

ADDICTIONS: SLAVERY TO A CRUEL MASTER

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ADDICTIONS: SLAVERY TO A CRUEL MASTER

1. ADDICTS ARE SLAVES TO A CRUEL MASTER

Main Theme: The Addict's Need.

Drugs Most Frequently Abused in South Africa at Present

- **Dagga** (cannabis sativa) also known as “marijuana” or “ganja”. Called the world’s most often used illegal drug.
- **Mandrax** (methaqualone) is relatively cheap and is often smoked with dagga (marijuana) which is also cheap. It is illegal and is manufactured either in India or South Africa. It is a sedative (CNS depressant).
- **Crystal meth** (a methamphetamine) also called “tik” is a potent CNS stimulant. Crystal meth involves a dangerous manufacturing process, often resulting in explosions, which have uncovered many operations. Called “The most abused drug on the planet”.
- **Cocaine** (coca=from the leaves of the cocoa plant, *-ine*=alkaloid suffix = *cocaine*) CNS stimulant and appetite suppressant. Also used medicinally as a topical anaesthetic. Illegal in most parts of the world (cultivation, possession or distribution) for non-medicinal purposes.
- **Heroin** (semi-synthetic opioid, synthesized from morphine, a derivative of the opium poppy) Also called “smack” or “junk”, heroin is used both as a pain killer and as a recreational drug. Use has shot up since 2000.¹ The heroin market is in the process of changing radically. Traditionally it has been the drug of more affluent white people, falling prices have seen it introduced into the African culture.

Life Through the Eyes of a Crystal Meth Addict

While there are many mind-altering substances, all with their unique features, for the purpose of this seminar I will limit my drug-related comments to the specific area of crystal meth abuse. This should serve as a representative addiction from which to teach the principles of addiction.

In an interview, Stephan Jenkins, the singer in the band Third Eye Blind, said that methamphetamine makes you feel “bright and shiny.” It also makes you paranoid, incoherent and both destructive and pathetically and relentlessly *self-destructive*. Then you will do unconscionable things in order to feel bright and shiny again.²

¹ <http://www.mrc.ac.za/mrcnews/dec2006/drugs.htm> Dec 2006

² <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/methamphetamine>

Effects of Methamphetamine³

Common immediate effects

- Euphoria
- Increased energy and attentiveness
- Diarrhoea, nausea
- Excessive sweating
- Loss of appetite, insomnia, tremor, jaw-clenching (Bruxism)
- Agitation, compulsive fascination with repetitive tasks (Punding)
- Talkativeness, irritability, panic attacks

Side effects associated with chronic use:

- Drug craving
- Weight loss
- Withdrawal-related depression and anhedonia (inability to experience pleasure) *"Former users have noted that they feel stupid or dull when they quit using methamphetamine."*
- Rapid tooth decay ("meth mouth")
- Amphetamine psychosis (loss of touch with reality or distortion of reality)

Side effects associated with overdose:

- Brain damage/ Meningitis (because methamphetamine is neurotoxic)
- Formication (sensation of flesh crawling with bugs, with possible associated compulsive picking and infecting of sores)
- Paranoia, delusions, hallucinations, which may trigger a tension headache.
- Muscle breakdown (rhabdomyolysis) which leads to Kidney failure
- Death from overdose is usually due to stroke or heart failure, but can also be caused by cardiac arrest (sudden death) or hyperthermia.

Quote: *"Researchers have found that meth creates this high by destroying the very part of the brain that generates dopamine, which makes them unable to feel pleasure from anything except more meth. "It actually changes how the brain operates," Rawson continues. "It's a wonder anyone ever gets off meth." According to the World Health Organization, meth abuse worldwide is worse than that of cocaine and heroin combined."*⁴

How meth affects the brain

Although there seem to be many complicated (and hard to verify) brain activities involved, the reaction in the brain of a meth user could be ruthlessly summarised like this:

³ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/methamphetamine>

⁴ <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/meth/view/>

- ❑ Certain substances or activities (or *anticipation* of these substances or activities) are *believed* to stimulate **dopamine** production in the mesolimbic system in the brain. This is said to create the sense of well-being (euphoria).
- ❑ When dopamine levels rise, **prolactin** begins to rise to counteract the dopamine levels. Prolactin, in addition to stimulating mother's milk, is known to be a dopamine suppressant.
- ❑ In the "post-dopamine-high" people experience a sense of "something missing", cravings, even depression.
- ❑ Prolactin can continue to be released for up to 2 weeks after dopamine high.⁵
- ❑ Driving the pleasure circuitry of the brain harder results in a more intense shut down response.

Associated Ruin and Misery in the Life of a Crystal Meth Addict

Disease and damage

When under the effects of meth, users experience:

- ❑ Increased libido
- ❑ Lowered inhibitions
- ❑ Dulling of pain receptors
- ❑ Leading to reckless, prolonged, rough sexual encounters
- ❑ Often leading to injury, tearing and abrasions
- ❑ Increasing the risk and actual transmission of STDs
- ❑ Driven by the frustrating inability to climax

A comparable parallel to this frustrating phenomenon is the way in which meth addicts abuse meth because of the intense high it delivers. The more they take, the more they *need* to take in order to reach that same high. Regardless of how intensely they hanker for that high, and how insanely they abuse meth, they will *always* experience a less and less satisfying high. This is because meth actually kills the section of the brain which is responsible for producing a sense of pleasure. Further, the more they abuse meth, the less they are able to experience pleasure from *anything* in life. They do permanent damage to their brains which makes future motivation to do anything meaningful a huge challenge.

