



Your Guide to Helping the Addict

In all phases of our daily life, there is potential of encountering a person who has a problem that most of us don't know how to deal with. One of the most common, yet at the same time most destructive problems faced by people today is that of chemical addiction. You may be involved in high school fellowship and someone confesses a dependency on drugs or alcohol. You may be at work and encounter an employee who has a "drinking problem". There are countless situations that could arise where you are face to face with a person with an addiction problem. The first reaction (especially from someone who does not come from an addiction background) is that of "What do I say?"

Why Is There So Much Addiction?

We live in an age of anxiety where everyone has his own standard of normality. As a society, we are caught in a mindset of escape where many turn to sedatives and painkillers to relieve the pain and anxiety of the loss of normality. We are PROGRAMMED to turn to everything from aspirin to Valium, Librium and the number one tranquilizer, alcohol, for one reason – ESCAPE.

Living under the cloud of World War III and the threat of nuclear holocaust creates a conscious and subconscious anxiety, which leads to the desire for escape. The means of escape are that of drugs and alcohol. We begin to use chemicals NOT to feel good; we use chemicals so that we don't feel AT ALL. It becomes a vicious cycle of escapism, denial, and other sin strongholds. As you will see in the process to healing, the Lord Jesus Christ is our only solution to the disease of anxiety and the subsequent disease of addiction.

As an illustration, I was once talking to a young lady and she stated frankly, "Sure, I smoke a little dope. I mean, there is no hope in this world so at least I can feel good by getting high." In this statement, there is a truth (there is no hope in this world) and a lie (so at least I can feel good by getting high [escaping]).



The reality of the addict's situation is no different than any other sinner. He is lost in his addiction and this addiction, left untreated, will ultimately lead to his death. But there is freedom from this problem and an offer of hope (from Jesus), where there seems to be no hope (from this world). That freedom and hope is the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

"But Some People Seem To Be Hopeless Cases"

I must admit that I have made this statement. It seems that no matter how bad things get, the addict continues on in his destructive behavior. What will the addict do, without the saving Grace of Jesus Christ, when things go wrong? He will "seek another drink". (see Proverbs 23:29-35)

But there is no "hopeless" person according to God's Word. Jesus said "...but with God all things are possible". (see Matthew 19:26) you see, God is the only real solution to the addiction problem. "They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and they are at their wits end. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He brings them out of their distresses." (Psalm 107)

"But What Can I Do?"

Below is a series of steps, sort of an "outline" that may be helpful to you in pointing an addict (or even an occasional user) in the direction of freedom --- to a personal relationship with Jesus.

1. Expose the lie:

If the addict confesses an addiction problem, you need to go to the next step. If the person is using and is not confessing a problem, you need to point out that drugs, like a game of Russian Roulette, is a loaded gun. And the longer you play the game, the greater the chances that the gun will go off, with the results being the same as that of Russian Roulette.



2. Reveal The Truth:

You need to tell the person that true freedom is experienced only through Jesus Christ. Drugs are not the way; they are a lie; and they lead to death. But Jesus is the way, He is the truth, and He is the life.

3. Point To A Program:

Recovery from addiction is an uphill journey and requires definite expenditure of energy and a definite program to change WHOLE sets of circumstances (attitudes, environment, relationships and goals). There are five recognizable stages that the addict must pass through to attain complete deliverance and experience the blessing of Christian Wholeness. Most of the time, this takes a structured, organized program.

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A FINAL WORD

If you are in situations where you have consistent opportunity to minister to the addiction community, you will most assuredly encounter a person who will resist your words of warning. Then will come the time when a crisis situation will occur and the addict will come to you (because you have shown you care) to "bail him out". It is very important that you allow the addict to go through what ever it takes to wake him up. Every time an addict is rescued from a crisis of his own making, the message of reality is intercepted. You can remind him that you still care and that you will help direct him to a program and that you will pray for him and that you will love him. But if you protect him from crisis and confrontation, you are only prolonging his healing process. Know also that this is a legitimate first stage on the road to recovery and allow it to take place in God's way and timing.

May God bless your efforts in this area. Remember, the words of the Lord ---
"Truly I say to you, in the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine,
EVEN THE LEAST OF THEM, you did it to Me." (Matthew 25:40)