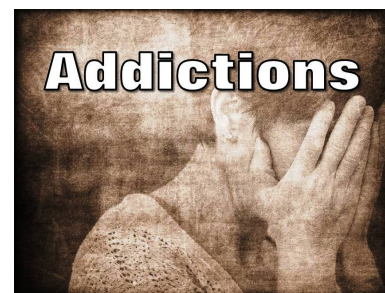


Church of God Sunday School

THE DEVIL'S WORKSHOP #9 – ADDICTIONS



DAILY READINGS:

- ❑ **Monday:** Do not make room for fleshly lusts (Romans 13:14; Ephesians 2:2-3; 1 Peter 2:11).
- ❑ **Tuesday:** Do not be under the influence of alcohol (Proverbs 20:1; Ephesians 5:18; Galatians 5:19-21).
- ❑ **Wednesday:** Be careful of what you look at (Job 31:1; Psalm 101:2-4; Matthew 5:28).
- ❑ **Thursday:** Your body is the temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20).
- ❑ **Friday:** Replace old habits and friends with new (Proverbs 14:7; 1 Corinthians 15:33; Colossians 3:7-10).
- ❑ **Saturday:** Do you need a spiritual heart checkup (Psalm 139:23-24; Proverbs 4:23; Luke 6:45)?

MEMORY VERSE: *"But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."*
– Romans 13:14

Addictive Behaviors

Can you imagine a world without computers, cell phones, or the internet? These examples of technology can often be found almost everywhere in our culture (stores, schools, homes, cars, etc.). Many people are calling this time period the Information Age. Information is collected, stored, and shared to educate, improve living conditions, and prevent disasters. By looking at some collections of important information (statistics), perhaps we can be alerted to another very dangerous tool of the devil (*Sources: NSDUH, CDC, Baylor University*).

- teenagers check their cellphones at least 60 times per day
- nearly 90 percent of all smokers began smoking in their teens
- 33 percent of 15-year-olds have had at least one alcoholic drink
- on an average, young people are exposed to pornography at the age of 12
- 90 percent of boys and 62 percent of girls have viewed pornography before the age of 18
- more than 80 percent of teens, ages 12 to 17, reported gambling at least once in the last year
- approximately 50 percent of high school seniors do not think it is harmful to try crack or cocaine



All of these statistics are describing addictive behaviors. The word *addiction* is not limited to substance abuse (drugs, tobacco, and alcohol) but also includes behaviors such as gambling, viewing pornography, playing video games, and even internet usage. Studies have shown that many people are addicted to social media or cell phones. The costs of treating all these addictions are in the billions of dollars. Yet, the devil tells the Christian young person: "This will not happen to you." Is that true?



What Is Addiction?

One definition of addiction is, to become dependent on a habit-forming substance or activity. With time these substances or activities have a bad effect on the user's health, relationships, education, job, and finances. There are many different reasons why people are tempted with these things. Some people try because of peer pressure, others because of curiosity, some out of boredom, and others to escape pain (physical or emotional). Some addictions begin because few limits are set on things that are enjoyable (such as, electronic devices). Teenagers are especially vulnerable to addictions, since the decision-making part of the brain is not fully developed until they are at least 25. Because of this, teenagers are more likely to be impulsive and risk-takers and



are less likely to think things through. Many addictive behaviors begin during the teen years.

Addictions are progressive. They first begin as desires, but desires work like this: the more you feed them, the stronger they grow. These desires can never be satisfied for very long; they always want more. Soon attitudes of "it's no problem" and "I can quit anytime" become "I must have it" and "I can't stop." In a very short time, addictive substances or activities become a regular part of one's life. What began as just a desire has become an addiction. Addiction becomes the master, and you become its slave.

What Does the Bible Say?

Does the Bible forbid specific addictive substances or behaviors? Although you will not find a verse that says, "Do not smoke tobacco" or "Do not view pornography" or "Do not gamble," God's Word has many principles that fit all these addictions (and more). The best way to withstand this tool of the devil is to use the Word of God. Romans 13:14 warns us to "make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." There is a danger in making "provision" (giving a place) to these desires. Ephesians 2:2-3 tells us that giving in to those desires was how we lived before giving our hearts to Christ. First Peter 2:11 warns to "abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." Philippians 3:18-19 describes the "enemies of . . . Christ" as people "whose God is their belly ['appetites'; AMPC]."