Criminal activity

Quote: The South African Medical Research Council, Jan 2007: "*Drug use generally is of concern, but it is when drug users become involved in **criminal activities** that it becomes a problem for the police and criminal justice system. A drug-using lifestyle often involves criminal activity: drug users are more likely to commit crimes because **they do not participate in the legitimate***

⁵ Find more on this at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drug_addiction

economy and are exposed to situations that involve crime. This lifestyle is often supported by illegal activities, like shoplifting and burglary.”⁶

“Methamphetamine is seen as an ideal tonic to prepare gunmen for a hit, removing inhibitions, sharpening senses and fuelling aggression,” says Leggett. One could therefore expect an escalation of violence within this already violent sector of the population... Chronic abuse can lead to out-of-control rages, violence, anxiety, confusion, mood disturbances and insomnia. Users can become psychotic, experiencing symptoms such as paranoia, hallucinations and flight of ideas (jumping from one topic to the next). The paranoia can result in homicide or suicide.”
(http://www.health24.com/mind/sexual_dysfunction/1284-1300,28037.asp)

Quote: Commissioner Reddy, Hillbrow Police Station: *“The user will start engaging in petty crime, like cell phone theft, in an attempt to support their addiction. The runners often have a track record of criminal activity and engage in more violent crime, while the kingpins engage on a more organized, syndicate level of criminal activity.’... The withdrawal symptoms of harder drugs can result in some people exhibiting violent behaviour in their desperation to acquire money or goods to exchange for drugs. Unfortunately, very few court diversion (to treatment) programmes exist in SA. People arrested for drug use-related offences thus often become victims of a spiral of crime, where they may progress from being a user to becoming a dealer, to getting involved in other organised crime. An early intervention in the form of treatment for a first-time drug-use offender could significantly reduce the compound effect of drugs on the criminal justice system.”*

⁶ <http://www.mrc.ac.za/mrcnews/dec2006/drugs.htm>

2. ADDICTS ARE NOT A MYSTERY TO GOD

Main Theme: Where Does the Bible Speak About Addictions?

A biblical definition of addictions

A central, common feature of addictions is the **quick onset of bodily sensation** (pleasant sensory experience). Simply put, things that people get addicted to are things (substances or activities) that people do or use because they *like the feeling* that those substances or activities produce.

Scripture speaks strongly about a number of these:

1. **Sleep** (Proverbs 6:9, 10, 10:5, 19:15, 20:13, 24:33, Isaiah 56:10, Matthew 26:40, 43, 45 (and parallels in Mark and Luke))
2. **Alcohol** (Genesis 9:24, Proverbs 20:1, 21:17, 23:29ff, Isaiah 5:11, 12, 22, 22:13, 28:1, 7, Hosea 7:5, Amos 6:6, Ephesians 5:18, 1 Timothy 3:8, Titus 2:3 etc.) Because Alcohol is a **mind-altering substance**, drugs that alter one's state of mind should be included under this heading.
3. **Food** (Exodus 32:6, Judges 9:27, Isaiah 22:13, Zechariah 7:6, Matthew 24:38, Luke 12:45, 17:28, 1 Corinthians 10:7, 11:22, etc.)
4. **Sexual relations** (Numbers 25:1, Matthew 15:19, Mark 7:21, Romans 13:13, 1 Corinthians 5:9, 11, 6:9, 13, 18, 10:8, Galatians 5:19, Ephesians 5:3, Colossians 3:5, 1 Thessalonians 4:3, Hebrews 12:16, 13:4, Jude 7, Revelation 21:8, 22:15, etc.)
5. **Other things that bring about the same physical reaction:** anger, love, weightlifting, nicotine, pain, TV, movies, eating out, coffee breaks, sense of well-being, exercise, gambling, nose drops, cocaine, work, sports, sugar, people, caffeine, shoplifting, lying, chocolate, risk, success/winning, pornography etc.⁷ (The list could go on almost endlessly)
6. The world is now discovering this **broad definition** of addictions too: As one researcher has put it: *"In short, the brain doesn't have individual brain circuits for cocaine use, alcohol consumption, gambling, porn use, and so on. Rather there is **reward circuitry** in the brain (also known as the mesolimbic system), which can become activated, depending upon a person's learned behaviors. **Anything** that activates this circuitry intensely is potentially addictive."*

Some of the World's Definitions of Addictions

Definition 1

⁷ This sample list is from Edward Welch's Addictions: A banquet in the grave: Finding hope in the power of the gospel P&R page 12. I have added a few others to the list.

An **addiction** or **dependence** is a recurring compulsion by an individual to engage in some specific activity, despite harmful consequences to the individual's health, mental state or social life. The term is often reserved for drug addictions but it is sometimes applied to other compulsions, such as problem gambling, and compulsive overeating. Factors that have been **suggested** as causes of addiction include genetic, biological/pharmacological and social factors.

