

“Helping ourselves to help the addict” (2)

Before we begin with this lesson I would like to spend a few minutes to share with you what we looked at in our last lesson. We looked at some of the most common addictions we're faced with today and noticed that some are more obvious than others.

1. Alcohol Addiction
2. Smoking
3. Drug Addiction
4. Gambling
5. Food Addiction
6. Video Games
7. Internet Addiction
8. Sex Addiction
9. Shopping
10. Work Addiction

And we also looked at some statistics which were very concerning and we saw that this can be very challenging if we want to reach out to the addict.

1. A study of 11 and 12 year old school kids, showed that those who demonstrated an awareness of beer ads, held more positive beliefs about drinking and intended to drink more frequently when they grow up.
2. By the time most teenagers get to 15-16 years old, around 80% have already used alcohol and 65% of those have been drunk.
3. In the U.K alcohol consumption has doubled in the last 10 years in young women.
4. Hospital admissions linked to alcohol use have more than doubled in the UK over the last 10 years, to over 200,000 in the last year, and there has been a 20% increase in GP's making prescriptions for alcohol dependency in the last 4 years.
5. Around 95% of alcoholics die from their disease and approximately 26 years earlier than their normal life expectancy.
6. The annual cost of drug abuse in the UK is around £19 billion.
7. Drunk driving is responsible for approximately 50% of motorway deaths.
8. In the UK, around 10% of adults aged 16-59 had used illicit drugs in the last year and for only 15 year olds, 29% reported taking drugs in the last year.
9. Around 180,000 people in the UK have in the past year been in a structured drug treatment program. Heroin was the main drug for which adults over age 18 were receiving treatment, while for those under the age of 18, it was marijuana/cannabis.
10. Kids at school who say they have been taunted or excluded were more likely to have taken drugs in the last month compared to those who had not taunted or been excluded (11 per cent compared to 1 per cent)

We saw very clearly that no-one starts out to be an addict but because of circumstances they end becoming an addict. We also saw that in most cases with any addiction, they become addicts because it helps them change the way they feel about themselves and the world around them.

We also looked at what the Bible has to say about addiction and at first glance it didn't look like it said a lot until we looked at the Greek Word for **addicted**. [Mickelson's Enhanced Strong's Greek and Hebrew Dictionaries](#) says **δουλώω** **douloo** (dou-loh'-o) 1. to enslave {literally or figuratively} KJV: bring into (be under) bondage, become (make) servant

And so after understanding the root meaning of **addicted** which is **enslaved** we saw that the Bible actually has a lot to say about addiction. **Titus 3:3** “At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and **enslaved** by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.”

Galatians 4:9 where says is talking about the law, he says, “But now that you know God--or rather are known by God--how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be **enslaved** by them all over again?”

And finally we spent most of our time looking at the true nature of man.

1 Thessalonians 5:23 “May the God of peace himself sanctify you completely. May your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

We broke this down and looked at what it means to be human and how man possesses a spirit, soul and body. In [Ecclesiastes 12:7](#) we saw the distinction between the body and the spirit. In [Matthew 10:28](#) we saw the distinction between body and soul. And in [Hebrews 4:12](#) we saw the distinction between soul and spirit. We were reminded that we all possess a **soul** which is **self conscience**. We all possess a **body** which is **earth conscience** and we all possess a **spirit** which is **God conscience**. And we went through all of that to remind ourselves that we are all unique individuals, addict or not and we are all created in the image of God. And this is something which the addict has either forgotten or is not aware of.

Today we’re going to look at the importance and attitude Christians should have towards the addict. We’re going to look at the various resources available to help the addict and how they can actually help us to help them. And finally we’re also going to remind ourselves that we too were former addicts and God will and can help the addict too.

A couple go to a marriage counsellor. She said, “**It was all about respect**”. She said, “**He gave her no respect**”. He’ll come home every day, smelling of work, walks past her in the kitchen, doesn’t speak, gets beer out the fridge, won’t even change or wash, grabs the TV remote and plonks himself down in front of the TV and that’s him for the night. Then comes to bed and doesn’t shower until he gets ready for work next day.

He decided to save his marriage. Next week he went to work, took a change of clothes with him. After work he showered, put on after-shave, then his fresh clothes. On the way home he stopped at the florist and bought a huge bouquet of flowers. When he got home he stood at the front door and rang the bell.