The Bible also says "be not drunk" (Ephesians 5:18). Any substance (not just alcohol) or activity that weakens your ability to hear God's voice or your conscience, that impairs your self-control, and makes you more likely to commit other sins **MUST** be completely avoided! Proverbs 23:29-33 talks about people who are under the influence of alcohol. Their "heart" (or mind) is not thinking clearly. One version says, "Your mind will play tricks on you." To be under the influence of any addiction is contrary to the way God wants His people to live. Your body is God's temple (1 Corinthians 6:19-20), and He expects you to keep your temple undefiled (1 Corinthians 3:17); in other words, free of dirt of pollution. Because addictions affect your thinking, you will become less and less interested in reading your Bible, praying, meditating, and attending church services. Your ability to think clearly about spiritual things will become impaired. God will no longer have first place in your heart.

**Just
Say
No**

What Should You Do?

In the 1980s and 1990s this popular slogan was promoted by First Lady Nancy Reagan as part of the United States' War on Drugs: "Just Say No!" Likewise, 1 Corinthians 10:14 tells us to "flee from idolatry" (idolatry is anything that you want more than God). The best way to prevent addictions is to never give in to those desires, not even once! Yet, it is not only a matter of self-control. You need God's help to withstand these temptations. "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 13:14).

**Flee
From
Evil**

It is only through daily contact with Him that you can be strong enough to resist this tool of the devil.

What if you have given in to temptation and tried some of the habit-forming substances or activities described in this lesson? What should you do about it? First, it is most important that you ask God to forgive you and give you the strength to resist temptations in the future. It might be necessary to include fasting with prayer (Matthew 17:21). Second, talk to someone who can pray with you and give you good spiritual advice. Do not try to handle this by yourself. Third, recognize and remove triggers. Are there certain friends, places, songs, movies, or videos that make you more likely to give in? Do you have certain thought patterns that enable your addictions? If so, it is time to replace old friends and old habits with new ones. Last, but not least, identify and begin to work on the reason you gave in to the temptation. What is in the heart will come out. Someone with a godly heart desires to "glorify God" in his or her body and spirit (1 Corinthians 6:20). However, a weak spiritual heart will have little or no resistance to temptations.

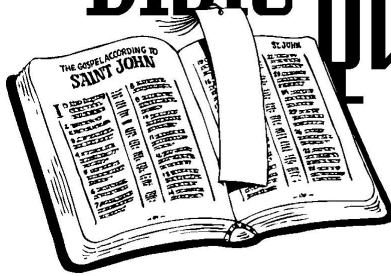
When it comes to addictions, many people feel that there is no hope, but God's Word says, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13).

If you want to get rid of an appetite:

- **you must starve it, not feed it**
- **you must be intentional, not accidental**
- **you must replace it, not ignore it**

– Tim Elmore

Bible Quiz



1. What is the definition of *addiction* given in the lesson? _____

2. What are three examples of substance abuse? _____

3. What are some examples of addictive behaviors? _____

4. What are some of the reasons people are tempted with addictive substances or behaviors? _____

5. What does "make not provision for the flesh" (Romans 13:14) mean? _____

6. What does it mean to keep your temple undefiled (1 Corinthians 3:17)? _____

7. What is idolatry, and why should we "flee from" it? _____

8. What is the best way to prevent becoming addicted to something? _____

9. What does "put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 13:14) mean? _____

Overcoming Addictions

NEVER START!

- Don't Look at Pornography
- Don't Take a Drink
- Don't Smoke
- Don't Bet

Create New Habits

Cellphone Addiction

- **Create "No Cellphone" Areas**
 - bedrooms
 - mealtimes
- **Digital Diet**
 - delete addictive games
 - limit social media checks to once or twice a day
 - turn phone off for at least one hour per day
- **Technology Fast**
 - unplug from all digital devices for one evening each week

Pornography Addiction

- **Be aware: porn is no longer limited to certain magazines**
 - Porn can be found in movies, videos, social media, texting, apps, etc.
- **Be honest: admit you have a problem**
- **Accountability: ask for help**
- **Seek God's help: prayer & fasting**
- **Create new thought habits**
- **Exchange smartphone for a flip phone**
- **Identify & avoid triggers**

Starve the Addiction

Ask for Help
Parent, Pastor, Spiritual Leader, Trusted Adult

Read God's Word

- **Philippians 3:13-14**
- **1 John 1:9**
- **1 Corinthians 10:13-14**
- **James 4:7**
- **Matthew 17:20-21**
- **Hebrews 4:15-16**

Remove Temptation