

Deliverance from addictions - 2 ways, man's way and God's way

Webster's definition of addiction – To devote or surrender oneself to something (or someone) habitually or obsessively.

What are some of the more common addictions? Admiration (by others), Alcohol, Anger, Cigarettes, Coffee (and caffeine), Danger, Drugs (illegal and prescription), Envy, Evil, Exercise, Fantasies (sex or romantic or heroic), Food, Glue, Gossip (discrediting others to make me feel better about myself), Hobbies, Internet, Jealousy, Lying, Masturbation, Pornography, Power, Self-pity, Sex, Sleep, Sleeping pills, Sports, Status, Someone wrong for me, Stealing, Swearing, Television, Violence and Work.

We all are or have been addicted, and most of us with many of them. None of us therefore can be aloof, judgmental and without compassion for those plagued by the more obvious addictions just because ours happen to be of the more secret kind.

Eph 2:3 **Among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind...**

In addiction, our flesh strongly desires something (or someone). Our will is taken captive by our flesh and is unable to say no to its insistence that we give in to what it wants.

1 Pe 2:11 **Do not give in to bodily passions, which are always at war against** (and seek to conquer) **the Soul** (the will) – (But the addicted can't say no). TEV

Addictions often come in groups – for example, alcohol, smoking and sex; envy, lying and gossip – why is that? It's because the flesh has an insatiable desire for pleasure and to have its longings gratified. When I keep conceding to the flesh in one area the flesh simply gets bolder and more controlling over my will to give in to it in other areas.

Our heavenly Father's heart concerning addictions– He longs to deliver us from them, not just because they may be harmful to us, and others, they often are. But because we go first to our addiction for relief in tough times and reward ourselves first with our addiction in good times, instead of going first, in love and dependency, to Him. This saddens Him.

Addictions are idols by another name: Since I value or love my addiction more than I love God – because I go to it so often in preference to Him – addictions meet the basic definition of an idol, which is something or someone valued or loved more than God. Every time I indulge my addiction I'm in effect worshipping my idol.

The Bible speaks everywhere about addictions – it calls them the lusts of the flesh – something or someone my fallen human nature strongly wants and wants now. The Bible makes it clear that our basic human nature is unchangeably prone to addictions. But the Bible also provides the most sure way, in Christ, to overcome these lusts, which have the potential to ruin us while we're on earth and the potential of depriving us of Heaven.

Sobriety or relief comes when the addicted person's will is empowered to say no to the lusts of the flesh. For the strongly addicted this can be brought about in one of two ways:

1 A more human solution – long term participation in an AA type of sobriety program:

Man's approach to strengthen the will to say no to the flesh's craving for what it wants, is by attending AA types of meetings on a near daily basis, daily contact with a sponsor and sincere participation in a 12 step type of program. This daily association with others who battle similar desires but whose words testify to the horrors of addiction and the delights of sobriety, greatly strengthen and encourage the will. In this supportive, non-condemning but not-enabling environment (what every Church should be), such words constantly feed the thought life and this empowers the will to over-rule the urge thoughts of the flesh. But often the will and the flesh remain in constant tension. Also as many discover, if this strict daily regimen is not actively maintained the will loses its power and becomes at risk of caving in to the ever present desires of the body. The Bible describes this predicament:

Rom 7:20-8:2 Now if I am doing what I don't want to, it is plain where the trouble is: sin still has me in its evil grasp...Oh, what a terrible predicament I'm in! Who will free me from my slavery to this deadly lower nature? Thank God! It has been done by Jesus Christ our Lord...For the power of the life-giving Spirit - and this power is mine through Christ Jesus - has freed me from the vicious circle of sin and death. TLB - Isa 10:27 The yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing KJV

2 A more spiritual solution— perhaps via AA— finding God through a belief in Jesus Christ

This addicted person has been introduced to the gospel of Jesus Christ and has received by faith God's forgiveness of all of their past sins. As this born again Christian continues to grow in their heart knowledge of God, through believing more of God's words and receiving by faith the fullness of the Holy Spirit, their wills become submitted to God. Their new spirit and God's growing nature within it now keep that Christian's will in surrender to God and empowered to say no to the flesh.

James 1:21 **...Receive with meekness the engrafted word** (of God), **which is able** KJV **to save** (to deliver) **your souls** (your wills - from captivity by your flesh).

Gal 5:16 **Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.**

If spiritual growth continues as more of God's words are believed, God can reveal the rest of the completed work of Christ's Cross, so that this addicted person comes to a place where their will is now dead to their flesh, including dead to its cravings. In this state, if it is maintained, the will, but not the flesh, has lost all desire for alcohol or.....

Rom 6:6 **Knowing this, that our old man** (human nature or flesh) **was crucified with Him** (Jesus), **that the body of sin** (and its addictions) **might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin** (including addictions).

Unseen spirits often seed and fan addictions: Many addictions begin to develop early in our lives when our human nature discovers certain kinds of thoughts or behaviors to be extremely appealing. Sometimes people may be responsible for introducing us to these thoughts or activities. The thoughts also may originate from spirits seeking to influence and control us, in such cases the addiction will reflect the type of spirit it is. Origins aside,

these spirits know what our addictive weaknesses are, and, that when we give in to them we can be kept from God. So, they will tempt us, by giving us thoughts, to yield to those desires for the rest of our lives – till we learn from God how to take their thoughts captive:

2 Cor 10:4-5 **For the weapons of our warfare are...mighty in God** (His word, His Spirit and prayer)...**bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ** (who lives by His word and His spirit in our hearts),

When we live in this place, in Christ, an urge thought from either such a spirit or our own flesh may from time to time show up, but it is easily rejected from the thought life by thinking on a more powerful word from God that was previously believed in the heart.

If however, we neglect God, our now weakened will, may begin to indulge here and there the appetites of the flesh, which haven't changed; it is likely sooner or later that the will is going to yield to the flesh's emboldened craving for alcohol or ... Often this happens with an intensity and demoralization that far exceeds anything previously experienced.

Prov 29:18 **Where there is no** (continuing) **revelation, the people cast off restraint...**

Three basic realities about both man's and God's solutions to the addiction problem:

(1) The flesh's addiction to alcohol or whatever it is, never changes.

(2) With strong and destructive addictions, the addicted person will never be able to "manage in modest proportions" the addiction. For the Alcoholic this means they will never become a "social drinker". Note: An exception is required if the addiction involves the excessive or abusive indulgence of a normal bodily function, like eating. Recovery now means deliverance from the excess and the abuse. Here the spiritual solution is much more likely to succeed since it involves the surrender of the will to God. God can then establish the boundary between acceptable and abusive indulgence of a normal bodily function and He will then empower the will to strictly adhere to it.

(3) Both solutions to the addiction problem require diligent maintenance. For this to work a person must be motivated. For the more human program the primary incentive is to stay sober from the addiction. For the more spiritual solution the primary motive is to become a disciple of Jesus Christ and to lay down one's life to serve God and man. To become a disciple includes being made free by God from every form of fleshly addiction.

John 8:31-32 (Jesus) **If you continue in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth** (My word), **and the truth** (My word) **shall make you free.**

Can I truthfully say that I'm no longer an addict? It depends on which "I" answers. If the "I" is my old human nature, the answer is no: But if the "I" is the new "I" that is joined to and one with Christ, that "I" can truthfully say "I am no longer an addict". How beautiful is that!

Gal 2:20 **I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.** KJV