His wife opened the door, saw him looking good, smelling nice and holding the flowers. She just burst into tears. Bewildered the man asked his wife “**what was wrong?**” and she said, “**This has been the absolute worst day of my life, the cat got stuck up a tree, I had to call out the fire service; I got a call from school to say that your son has been excluded for fighting; your mother called to say she is coming to stay for two weeks; the washing machine broke and the kitchen is flooded and to top it all off, I answer the door and you’ve come home drunk**”

Once we make up our minds a certain person has lived disgracefully; it’s hard to change our opinion about them. Let me ask you, [what do you see? \(Pictures on PowerPoint\)](#) It was [John Bradford \(1510–1555\)](#) the English reformer and martyr who was best remembered for these words “**There, but for the grace of God, goes John Bradford**”.

These words were uttered by [Bradford](#) while imprisoned in the [Tower of London](#) for alleged crimes against [Mary Tudor](#) for his Protestant faith when he saw a criminal on his way to execution. And that’s what I see when I look at those pictures, “**there, but for the grace of God, goes Mike Glover**”.

You remember the story of Jesus’ anointing in a Pharisees house in [Luke 7](#). And in walks a woman off the street and starts giving the hospitality which the host should have given. And so Simon gets a little upset with this woman and then Jesus turns around and asks Simon in [Luke 7:44](#) “**Do you see this woman?**”

I mean how could he not see her, she’s right there in front of him. The problem was Simon saw a tramp, Simon saw a sinner who just wasn’t good enough for the love of God. And so Jesus more or less tells him that the reason he doesn’t see her clearly is because he doesn’t see himself clearly. One of the amazing things about Jesus was His ability to see people as they could be, instead of as they used to be.

You see loved ones if we’re going to help the addict we really need to look at them in terms of what they can be, instead of what they are at the moment. There are times we need to stop and think and put ourselves in their shoes. Think about it, if an addict comes up to you and asks for help [do you really believe that quoting book, chapter and verse is going to help them?](#)

Yes I understand that the Bible is the source for all things regarding our spiritual life and godliness but the addict isn’t interested in that, they want help. The very fact that they have asked for help should tell us a couple of things.

1. They want to stop the addiction or at least control it.
2. They want to change the way they feel in a positive way.

In the film **Shawshank Redemption** which is about a prison a guy named **Andy** ends up in jail for a crime he really didn't commit and in one of the scenes another inmate named **Red** says to **Andy**, "These walls are funny. First you hate them, and then you get used to them. Enough time passes, you get so, you depend on them".

You see loved ones addiction is very much like that, oh at first you hate yourself for doing it, then you get used to doing it and then after time you learn to depend upon it. Now to most people giving up an addiction isn't a big deal, but to the addict this is huge, this is a serious cry for help. And they have come to you for help, **so what are you going to do?** Now remember if we are dealing with Christians who are addicts, we can help them by taking them to the Bible which we will look at later. But to help the non-Christian addict we need to have a different approach.

Let me give you a scenario, a man walks into our assemblies one Lord's Day, he is obviously an addict because you can see the needle marks on his arms and he asks for help with his addiction **what do you do?** Now you know he really wants help because he hasn't asked you for money to feed his addiction, **so what do we do?**

The first thing we need to do is, listen to them. **James 1:19** "Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters! Let every person be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger". Now remember a vast majority of addicts have low self-esteem, they are used to being around people who either just uses them or around people who simply just don't really care and they very often feel helpless. And so a simple thing like listening to them will actually send them a powerful message that you're actually genuinely interested in them.

Now please keep in mind that everyone is unique and the way we deal with a drug addict may well be different from the way we deal with someone who is addicted to abusing women. But explain to them that what they say will be in total confidence unless their lives are in danger or they are a danger to others. And also explain to them that you may not have the experience to help them but you know people who are.

But the first thing we have to do is listen and after were finished listening we need to ask them the question, **what can we do to help?** Don't go jumping in and tell them that their addiction is not good and they are making a mess of lives; they already know that, that's why they've asked for help. And if anyone knows the areas they need help in it's the addict themselves.

