoccupation is frowned upon and unadvised (as with an addiction.) Preoccupation is one of the reasons that I define an addiction as an idol. One of the ways that we worship is to think so highly of our object of worship that we allow it to consume our thoughts. Though I do not agree with all that Narcotics Anonymous says, I concur with their description of an addict.

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"Our whole life and thinking was centered in drugs in one form or another- the getting and using and finding ways and means to get more. We lived to use and used to live. very simply, an addict is a man or woman whose life if controlled by drugs."

Preoccupation with God is one of the aspects of reverencing God. Reverence is essential to our repentance. It is in our reverence that we express such a preoccupation with God that we acknowledge Him in the manner of which He is worthy.

Completion

So Joshua said to the people of Israel, "How long will you put off going in to take possession of the land, which the Lord, the God of your fathers, has given you?". Joshua 18:3

Here is at least one of the questions that we must ask when intervening upon addiction. I like the way that the question contains the two sides of addictions that need to be addressed. Simply stated in *Turning to God from Idols* the two sides are that addictions dishonor God and addictions have no lasting value.

The first side is how the refusal to abandon our

addictions are a disgrace unto God. The refusal to abandon addictions is not only a rejection of God, but a rejection of the plans that God has for our lives. Just as the Israelites had failed to take possession of the land that God wanted them to have, we fail to go where God wants us so long as we engage in addictions. To refuse to forsake addictions are to say that God is wrong.

The second side is how addictions prevent one from prospering and growing. Addictions are non-productive. They deceive us into thinking that they are for our gain, but we lose more than we can ever imagine by our addictions.

The one thing that binds these two together is a reverence for God in accepting the responsibility He gives us. As a side note, we must consider that so long as our organizations, as well as the general population, does not address addictions a manner that honors God, then we insult the Lord and cannot take possession of the ground that lies before us.

Concluding

Fear and Refinement

*For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.
Jeremiah 29:11*

This was from a scary, uncertain situation in the history of Israel. Ryrie Study Bible says that the passage was from a letter sent to 3,023 Jews who had been taken to Babylon in 597 B.C. to exhort them to live as normal a life as possible, to await God's deliverance after 70 years, and to disregard false prophets.

Addictions can lead to scary and uncertain situations as well. One of the scariest situations that my drug use led to was a face to face encounter with a man who ran a dope house while I was 600 miles from home in a city where I didn't know a soul. I had been hanging out in this dope house for several days, foolishly 'burning' money.

Upon our return from a drug run, I was introduced to a man who I found to be the 'house man'. Since he had been away for several days, he wanted to know who I was, what I was doing there, and whether he should allow me to stay (or just what they should do with me.) To make a long story short,

the final words that this man said were the most scary and shocking words that anyone has ever told me. He said (with hesitation), "You know, there is something about you, something about you. I just can't put my finger on it, but there is something about you. Hmm, something about you, THAT I DON'T LIKE." Thank God that I made it out of that situation unharmed!

The amazing thing is that God is saying the same thing to us that the house man said to me. "There is something about you, something about you!" But, unlike the house man we don't have to wonder and guess what that something is. And instead of saying that there is something about us that He doesn't like, God is saying that there is something about us that HE DOES LIKE. What God likes about us is that we are all created in His image.

That's just one reason why He has plans for us just as He did for Israel during the days of Jeremiah. Perhaps, the preparation is the hardest part. Here's an illustration.

“Refining Silver”

Some time ago, a few ladies met in a certain city to read the Scriptures, and make them the subject of conversation. While reading the third chapter of Malachi they came upon a remarkable expression in the third verse: "And He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver." One lady's opinion was that it was intended to convey the view of the sanctifying influence of the grace of Christ. Then she proposed

to visit a silversmith and report to them what he said on the subject.

She went accordingly and without telling the object of her errand, begged to know the process of refining silver, which he fully described to her. "But Sir" she said, "do you sit while the work of refining is going on?" "Oh, yes, madam," replied the silversmith; "I must sit with my eye steadily fixed on the furnace, for if the time necessary for refining be exceeded in the slightest degree, the silver will be injured."

The lady at once saw the beauty, and comfort too, of the expression, "He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver." Christ sees it needful to put His children into a furnace; His eye is steadily intent on the work of purifying, and His wisdom and love are both engaged in the best manner for them. Their trials do not come at random; "the very hairs of your head are all numbered."

As the lady was leaving the shop, the silversmith called her back, and said he had forgotten to mention that the only way that **he knows when the process of purifying is complete when he sees his own**

image reflected in the silver....

--Author Unknown

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Bible Verses Addictions and bears the philosophy concerning addictions that is found in ***Turning to God from Idols: A Biblical Approach to Addictions*** by Gregory Madison.

Books by Gregory Madison include:

Turning to God from Idols
Sobriety for Christmas
Bible Verses Addictions
(series, plain and illustrated)
The Fear of the Almighty
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