

## **Introduction to Addiction - Class Notes**

By Christopher Wells 7/2010

Addiction is another word for idolatry. Anything that we look to in order to obtain something that we were created to only receive from God becomes an idol. By doing this we are committing the sin of idolatry and we become addicted to that counterfeit source for those things that we have been seeking from it. An idol can be money, power, drugs, relationships, control and manipulation – the list is endless. Consequently any idol we have is also an addiction – the two words are synonymous.

We are created to be addictive beings. We are designed to be addicted to God to meet all of our needs, but in our fallen state we continually look to other things to provide for our needs. These beliefs do not necessarily get corrected when we get saved. In fact, the Bible says that believers should be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:1-2), meaning that our beliefs should continually be transformed from those of the lower/fleshly nature to those of the mind of Christ.

GENESIS 2:25 The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

It is very interesting that shame is mentioned here. The word for shame here means “worthless”. Adam and Eve had no feelings of worthlessness at this point. Now why would God record that here, immediately after the creation story? What is the relevance? I believe that this verse is actually an introduction to the next chapter – the fall of man. As we will see later, the fall of man is the story of how idolatry opened the door for the spirit of Shame to enter the world and begin to be a dominating influence in the actions of mankind.

GE 3:1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

“Did God really say...”

Satan is attempting to plant doubt in Eve’s mind about what God has said. By perverting what God had said in Eve’s mind, Satan is able to plant the lie in Eve’s mind that God cannot be trusted, and set up the pathway to idolatry and addiction.

Note that when Eve repeats what God had said, that she does so incorrectly. God did not say “...you must not touch it, or you will die” (Genesis 3:3) as Eve states. God said, “...for when you eat of it you will surely die.” (Genesis 2:17). Perverting the truth of God in our minds is the chief aim of Satan so that we will

then believe the lies he is speaking to us. Make no mistake about it, it is Satan and his demonic spirits that are whispering the lies in your ear that are keeping you in the bondage of addiction and idolatry, and it is your choice to continue to believe them. Stop believing the lies, believe the truth, and the addiction disappears. Sometimes this is an easy process; sometimes this requires long-term discipleship.

This, then, is the lie Eve comes to believe: "I cannot trust God to meet my needs." This is the first lie that the demonic attempts to deceive us to believe and it is necessary for us to believe it in order to be bound up in any addiction.

GE 3:6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

"...desirable for gaining..."

This is a key phrase to teach us the next component of addiction. If we come to believe that we cannot trust God to meet all of our needs, next we look to something else besides God to help meet those needs. We see this thing as desirable in order to gain something. We are seeking to gain from this behavior, this relationship, this substance, et cetera, what we do not believe we can obtain from God. We hereby come to believe the second lie that is necessary for us to be bound up in addiction: "\_\_\_\_\_ is my greatest need." Fill in the blank with your particular idol: alcohol, controlling and manipulating others, a relationship, food, sex, money, power, the need to be continually viewed as a victim and be cared for by others, hypochondria, and so on and so forth. The addictive agent then becomes the vehicle that we believe will obtain for us what we believe God will not give to us.

It is interesting to note that the first ungodly addiction mentioned in the Bible is a food addiction. Eve believed that by eating a certain food that she would gain wisdom. Note that it also said that Eve saw that the fruit was "...good for food and pleasing to the eye."

The addictive agent or addictive behavior can be defined as that thing which we idolize and seek to obtain from what we believe is necessary for our happiness and wellbeing, but that God is either unwilling or unable to provide for us.

GENESIS 3:7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

GE 3:8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. <sup>9</sup> But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"

After Adam and Eve took the forbidden fruit – their idolatrous addictive agent of choice in this case – they became slaves of Satan. The scriptures tell us in Romans 6:16:

"Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey--whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?"

Having become slaves to Satan – a fallen angelic being, they were now under his direct influence and control. He then had their permission to feed them lies from his underlings. The demonic spirit of Shame then told them more lies. "You are worthless. No one could love you like this." Consequently, Adam and Eve came to believe in their own minds and hearts the following lies: "If you really knew me, you wouldn't love me," and, "I'm a bad, unlovable person who is unworthy of love." So they began to hide their true selves from each other using fig leaves and attempted to hide from God in a vain effort to prevent themselves from experiencing feelings of worthlessness.

So then, the next lies Adam and Eve believed and that were necessary to cause their addiction came from the demonic spirit of shame and can be defined in two parts as follows:

- a) I am a bad, unlovable person who is unworthy of love.
- b) If you really knew me, you wouldn't love me.