They will tell you what they need to do to help themselves and on many occasions they just need some love and support to help them achieve that goal. And please remember loved ones sometimes there is no quick fix to help these people. **We need to adopt the Lloyds TSB slogan when were helping any addict, 'For the journey.'** As long as they are seeking that advice and putting it into practice, we will help them, no matter how long it takes.

When I'm helping addicts one of the first things I constantly ask them is the question which I constantly needed to keep asking myself when I had addictions. **Remember when Jesus went up to Jerusalem and went up to the sheep pool?** In **John 5:1-6** we find a man who had been lame for thirty eight years and Jesus asks him an incredible question. **"Do you want to be made well?"**

Now I think that, that question on the surface sounds like one of the most unfair questions you can ever ask anyone. And I say one because the other unfair question is found in **Acts 1:11**, when the two men appear to the apostles and ask, **"Men of Israel why are you standing here looking up to the sky?"** My point is we can't help anyone unless they want to be helped. You can't help anyone unless they are willing to make a decision to help themselves.

They have to make the first move, they must want to get well because if they are happy just staying where they are staring into space, you can't help them. So we've listened to them and they have told us that they really want our support. **So what do we do next?**

And I say the word **we** in terms of both the church and the addict, **what do we do next?** **James 1:27** "Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained by the world".

We've got a duty as Christians to help the helpless but also to look after ourselves at the same time. And so depending on the addiction and the circumstances, we begin the support process. Now not only will this test the addict to see if they are genuinely wanting your support but this will also test you as a Christian to see if you genuinely want to help them for the long haul.

And please know there is no shame in admitting that a certain situation may well take us out of our depths and so there are times we ourselves need help to help them. So we can set up another meeting and in the meantime we do our research and find out practical ways we can help them.

And this is where the church comes in and without giving any details unless the person has said it's ok to talk to others about it, we pray for them. **James 5:16** "The prayer of a righteous person has great effectiveness." We pray to God because we recognise that He is the Great Physician not us. We pray to God and ask for wisdom to help this person because we recognise we can't do it on our own. And so after we've prayed we look around ourselves.

Now remember that list of common addictions I shared with you earlier?

1. Alcohol Addiction
2. Smoking
3. Drug Addiction
4. Gambling
5. Food Addiction
6. Video Games
7. Internet Addiction
8. Sex Addiction
9. Shopping
10. Work Addiction

The chances are our congregations are filled with people who were or still are addicts. And so one of the best tools we have at our disposal to help an addict is right in front of us. Now remember that just like an addict doesn't set out to become an addict, it's the same with the Christian. We aren't born Christians, we are born again Christians.

What better person can you get help and advice from to help an addict than a former addict? You wouldn't go to your neighbour for advice about marriage if they were single. You wouldn't go to your local garage to get advice about buying a house. Sometimes the help we need is right on our doorstep and trust me when you approach a former addict for help they will be more than willing to help you out.

Why? Because they have overcome an addiction and they would like nothing more than to help someone else overcome theirs. And that's something we really have really neglected over the years and if we want people to eventually become Christians, these people are invaluable.

So let me ask you what other resources outside of the church can we use to help someone with an addiction?

1. Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)
2. Cocaine Anonymous (CA)
3. Heroin Anonymous (HA)
4. Crystal Meth Anonymous (CMA)
5. Marijuana Anonymous (MA)
6. Nicotine Anonymous (NicA)
7. Narcotics Anonymous (NA)
8. Pills Anonymous (PA)
9. Co-dependents Anonymous (CODA)
10. Gamblers Anonymous (GA)

Now remember we may not be 'professional' councillors but we do have loads of useful tools available to help us get prepared for the next meeting with the addict. Do your research about the addiction, get some leaflets, speak to people who are former addicts within the church and you will find that once you've got some sort of idea what they are going through, you will be in a better position to help.

And so they turn up for the meeting which you arranged what happens next? It's now that you put the plan into practice, or the road to recovery into practice. It's all about putting them in touch with the right people and what your role is in helping them and also what's expected of them.

We ask them again, are you sure you still want to be well? And then we explain that we will continue to help them as long as they are willing to help themselves. And so we go through the options of what help is available. So for example, if we have someone who is addicted to sex, what do we do?

We give them the leaflets which we found and then ask if they are willing to go along to a **Sex Anonymous** meeting which you now know meet every **Tuesday** evening in the nearby community centre. Now this to the addict is absolutely huge and so they may ask you to come with them and I would suggest that you go but find out before hand if you're allowed to because sometimes they have closed meetings where it's addicts only.