Definition 2: Dr. Robert Hicks (Reviewed November 2005)

Popular conceptions of addiction do not stop at drugs and alcohol. People can become overly attached to gambling, chocolate, computer games - even using the internet. These non-drug addictive behaviours are similar in that the person has a lack of control over their behaviour.

There are popular and professional definitions of addiction. In everyday language, we think of someone who is addicted to something as having what could be called an unhealthy habit.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/health/conditions/addictions/aboutaddiction_what_is.shtml

Definition 3: National Health Service UK (November 2007)

Addiction is not having control over doing, taking or using something, to the point that it may be harmful to you. Common addictions are to alcohol or drugs, but it's possible to become addicted to anything - from gambling to chocolate. Whatever the addiction may be, the person cannot control how they use it, or become dependant on it to get through daily life.

<http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/articles/article.aspx?articleId=650>

Definition 4: Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary 11th Edition

ad•dict : to devote or surrender (oneself) to something habitually or obsessively⁸

Some of the World's Suggested Causes of Addictions

Several explanations (or "models") have been presented to explain addiction. These divide, more or less, into the models which stress biological or genetic causes for addiction, and those which stress social or purely psychological causes. Of course there are also many models which attempt to see addiction as both a physiological *and* a psycho-social phenomenon.

- The disease model of addiction holds that addiction is a disease, coming about as a result of either the impairment of neurochemical or

⁸Merriam-Webster, I. 2003. *Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary*. Includes index. (Eleventh ed.). Merriam-Webster, Inc.: Springfield, Mass.

behavioral processes, or of some combination of the two. Within this model, addictive disease is treated by specialists in Addiction Medicine. Within the field of medicine, the American Medical Association, National Association of Social Workers, and American Psychological Association all have policies which are predicated on the theory that addictive processes represent a disease state. Most treatment approaches, as well, are based on the idea that dependencies are behavioral dysfunctions, and, therefore, contain, at least to some extent, elements of physical or mental disease. Organizations such as the American Society of Addiction Medicine believe the research-based evidence for addiction's status as a disease is overwhelming.

- The genetic model posits a genetic predisposition to certain behaviors. It is frequently noted that certain addictions "run in the family," and while researchers continue to explore the extent of genetic influence, many researchers argue that there is strong evidence that genetic predisposition is often a factor in dependency.
- The experiential model devised by Stanton Peele argues that addictions occur with regard to experiences generated by various involvements, whether drug-induced or not. This model is in **opposition** to the disease, genetic, and neurobiological approaches. Among other things, it proposes that addiction is both more temporary or situational than the disease model claims, and is often outgrown through natural processes.
- The opponent-process model generated by Richard Solomon states that for every psychological event **A** will be followed by its opposite psychological event **B**. For example, the pleasure one experiences from heroin is followed by an opponent process of withdrawal, or the terror of jumping out of an airplane is rewarded with intense pleasure when the parachute opens. This model is related to the opponent process color theory. If you look at the color red then quickly look at a gray area you will see green. There are many examples of opponent processes in the nervous system including taste, motor movement, touch, vision, and hearing. Opponent-processes occurring at the sensory level may translate "down-stream" into addictive or habit-forming behavior.
- The allostatic(stability through change) model generated by George Koob and Michel LeMoal is a modification of the opponent process theory where continued use of a drug leads to a spiraling of uncontrolled use, negative emotional states and withdrawal and a shift into use to new allostatic set point which is lower than that maintained before use of the drug (Koob and LeMoal, 2001; Koob and LeMoal, 2006).
- The cultural model recognizes that the influence of culture is a strong determinant of whether or not individuals fall prey to certain addictions. For example, alcoholism is rare among Saudi Arabians, where obtaining alcohol is difficult and using alcohol is prohibited. In North America, on the other hand, the incidence of gambling addictions soared in the last two decades of the 20th century, mirroring the growth of the gaming industry. Half of all patients diagnosed as alcoholic are born into families where alcohol is used heavily, suggesting that

familiar influence, genetic factors, or more likely both, play a role in the development of addiction. What also needs to be noted is that when people don't gain a sense of moderation through their development they can be just as likely, if not more, to abuse substances than people born into alcoholic families.

- The ***moral model*** states that addictions are the result of human weakness, and are defects of character. Those who advance this model do not accept that there is any biological basis for addiction. They often have scant sympathy for people with serious addictions, believing either that a person with greater moral strength could have the force of will to break an addiction, or that the addict demonstrated a great moral failure in the first place by starting the addiction. The moral model is widely applied to dependency on illegal substances, perhaps purely for social or political reasons, but is no longer widely considered to have any therapeutic value. Elements of the moral model, especially a focus on individual choices, have found enduring roles in other approaches to the treatment of dependencies.
- The ***habit model*** proposed by Thomas Szasz questions the very concept of "addiction." He argues that addiction is a metaphor, and that the only reason to make the distinction between habit and addiction "is to persecute somebody." (Szasz, 1973).
- Finally, the *blended model* attempts to consider elements of all other models in developing a therapeutic approach to dependency. It holds that the mechanism of dependency is different for different individuals, and that each case must be considered on its own merits.⁹

A Biblical Explanation of the Cause of Addictions in Contrast to the Above

The Bible understands and explains this exact phenomenon in its ***own terms***. In Scripture we have such a mature view, there is no need for the views explained above.