They believed the lie that they were bad, unlovable, and unworthy of love. They no longer believed that they were intrinsically valuable and of immeasurable worth to God. Once they had chosen to believe that they could not trust God, and that they were bad, unlovable, and unworthy of love, they had a problem. They were now directly responsible for creating value and worth for themselves. Mankind's need for worth and value is a core need. We MUST feel that we are worth something. People who feel completely worthless and unloved commit suicide.

Human beings cannot live without feeling worth something. Some people get into abusive relationships because they believe that they are unlovable, but if someone is taking the time to abuse them then they are of SOME value to the abuser - even if it is only to be the object of their of their abuse. Others embrace self-hatred, hoping to generate feelings of pity in others and inspire

them to rescue them in an effort to illicit some sense of value for themselves by the fact that someone else is attempting to rescue them – therefore they must have some value and worth as a person.

Adam and Eve began to believe that they were worthless and as a result began hiding from each other and from God. Some living being had planted this in their minds – the demonic spirit of Shame. God makes a statement supporting this fact when He asks Adam, “WHO told you that you were naked?”

Adam and Eve had experienced no rejection before, they had no other person to witness who had demonstrated a shameful spirit before. Why would they immediately feel shame after they sinned? It wasn't the convicting power of the Holy Spirit that caused them to feel shame. Conviction draws us towards God, not away from Him. It was a spirit of Shame, a demonic presence, that told them they were now worthless because they had sinned and they believed this evil spirit and took these beliefs as their own.

As a result of their feelings of shame and worthlessness Adam and Eve came to believe that they were only valuable and loveable and worthy because of what they DID, not because of WHO they WERE or more correctly WHOSE they were (God's beloved children). Consequently THEY believed they were responsible to generate value and worth for themselves by DOING something to create worth. This is where works righteousness and perfectionism come from. This is the next lie that we believe and that supports addiction: I must generate worth and value for myself by what I DO.

Let's look at those verses again:

GENESIS 3:7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

GE 3:8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. <sup>9</sup> But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"

Shame causes us to do two things: 1) Hide from ourselves and others, and 2) Attempt to DO something in an effort to generate feelings of self-worth. As a result of shame Adam and Eve began to hide their true selves from each other (the fig-leaf clothing), and to hide from God. People living under the demonic influence of shame often feel like they are never an accepted part of the group, never a most valued person, never loved for who they really are. Often, no matter how hard they try to do what they believe will please God and others,

they can never feel truly accepted, because they have believed the lies of the enemy that they are worthless and unlovable. This is why some of the people we often consider to be the most successful in life often confess they are miserable and/or commit suicide, because they constantly drive themselves to perform in order to generate feelings of value and of worth – but because they are serving an idol instead of believing they are intrinsically valuable to God it is never enough.

Putting all of these lies together, we can gain a picture of the lies we believe if we are addicted to something:

- 1) I cannot trust God to meet my needs.
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_ is my greatest need. (fill in the blank with the idolatrous addictive agent or behavior).
- 3) I am a bad, unlovable person who is unworthy of love.
- 4) If you really knew me, you wouldn't love me.
- 5) I must generate worth and value for myself by what I DO.

God wants us to be addicted to Him, not anything or anyone else.

The way to break the back of addiction in our lives is to come out of agreement with these demonic lies and embrace the truth of God:

- 1) I can trust God to meet all of my needs all of the time because He loves me at all times.
- 2) Being intimate with and in the presence of God is my greatest need.
- 3) I am a person of intrinsic value and worth to God.
- 4) God knows everything about me and loves me just the way I am. He is not always pleased with my behavior, but He always loves me.
- 5) My worth and value comes from WHOSE I am not what I DO. God loves me and values me because I am His child and He created me with intrinsic worth and value, not because of what I do.

**Where do our false beliefs come from today?**

Adam and Eve are the ancestors of us all. By their disobedience sin entered the world and these five lies became part of the fallen nature of man. As such, we are all BORN with these lies ALREADY FIRMLY ENTRENCHED IN OUR SIN NATURE. They are part of the operating system of our computer if you will, already pre-installed by Sin. These lies are further reinforced by core wounds that we receive in our childhood, usually during by the age of about 7 or 8, although they can occur after this point. It is important to note that we do not have a cognitive awareness that we hold these beliefs in our mind. Yet they are seared into our spirits and become the driving force of almost every decision we make in life. These false core beliefs become the foundation of addiction in our lives.