Have you ever been to any of these types of meetings? If you have you will know that you get an incredible insight to the addiction which is being discussed. And what that does is helps you in your understanding of the addiction and equips you to help the addict simply by listening to what's been said and how others have overcome their addictions. And so if the opportunity arises to go to any of these kinds of meetings, please go along, they are very helpful.

Now please remember you are not the one going through the addiction, your simply there to support them but they need to be the ones who are pushing forward to try and help themselves. Now I don't want to spend the rest of my time speaking about what happens next.

Sometimes people take the help and then later fall away because they haven't hit rock bottom yet. This is not a failure on your part; you've done what you can with the tools you have available. And remember if addictions were easy to give up, we wouldn't have so many addiction help lines today. But every now and then we will come across people who truly do want to get well.

And so we continue the support, we text them every now and then, we call them every now and then, we visit them every now and then, just to encourage them to keep going with the recovery process. But I say this with caution. The reason you're helping them is to **enable them** to get back on their feet and they will take up a lot of your time if you let them.

You've got your own life and you can't be and must never be on call twenty four seven every time they have what they think is a crises. If an alcoholic calls up and says, '**Mike I need help, I've just had a drink**', you can't help that person especially if they are drunk, so you remind them to call the **appropriate support people**.

And remember if we're helping people and they stumble this doesn't necessarily mean that they have quit trying quit. I didn't become a Christian until I was thirty years old and let me tell you those addictions didn't go away over night. I had thirty years of junk in my life to replace with positive things, so be patient with them.

Now over a period of time you may have begun to build a good relationship up with them and maybe you've never even mentioned the Bible or God for that matter to this point. But remember they came to you; they walked into our place of worship. **Ephesians 5:15+16 "Therefore be very careful how you live – not as unwise but as wise, taking advantage of every opportunity, because the days are evil."**

Colossians 4:2-4 "Give yourselves to prayer at all times, keeping watch with praise; And making prayer for us, that God may give us an open door for the preaching of the word, the secret of Christ, for which I am now in chains; So that I may make it clear, as it is right for me to do."

And so because we're now trying to help them physically, a door may well open at some point to help them spiritually. And that again is where former addicts who are now Christians are invaluable. And remember the church in many ways is like a hospital for the spiritual sick, so we shouldn't be surprised if our congregations become filled with sick people. So when we're helping people who are addicts, introduce them to former addicts who will then introduce them to the Bible.

I remember last year and I won't mentioned their name because of confidentiality reasons, a person came into our mid-week Bible study not long after they had become a Christian. So they came in and you can smell the alcohol in their breathe. Now because we already had some sort of relationship with them, we told them what we we're planning to study that night.

So we went to **Proverbs 23:29-35 "Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaints? Who has needless bruises? Who has bloodshot eyes? Those who stay long at the wine; those who go to seek out mixed wine. Don't look at the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly. In the end, it bites like a snake, and poisons like a viper. Your eyes will see strange things, and your mind will imagine confusing things. Yes, you will be as he who lies down in the midst of the sea, or as he who lies on top of the rigging: "They hit me, and I was not hurt! They beat me, and I don't feel it! When will I wake up? I can do it again. I can find another."**

We talked about how people who are drunk often fall over and end up with bruises which were needless. We talked about how red wine looks great and is attractive to look at and how it tastes good and entices you to drink it. We spoke about how a drunken person will see things which aren't really there and say things they don't even mean. And finally we discussed how people drink to change the way they feel and its gets to the point where they don't feel anything at all.

Now what was interesting about that study was their reaction to the study. After we had finished they said, you sound as though you know what you're talking about. And they were right, a former addict can really relate to another addict and so we went on and got them more help. We set them up to attend an **AA meeting** which we went along for the first two weeks to support them.

Now let me ask you which drink is the drink that gets you drunk? (Pictures of bottled beer) Now let me ask you which joint is the joint that gets you high? (Pictures of joints) (Feedback) It's the first one loved ones because it's the first one which leads to the next and to the next.

You see an addict will very often justify what they are doing by saying, 'well its only one line of coke, I usually have three'. And they will say things like, 'well the Bible says it's ok to drink in moderation'. They will say, 'well the Bible doesn't mention anything about drugs'.