Addicts Have Fallen into False Worship

Scripture shows the human race to have fallen from true and satisfying worship of God to the false, unsatisfying worship of idols. In the case of addictions, the addict will pursue his substance or activity in a manner that can only be called *worship*.

1. Scripture teaches to **worship God only**: Exodus 20:3-6, Revelation 19:10, 22:9
2. Mankind has plummeted to the **worship of created things**: Romans 1:21-23, 2 Timothy 3:4, Isaiah 44:17. (Dictionary definition of worship: extravagant respect, devotion, esteem)

⁹ This article is from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Addiction>

3. People **depend** on idols for a pleasant life-experience and meaning rather than on God. Habakkuk 2:18-20, Jeremiah 2:13

Addicts Have Fallen into sin

Scripture teaches that the entire human race has fallen into sin. Sin has so affected and dominated the lives of human beings that they continually struggle toward what is wrong and away from what is right. This drive is overwhelming, enslaving, deceptive and ever-increasing. These are the themes we see in the lives of addicts to an advanced degree. Sin lures Addicts to their own destruction.

1. Sin has overwhelmed **inclination, purposes and desires**: Genesis 6:5, 8:21, Ecclesiastes 9:3, Jeremiah 17:9, Mark 7:21-23, Ephesians 2:1-3
2. Sin has **enslaved**: Titus 3:3, John 8:34, Romans 6:17
3. Sin has **deceived** into self-destruction: Isaiah 44:20, James 1:13-15,
4. Sin demands **ever-increasing** indulgence, bringing **ever-increasing** regret and shame. Sin drives cravings. Romans 6:19.

Addicts Are Restless

One need not spend much time with addicts at all to discover that they are compelled to be perpetually moving. This restlessness is well explained in Scripture. How can they expect peace when they are neither at peace with God, nor do they have the peace of God?

1. **Restlessness** in the place of peace **with** God (Romans 5:1) and peace **of** God (Philippians 4:7).
2. Consider Cain's restlessness (Genesis 4:12, 14. See also Leviticus 26:36, Deuteronomy 28:65-66, Psalm 109:10, Hosea 9:17)

Addicts Want Control

Scripture again bears witness to the relentless drive within fallen man to be his own master and lawmaker. He will not respect God, thank God, nor obey God. The addict will set his own objectives and carve his own path. Naturally, this ends in ruin and misery.

1. **Insistence on autonomy is seen in the following ways:**
 - a. People, addicts, won't even give God the **respect** ordinarily given to a father or master: Malachi 1:6.
 - b. Every person has turned to his **own way**: Deuteronomy 29:19, **Isaiah 53:6, 55:7**, 58:13, 66:3, Acts 14:16, Romans 3:10-18.
 - c. Insistence on autonomy is *implied by the exchange* of Creator worship to the worship of created things (see point on false worship above)

- d. Often obvious at a young age—***no submission to authority***. (Case study: undisciplined toddler who performed to get what he wanted has become an addict.)
- e. Something often forgotten by counsellors is that most drugs to which drug-addicts are addicted are ***illegal***. The very practise of obtaining them is sinful. This also demonstrates a lack of submission to any authority.

Consider that the world ridicules the Scriptural approach because it is classed as the ***moral*** approach.

For secular views on the causes of addictions see the insert above, under the definition of addictions.

3. ADDICTS MAKE GOOD CHURCH MEMBERS

Main Theme: How Can Ordinary Christians Help Addicts?

Be ready for what you will encounter

Addicts are Miserable and Broken

Reflect on the **misery and brokenness** of the crystal meth addict we spoke about earlier (Section 1. Addicts are Slaves to a Cruel Master)

1. Although, when speaking to addicts, they don't seem to understand many things, begin as a student; imagine yourself trapped in that misery. Consider your own secret sins and what it would be like for you to come under their control incrementally until you are as miserable and as broken as the addict you now face. How would you like a counsellor to help you? (Matthew 7:12) To think about addicts in this way helps us to develop genuine compassion for them (Mark 6:34, Romans 12:15).
2. Consider the way in which we often fall into the trap described by Job in Job 12:1-5 and 16:4-6. A person, even a believer, who is not at that time involved in a desperate struggle, will tend to minimise the struggles of a person who is struggling. You are counselling a person in pain. He is between highs. On one side, his cravings are driving him insane, on the other, his conscience is screaming at him to stop. On a third side is the inevitable deadline he faces—he is craving for more and more pleasure, but he is experiencing less and less. The satisfaction of his drug-worship is no longer satisfying. There is a gaping hole that he must fill—there is “something missing”
3. **Help the addict** by taking the time to grasp the full impact of this misery. Deliberately allow it to impact the way you perceive him and the way you will speak to him. If you continue like Job's counsellors, you will lose your opportunity to **evangelise and counsel** him at this **critical** time.

Addicts are Proud

Addicts tend to be proud. It is difficult to understand how an addict can be miserable and broken, but at the same time, proud. We will explore this below.

One thing that seems to make addicts proud is that they have struggled through many hard life experiences. They have become critical and cynical toward people who haven't experienced the hard experiences they have experienced.

Following on from this is a cynicism toward ordinary Christians and preachers who desire to help them. They seriously doubt that such people even know what drugs look like. They seem to see Christians and preachers in a humorous light as being so far removed from real life that they have no idea of the struggles addicts face.