Often these false core beliefs are reinforced by demonic forces seeking to keep us bound up in addiction so that we do not fulfill the destiny that God has prepared for us. These demonic forces can often be generational, but can also enter in through wounds that we receive from other sources.

Addiction is an act of worship. By acting out in an addiction we are praying to our gods to enter our situation and change something for the better. We do this because we don't believe or are ignorant of the truth that God will supply all of our needs according to His riches in glory. We unknowingly choose to trust in ourselves rather than God. Deliverance from addiction is not only breaking the association with the demonic forces that help to keep us bound to un-Christ-like behaviors and beliefs, and receiving forgiveness for our sins, but renewing our minds to think and believe according to the truths found in God's Word.

Deliverance from addiction is a journey in much the same way our pursuit of Christ-likeness is a continual journey, with more and more freedom around every bend in the road for those who choose to pursue Him. The road to deliverance from addiction is often long and often requires the person seeking deliverance from addiction to pursue their recovery in an environment where they are surrounded by a group of fellow-believers who are similarly pursuing deliverance from addiction. The reason for this is that accountability and safe intimacy with like-minded people who will reinforce the true core beliefs of God's Word is absolutely necessary for long-term deliverance from addiction. Deliverance from the tormenting influence of the demonic forces oppressing you can be accomplished in an instant, but when the house is swept clean, if the mental beliefs that resulted in the addiction in the first place are not dealt with, the demons can and will return, making the second state of that person worse than the first.

I want to make it clear that God can do whatever He wants, however He wants. He can deliver a person from an addiction in an instant and they will never have another problem with that addiction for the rest of their lives. God may very well

deliver some of you in this way today. However, it has been my experience that often God chooses to complete the deliverance process over a lengthy period of time. If a person seeking deliverance from addiction cooperates with the Holy Spirit in the context of mentoring relationships with other believers, a person's thoughts and beliefs are changed to line up with God's Word over time. In this way their character is changed into His character and they gain the wisdom and training that is needed to live a lifestyle of freedom in Christ and to help deliver others for whom instantaneous deliverance is not forthcoming.

The process that God often uses for deliverance from addiction is the following:

- 1) Identification of the manifestation of addiction.
- 2) Repentance of the idolatry by which we have exalted the idolatrous addictive agent to the status of a god in our lives.
- 3) Deliverance from the demonic forces helping to keep the person bound in their addiction.
- 4) Identification of the false core beliefs that have helped to fuel the addiction and replacing those false core beliefs with biblical truth so that new, Biblically correct thinking and behavior patterns are established.
- 5) Identification and healing of core wounds that helped to reinforce the false core beliefs and allowing God to come in and heal those core wounds so that the gate to addiction is closed and freedom from addiction can be maintained.

This is a tremendous simplification of a process that can take years to complete. There is not time enough in this session to delve into the intricacies of what this looks like. Often steps three and four are carried out in the context of a recovery group with people who have been trained in this process. I want to encourage each of you who has been battling an addiction that in Christ you are well able to take the land! You CAN cross the Jordan and defeat the giants of addiction with the help of the Holy Spirit and other believers in your life. However, I don't want to give you a false hope that this will always be accomplished in a short period of time. You can have significant victories very quickly, and today can be one of those. But consistent commitment to pursuing a Biblical path to recovery from addiction is required if you want to walk in the fullness of deliverance and not simply take back a piece of your life, but the whole territory. Freedom is yours in Christ, but you cannot have it without doing your part to fight for it.

Are you ready to commit to the journey! Amen!

### **The Biblical antidote to the false core beliefs:**

Truths:

1. I can trust God, and I am totally dependant upon Him for my needs. (Proverbs 3:5-6)
2. My greatest need is to know God and to be known by Him. (John 17:3)
3. I am a person of great worth and significance, for I am created in the image of God for His glory. (John 3:16)
4. I am completely loved and accepted by God. (Romans 5:8)
5. I am a person of worth and value to God because I am a child of God and made in His image, not because of anything I DO. (Psalm 139:13-16; John 3:16; Romans 5:8)

#### Scriptures:

##### John 3:16

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

##### Romans 5:8

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

##### PR 3:5-6

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

##### John 17:3

Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

##### Psalms 139:13-16

PS 139:13 For you created my inmost being;  
you knit me together in my mother's womb.

PS 139:14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;  
your works are wonderful,  
I know that full well.

PS 139:15 My frame was not hidden from you



when I was made in the secret place.  
When I was woven together in the depths of the earth,

PS 139:16 your eyes saw my unformed body.  
All the days ordained for me  
were written in your book  
before one of them came to be.