Well, in that long list of sins of the flesh in **Galatians 5:19-21** the apostle Paul uses the word **witchcraft**. Now you might be thinking **what has that got to do with drugs?** Well look at the Greek word which is used there. (**Mickelson's Greek Word studies**) **φαρμακεία pharmakeia** (far-mak-ei'-ah)

1. the use of drugs, potions, and enchantments
2. poisoning ("pharmacy")

So drug taking was very real in Biblical days and I'm sure there were many people who became addicts because of those who were practicing witchcraft. So when we're studying with an addict always remember to remind them that we all can justify our behaviour. But in the words of the Apostle Paul's in **1 Corinthians 6:12**. "All things are lawful for me" – but not everything is beneficial. "All things are lawful for me" – but I will not be controlled by anything".

What an addict needs most of all is **hope** and when they talk to former Christian addicts they will eventually ask the question, **how did you deal with your addiction?** And that's where Jesus comes into His own.

When I was around 18 years old, I was enticed along to a gospel meeting hosted by the Baptist church because of one of my addictions. Not to get help with it but to feed it further. Anyway I said the sinner's prayers and was convinced I had now become a Christian, my friend and I were given a Bible and told to read **Matthew's gospel** and **Acts**. And so after reading them both my friend and I kept reading about this baptism thing and came to the conclusion even though we didn't fully understand it, we needed to be baptised. The next day we went along to the local Baptist church and asked to be baptised and the minister there said, 'No, you need to prove yourself first.'

Now loved ones I took that as a rejection from God Himself and from that point on my life got worse and worse because there was no point to life for me anymore. And when my life eventually got out of control because of many addictions, I met a minister from the Glenrothes church. And after a lot of study we came to the topic of baptism again and I thought to myself, 'oh no, here we go again, more rejection.'

But do you know what he said to me? God loves you and will take you just the way you are. And for the first time in my life I finally begun to understand just a little bit about what was so amazing about God's grace. **Now why am I sharing that story with you?**

Well simply to remind you that many addicts may well want to become Christians but they believe either they are not worthy or they need to fix their lives out first. And so we need to remind them that God loves them and He will accept them just the way they are and He will patiently and lovingly help them in their recovery process.

Addicts also need to know that they are not the first to try to deal with an addiction and sadly they won't be the last. **1 Corinthians 6:9-11** "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! The sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers, passive homosexual partners, practicing homosexuals, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, the verbally abusive, and swindlers will not inherit the kingdom of God. Some of you once lived

this way. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God". Paul says the church in Corinth had former addicts, with emphasis on the word former.

Now look at Colossians 3:5-7 "Put to death therefore your members which are on the earth: sexual immorality, uncleanness, depraved passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry; for which things' sake the wrath of God comes on the children of disobedience. You also once walked in those, when you lived in them." Paul says the church in Colossae had former addicts, with the emphasis on you once walked.

And I can say with certainty that within most of our congregations today the chances are there are a few former addicts. Whether its sex, video gaming, stealing, drunkenness or abusive behaviour, the chances are we have former addicts all around us.

In Romans 6 the apostle Paul points out that those who have been have put to death the old man and have been raised to walk in a new life. He points out that this new life is not one of sin, but of devotion to God. Romans 6:12+13 "Therefore don't let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. Neither present your members to sin as instruments of unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God, as alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God."

Paul says that we made the choice to die to sin and live to Christ, so we can make the choice not to let sin rule us. And please note he does not say that it is an easy choice. Just like making the choice to give up any addiction is not easy, neither is the decision to become a Christian.

Now I know that we don't like sharing our testimonies with people but I believe this is one area where we can really help the addict. They need to hear how you were before, they need to hear what you did to help your addiction, they need to hear how Jesus can help them and finally they need to see the results in your life.

And so loved ones just to summarise what we've actually looked at today. We've looked at the importance and attitude Christians should have towards the addict. We've going to look at the various resources available to help the addict and how they can actually help us to help them. And we've also been reminded that we too were former addicts and God will and can help the addict too.

In our last lesson we're going to look at some positive addictions and how they can be a very useful way to replace those negative addictions. We're going to see that some addictions are actually very good for us and can actually help people get through those negative addictions.