Naturally, this impacts counselling because addicts often use the following approach. They either look for clues to uncover the Christian's well-wishing ignorance, or they ask the question directly, "So, have you ever done drugs?" As soon as a Christian helper answers, "No.", the whole interpersonal dynamic changes. Addicts then tend to want to become teachers rather than learners. They begin to control or manipulate the conversation, leaving the Christian person feeling like a helpless fool.

Moreover, many addicts speak of having "spiritual" experiences while under the intoxicating effects of drugs. They highly value "great spiritual insights" they get in their drugged state. Then, they like to toy with Christian people, making them feel ignorant and childish in their faith. Not surprisingly, there are at least 5 formally constituted "churches" in the world that consider marijuana their "euachrist".

These are all demonstrations of pride. As we consider what Scripture says about these things, we face some satisfying, confidence-inspiring teachings.

Help the addict: Before we consider this manifestation of pride, allow me to comment on how I have successfully dealt with the addict's assault, "So, have you ever done drugs?" or similar questions.

I answer that I haven't done drugs, and then I wait for them to finish their predictable explanation that a person who has never done drugs can never understand an addict. I then quote Romans 3:16-17 and draw attention to the fact that they have truly found themselves in the ruin and misery of which that text speaks. I then ask them why it is that they have come to the point where their lives are scarred by ruin and misery. They give a reason from their interpretation. I then counter that reason with God's reason. He shows in that passage that what goes hand in hand with this kind of ruin and misery is that they do not know the way of peace. I ask them what they understand about the way of peace, and they are unable to explain even the basics of God's way of peace. This transaction helps to restore control over the situation. They realise that maybe you have something to say that will help them. Never before has someone stood up to them so clearly, graciously, and helpfully. See also Isaiah 59:8, Matthew 7:13-14, and Luke 1:79.

Let us now consider the **pride** the addict.

1. Consider the pride of the idolater in Romans 1:30
2. **Arrogant** (*huperephanos*)—*to show oneself above others, over topping, to be conspicuous above others, or to be pre-eminent. Secondly, it is to have an overweening estimate of one's means or merits, despising others or even treating them with contempt, being haughty.*¹⁰
3. **Boastful** (*alazon*)—*to be an empty pretender, a boaster. Alazon describes the person who boasts about possessions and abilities he doesn't actually*

¹⁰Strong, J. 1996. *The exhaustive concordance of the Bible : Showing every word of the text of the common English version of the canonical books, and every occurrence of each word in regular order.* (electronic ed.) (G5244). Woodside Bible Fellowship.: Ontario

have.¹¹ Its **antonym** is *tapeinós*, which speaks of a person who is humble, who places himself on the ground floor.¹²

4. What is more striking than the actual *definitions* of these words, especially those found in Romans 1, is the **context** in which they are found! The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament shows that *alazon* portrays *the corruption of idolatrous paganism*.¹³ The unredeemed masses under God's wrath (v18), pursuing what they perceive to be paradise, in opposition to God, gratifying their lusts and exhibiting the features of verses 29ff.
5. Here this mystery is resolved, this pride, arrogance, boastfulness, accompanies **idolatry**. The natural result of a life of idolatry is the ruin and misery we see in the life of the addict.
6. **Help the addict:** Paul counsels Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:12 not to allow anyone to look down upon his youthfulness (the reader should consider the context). Paul then explains that Timothy will achieve this by living such an exemplary Christian life that they will not be able to fault him on anything that presents as childish youthfulness. A temptation with some Christians when faced with addicts who want to belittle them for their sheltered lives, is to try to exaggerate some sinful aspect of their past in order to identify with the addict. This doesn't show Christian character, rather it immediately exposes the fact that the Christian has fallen into the trap the addict wants him in. He has feared the addict enough to sin so he won't look stupid. Addicts will see through that kind of thing. Rather Christians who desire to be helpful will not try to brag about past sin. They will help addicts by acknowledging their sin as serious. They will refuse to compete with the addict for prominence and control. Personal pride must not stand in the way of clear evangelism, even if the Christian helper appears primitive and naïve. The way in which Christian helpers prevent an addict from looking down on them is by conducting themselves humbly, in an exemplary way, using God's word as the backbone of their approach. Be willing, as was Christ (Romans 15:3), not to please yourself by trying to win the admiration of the addict, but by trying to win the addict by your clear, unashamed, humble, Christian character and use of God's Word. The addict is proud; don't mimic him.

Addicts Know Interpersonal Misery

One thing that is true in the lives of addicts is that they have ruined their relationships with most of the people around them. Even this can be used as an evangelistic and discipleship opportunity.

