

ADDICTION

Break the chains that bind you!



Addictions come in all shapes and sizes, from shopping to sexual addiction to drug use. For Daniel, it started with a seemingly natural teenage curiosity, but later in life his addiction to porn nearly destroyed his marriage. By the age of 21, Candace's addiction to sex had led her into more sexual encounters than she could remember. Ryan's craving for marijuana left him unmotivated for anything else in life for 13 years, including time with his family. Judith's fibromyalgia led her to an addiction to pain meds. Simone's addiction to shopping destroyed her two-year relationship with the man she loved. After twenty years sober, Stacie relapsed into alcohol abuse until it nearly left her hopeless.

These true stories are not unique. The fact is most people have addictions. Whether they are guilty pleasures or seemingly innocent, all have an addictive personality. We all have a void within us that we strive to fill with different things and yet these things only seem to bring temporary satisfaction. Whether it is drugs, alcohol, video games, social media, coffee, smoking, gambling, pornography, or some other vice, we are all just trying to fill a void. The problem arises when we stop striving for a purpose driven life and instead seek pleasure to give our lives purpose instead of seeking purpose to give our lives pleasure.

Attempting the Impossible

While all of us have things in our lives that can turn into addictions, we must specifically be cautious of those things that are chemically or psychologically addictive that damage our lives and relationships, like alcohol, porn, gambling, any mind altering drugs, and other vices which gain control over us. When I used to smoke cigarettes I remember at times running out and having panic attacks in the middle of the night because I had no more cigarettes. I knew then that I didn't control smoking. It controlled me.

Is there anything harmful in your life that you can't seem to live without? When we find ourselves unable to live without these vices, they begin to own us and we need to break free, but this is easier said than done. While many are in denial about their problems, there are also many people who realize they have a problem and want to quit. If you realize your problem, there is hope. There is a way out and some of the steps outlined here can help you overcome your addiction, but the first step is to recognize that you have a problem. The first key to quitting is admitting!

Once you admit the problem, you must then admit your helplessness to defeat it on your own. So many people continue to fail and fall because they refuse to recognize their weakness and give their

problems over to Christ, but Jesus said, "Without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). We must admit that overcoming any sin is impossible on our own. That does not mean we can stop making the effort to quit. While it is impossible on our own, "with God all things are possible" (Matt. 19:26). Paul says to "work... for it is God who works in you" (Phil. 2:13). When we work with God, according to His will, He gives us power. That means we must attempt the impossible, trusting that God will give us the power. When we say, "God, I can't do this, but I am going to try anyway," we are walking by faith.

Do you remember the story where Jesus was walking on water and Peter called out to Him, "If that's you, command me to come out to you on the water." Jesus replied, "Come," and Peter walked to Jesus on the water (Matt. 14:29). Peter did the impossible because He had faith in the word of Jesus. This is the key to overcoming. The Bible says we are "saved by faith," we must "stand by faith," and we are called to "walk by faith" (Eph. 2:8; Rom. 11:20; 2 Cor. 5:7). When we believe God will supply us with the power to do the impossible, we must pray and step out by faith.

Surrender for Survival

There are countless war stories of soldiers whose only chance of survival was to surrender. It's

the same with getting victory over our vices. We must surrender, not to the vice, but to God. We must turn the steering wheel of our lives over to God and say, "Okay, I've tried things my way and it didn't work. Now I'm ready for you to drive my life." Surrender is a key to victory. It is giving up our will to God, saying, "Not as I will, but as You will" (Matt. 26:39). When we surrender our will to God, He takes over.

The key to breaking the chains in our lives does not come through personal strength and self-will, but through prayer and surrendering our will to God. You see, the Bible says that "we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but...against spiritual hosts of wickedness" (Eph. 6:12). Satan seeks to hold us in the chains of addiction and he is too strong to defeat on our own. We must have a power from above. That's why the victory does not come by fighting, but on our knees through prayer. When we learn to constantly pray for God's power, we will find strength.

In addition to prayer, we can fast. Jesus once said "this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting" (Matt. 17:21). While fasting often refers to abstaining from food for a period of time, it does not necessarily refer to food. If you are addicted to drugs, alcohol, or junk food, do a food fast to clean out your system and clear your mind, but if you are addicted to social media, do a media fast. This will help restore

mental clarity. Give up internet, television, and even music for a day, a week, or a month

Practical Tips

There are also many practical things we can do to get the victory over addiction. Cut off associations with people who lead you into temptation (Jas. 4:4). Replace bad friends with good ones. Join a support group. Avoid situations that draw you into temptation, making "no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts" (Rom. 13:14). Get rid of things in your life that lead to temptation. Jesus said, "if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off" (Matt. 5:29). For example, if addicted to porn, get rid of the internet and movies with nudity. If addicted to shopping, cut up the credit cards.

It is not enough to give up things. You must also replace bad habits with good. Jesus told a story of a man who emptied his house of an evil spirit, but didn't fill it back up with good things, so "seven other spirits more wicked" returned and filled the house (Matt. 12:45). The point is, don't just stop doing bad things, but replace bad things with good things. If you are an addict, volunteer with an addiction recovery ministry. Get involved. Also make health changes. If you are overcoming drugs, alcohol, or some form of physical addiction, try a healthy vegetarian diet along with starting up an exercise routine.

Time for Victory

It's time to defeat your demons, overcome your addictions, and start dreaming again! Start living the life God planned for you. God has great plans for you, "to give you a future and a hope" (Jer. 29:11). Those plans are still waiting for you if you will give control to Jesus, but if you try it on your own, your best laid plans will not satisfy. The fight against addiction is on your knees in prayer. Won't you pray with me right now? Say to God, "Father, I have sinned against you and I am helpless to stop, but you have promised to save me from this. I can't do it, but you can. I give my life to you and ask you to help me make the changes and save me from myself and my addiction!"

Now get up and live like you believe it! You may fall again. It's okay. Just keep getting back up, "For a righteous man may fall seven times and rise again" (Prov. 24:16). Jesus said we may fall "seventy times seven" (Matt. 18:22) and still have forgiveness, so keep praying and trying until God gives you the victory. Jesus wants us to pray with persistence until He gives us the victory so get out there and start putting into practice what you read. God will get you through this. Just trust Him. He's on the case.

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