Consider what Scripture says about this:

¹¹Strong, J. 1996. *The exhaustive concordance of the Bible : Showing every word of the text of the common English version of the canonical books, and every occurrence of each word in regular order.* (electronic ed.) (G213). Woodside Bible Fellowship.: Ontario

¹²Zodhiates, S. 2000, c1992, c1993. *The complete word study dictionary : New Testament* (electronic ed.) (G213). AMG Publishers: Chattanooga, TN

¹³ *Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964-c1976. Vols. 5-9 edited by Gerhard Friedrich. Vol. 10 compiled by Ronald Pitkin. (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (8:527-529). Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, MI

1. In 2 Timothy 3:2c-3, Paul is describing terrible times that would come. One of the specific items in his list is that people would be “unloving” or “without love”. He uses the Greek word “*astorgos*” which speaks of a person who has no “family” love. This is a striking feature in addicts.
2. “Family” love is even seen and expected by common grace in a fallen world (Isaiah 49:15) which makes the lack of it so shocking. As some mothers display lack of family love by discarding their babies in trash cans, so addicts show lack of family love by turning on their parents and families, using them until they will not be used any more.
3. Addicts (often) have so ruined their relationships with the people around them that they can’t name even **one** person who would be pleased to see them at their front door.
4. Addicts weave themselves tightly into a network of “friends” who are all the same at heart, enduring anything to huddle around their “god”. Their addiction is even more important than the life of one of their friends (consider the excellent way in which this is portrayed in the National Geographic documentary on heroin, “Inside”. There a couple uses a batch of heroin that proves too strong. She begins to “fade”—where the body literally falls asleep, including breathing etc—and he doesn’t call an ambulance for fear of being caught. He would rather she died than he got caught and had his habit put in jeopardy.)
5. **Help the addict** by gathering information about their families and closest friends. Find out about people they used to be close to who will no longer associate with them. Show them, using specific examples in their lives, that they lack family love (*astorgos*) Convict them of sin in this specific area. Show them that it is their own personal sinful actions that have brought about such misery for them and all of their loved-ones. **Notice too** that Paul’s next accusation in the text is that they refuse to be reconciled. Use his very situation and misery to show him his need to be reconciled to God and the people around him. Case of the man who repented after holding his own mother down on the floor with a knife to her throat because she wouldn’t tell him where her purse was.

Addicts Talk Too Much

One thing addicts seem to love is talking. In all of their talk, certain trends are noticeable:

1. Addicts like to speak a lot about their own experiences. Unfortunately, a lot of what they say leans toward self-promotion. They want you to be impressed with their experiences and the admirable way in which they have come through hard life experiences.
2. Addicts like to justify themselves and their way of life. While they often freely confess their shortcomings generally, their confessions are laced with accusations against other people. Listen for what they say **in addition** to their confessions. Do they emerge appearing relatively innocent while others appear wrong and unreasonable?
3. Consider Romans 3:19. God puts an end to the hum of self-justifying arguments and **everyone** stops speaking.

4. **Help the addict** by bringing him to the point where he will **stop talking** and confess this sin before God. Convict (rebuke) him of this sin (Titus 2:15). Specifically, this can be done by noting the specific ways in which they continually declare their innocence and other people's culpability. Use specific incidents (as in the data you gather while considering their interpersonal misery) to convict them of this sin of continually trying to appear right. Specific conviction is most likely to aid specific repentance.

Addicts Struggle with Accurate Perception

We considered the addict's proneness (with the rest of the fallen human race) to worship elements of God's good creation that bring him a pleasant bodily experience rather than worshipping God. To an extended degree, he sees true value in his addiction of choice and no value in God. He is convinced that his addiction of choice will deliver the promised reward, even though he knows fully that it has failed repeatedly.

Depending on mind-altering substances increases the severity of the addict's warped perspective of reality. His perception of the world is clouded by:

1. The mind-altering effects of his drug/alcohol/substance
2. His numbness from the exhaustion of pursuing pleasure but not finding satisfaction (See Jeremiah 9:5)
3. Their depression, mulling over the meaning of life and their helpless worship/slavery.
4. **Help the addict:** I listen to addicts reasoning about the meaning of life. It is always helpful to ask them questions that will help you to understand their concept of life.
 - a. Ask them questions without criticising their world-view—you are learning what they perceive to be true.
 - b. Ask them what they think their purpose in this world is.
 - c. Expand the circle of questioning and ask them what they think the purpose of the human race is; why are we even here?
 - d. Ask them about the whole world; why is *it* here? Find out what they think about creation and God the Creator.
 - e. If God created the world, what were His purposes?
 - f. If God created the world, what rights does He have over the universe and the people He has made?
 - g. Find out what rights they think God has over them as individuals.
 - h. Find out what they think is the ultimate source of motivation in life.

It is helpful to consider these questions in the framework Paul provides in Romans 8:28-30—God's delightful foreknowledge of His people, His creation in order to give them existence, His plan of redemption in order to justify them, His grace in eternal glorification. In this context, God is working **all things** (verse 28) for the good of His people and for His glory. God's purpose is seen in a nutshell in verse 29—that there would be many people who would be *like Jesus*. In short, addicts need to be exposed to a vast, mature, Christian world view. They need to see God's demands on their lives and their responsibility to function as God requires.

Addicts Come for Help for Different Reasons

Christians who desire to help addicts should seriously consider what it was that brought the addict to seek help. I have seen **two major dynamics** at work here.

1. **Firstly:** Most addicts I have had to deal with have given me reason to believe they had never truly been born again—including many who claimed to be believers. What brings them to the crush-point that forces them to call out for help is their **pressing circumstances**. It appears in this situation that their final motivation is their circumstantial misery, intertwined with intense emotions. Often, a Christian person who questions an addict in this condition, will find that they have recently been asked to leave the place where they have been staying. This often has a high shock factor and they seek help in a highly emotional state. In many cases, regaining shelter appears to be the final and sole motivating factor.
2. Notice that the greatest need here is not improved circumstances, but the salvation of his soul! The counsellor's aim is not primarily to get the addict off the street, but to use his pressing circumstances as a God-given opportunity for evangelism.
3. Consider the tragedy of irreversible brain damage through drug abuse that apparently pushes the addict beyond the reach of the gospel, and thus hope.
4. **Help the addict:** An opportunity such as this for a Christian counsellor is a blessing because he can use this circumstantial misery in the way God intends it to be used. Scripture shows that increasing circumstantial misery is a display of God's goodness and mercy. It is **this misery** that presents the addict with the God-given opportunity to repent. This is the theme found in Psalm 107. There the psalmist begins and ends with a statement of the goodness of God, and in between those statements, shows how God brought people to repentance by subjecting them to personal, circumstantial misery. Use this misery in the addict's case by warning him that this is a display of God's goodness and mercy. He dare not reject this opportunity to repent because the calamity and misery that will come to those who do not repent will be immeasurably more intense and extended. Be ready and willing to direct this addict to Christ.
5. Those who come for counselling because they are caught and **exposed** seem less likely to succeed than those who come because they are personally broken and exhausted with their sin (they expose themselves).
6. **Help the addict** by using the shame of exposure to warn ultimately of the shame and exposure of the future final judgement (Revelation 20:11-15).
7. **Secondly: Every believer struggles** with one or other sin to different degrees of intensity (some are **entangled**—Hebrews 12:1). The dynamic here is different. While negative circumstances do play a part, what is more compelling than anything else is the convicting work of the Holy Spirit, urging them toward authentic personal holiness and true worship (John 16:8). This is the war (1 Peter 2:11, James 4:1ff). With true believers, rather than confusion there is an eager desire to lay hold of the spiritual secret that will set them free. It is entirely possible, when an unbelieving addict comes exhausted to the counsellor, that it is the result

of a convicting work of the Holy Spirit in his heart. It is when this dynamic is in force that the biblical counsellor can exude the most hope.

Be Ready to be Involved and to Give Hope

You will want to gain genuine involvement

1. by being willing to **listen** to him/her (**James 1:19**, Romans 12:3)
2. by **learning** the shocking reality of their lives
3. by developing a genuine sense of urgency/compassion because of their misery (past, present and future)
4. by being willing to extend yourself to help them in their state of need
5. because you personally believe that even at this desperate stage there really is hope through the gospel.

You will want to give them hope at a very early stage because

1. They truly are exhausted from repeated failure (for many, death is not far off due to organ failure or suicide—deliberate or accidental)
2. They have no confidence in you or the Bible (probably compelled by someone else to come to you)
3. They know that you have probably never experienced their lifestyle, you live in different worlds—you are amusingly naïve to them.
4. They are in a poor state of health which too leads them to hopelessness.
5. They are conscious that they have done so much damage in their relationships that they really don't believe it is possible to undo the damage, nor do they have the energy to try.
6. Their cravings and the feeling of emptiness are so intense, they really don't believe they could ever withstand them (they come believing they will never be free).
7. In spite of the misery their addiction has brought them to, they are convinced that nothing can bring them the relief that **think** their addiction can.

You can give them hope by

1. Refusing to nit-pick at their obvious lack of understanding in many areas of life. Overlook the side issues and go for a life-changing conviction of sin and repentance that signals a fresh start. Use the suggestions made in the material we have already covered.
2. Showing them how Scripture describes **exactly their** situation (fallenness, desire, sin, slavery, bodily sensation, dependence, worship, idolatry)—nothing new! (1 Corinthians 10:13)
3. Showing them that God really does save people like them—regardless of how far gone they are (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

4. Showing them that the change can begin immediately through **the Person** Jesus Christ and will be permanent and transforming (Acts 16:31, Romans 10:9, **Hebrews 7:25**)
5. Showing them that there is genuine help among the Lord's people (Ephesians 4:11-16, Jude 22-23).
6. Showing them that you are willing to deal sincerely with them regardless of whether they are attempting to manipulate, deceive or ridicule you or not. Christians who were once addicts tell me that **this** is one of the things that made the greatest impact on them in their drugging state; when they were approached by sincere Christians.

Be Ready to Convict of Sin and Apply the Gospel of Grace

The solution is the gospel of the Lord Jesus—in the following specific areas

1. **Consider the Critical importance of conviction**—be specific, they need it. (Take special note of Dr. Adams' treatment of *conviction* in *How to Help People Change*.)
2. They have sinned **against God** (Psalm 51:4, Genesis 39:9, 13:13, etc.). The objective nature of their sin must be shown to them so that it would become clear to them that their sin is not just about their own isolated lives, it is a personal offence against God. Christ's atoning sacrifice deals with that offence.
3. Their present misery is the merciful **consequence** of that lifestyle. Far more intense, eternal consequences await them. It was in order to save them from this sin and its consequences (temporal and eternal) that Christ died. This (the Gospel of Jesus Christ) is God's specific solution to this particularly pronounced rebellion and tragedy. (Ephesians 2:3-5, Romans 6:23).
4. The **hostility** (clash between **their** agenda and the agenda of **God**) must be addressed (Romans 8:7, 1:30, 5:10, John 7:7, Colossians 1:21, **2 Timothy 3:4**) I have quoted a number of texts here to emphasise this actual hostility in the unsaved addict's heart toward God because of the seeming paradox we noted earlier. Remember, when speaking to an addict, he/she may come across as so broken and miserable, you couldn't imagine butter melting in their mouths. Yet at the same time, we saw that they are fiercely proud and self-righteous. In their hearts is a blazing hostility toward God. This hostility must be dealt with by those who desire to help addicts. Addicts must come with this hostility toward God broken. **Beware, addicts often come across as helpless, innocent victims**; be careful to hear what Scripture says about this covert (or not so covert) hostility toward God in fallen man. Because of Jesus, true peace is possible! Colossians 1:19-23. Confess and turn away from hostilities.
5. Call the addict to repent from a pleasure-centred lifestyle and to commit him/herself to a principle-governed lifestyle where Jesus is Lord and Master (2 Timothy 3:4). Earlier, we spoke about the interpersonal misery of the addict. Much of this has to do, as we saw, with the fact that he/she will

not live in submission to any authority. Their authority is their personal desires. This is often what has caused the interpersonal problems; refusing to submit to the authority of their parents, refusing to submit to the law of the land, ultimately, refusing to submit to God Himself. Christians who desire to help addicts would do well to show this tendency in the life of the addict and use it as a point of conviction of sin, urging them toward repentance, submitting to the authority of God for the first time, rather than submitting to their own personal desires.

6. Addicts, because of their self-centred lifestyles and the sins they have engaged in as they have pursued their desires, naturally carry around a sense of guilt. The Gospel of Jesus Christ deals with this guilt as well (Psalm 32:1-5, 1 John 1:9). Sometimes addicts use this load of guilt as a reason why they can't come to God for forgiveness—they consider themselves too far gone. The gospel declares that even such addicts will be **freely justified** by God's grace (Romans 3:23-24).
7. Call the addict to deliberately renounce their gods/idols they love so much (initial breaking-off commitment) and to persevere in distancing themselves from them progressively (1 Thessalonians 1:9, Romans 6:19, Hebrews 12:1).
8. Call the addict to be vigilant; he has been prone to succumb to the worship of one substance/activity, he is therefore prone to do this in every area of life—like drug addicts who kick the drugs but become alcoholics or heavy smokers.

A note on feelings orientation

1. One may wrongly conclude that because there is so much happening in the physical body to raise and lower one's sense of wellbeing, that one is the victim of his own body. This impression should **never** be given. True believers have the power, by God's grace and empowering Spirit, to live godly lives with the kind of vigour that will pull their feelings right in their wake (Romans 8:13, Colossians 3:5).
2. Consider Psalm 1 and other Scriptures that speak of the **blessedness** of God's people. Addiction is not *inevitable* it is the result of sinful response to bodily feelings—looking for **blessedness** in the wrong places. Repentance will include the daily, positive pursuit of **this** blessedness. This is deliberate, passionate, putting off and putting on (Colossians 3 and Ephesians 4). (Mere sobriety is not enough, total transformation is God's intention—Romans 12:1-2.)

A note on resistance

Failure in counselling homework with unbelievers often seems to be tied up with an obvious **confusion** about what you are asking them to do; a deep lack of understanding of even basic issues. This is both a spiritual reality (1 Corinthians 2:14) and an unwillingness and lack of desire to give themselves to spiritual exercises. There is an unwillingness to **override** negative feelings and to act according to principle in even **one** inconvenient action. This is war!

When God breaks through into that life, that **resistance** and **confusion** immediately begins to vanish—very thrilling.

The critical role of church involvement, accountability and radical amputation

Help the addict with the following: He will need:

1. Proper **church involvement** and support (Even unbelievers should be urged to spend time with the Lord's people; the place where they are most likely to encounter God's saving grace. Proverbs 13:20, Romans 10:17)
2. Support **must** include personal **accountability** with a suitable believer who truly cares—consider the following suggestions for ground rules from one of Dr. Mack's outlines:
 - a. *Agree on the parts of your lives that you will be accountable for, more diligent and faithful in.*
 - b. *Person can't be closer than spouse.*
 - c. *At beginning of each session, go straight to the issues.*
 - d. *Agree to ask very direct questions. You design your own questions and he his. Be brutally honest with yourself. And receive their suggestions as well (since you struggle with different things).*
 - e. *Last one, "Have you deceived me in any of your answers to my previous questions?" (from Chuck Swindoll)*
 - f. *Agree on how much of the conversation can be shared with other's spouse.*
 - g. *Spend a specific amount of time, keep it succinctly edifying. (Critical in order to prevent addiction from staining every conversation and facet of life).*
3. This will help him in the gruelling process of **radical amputation**. (I have simply used the word "he" in the sentences below, referring to either a man or a woman, in order to keep my sentences simple.)
 - a. He may have to stay with a Christian family for a period of time
 - b. He may have to hand over monthly income to a trusted person
 - c. He may have to use a less sophisticated 'cell phone that doesn't have an internet connection
 - d. He may have to install accountability software and or put his computer in a more public place
 - e. He may have to move house, change job
 - f. He may have to ask someone to keep him to his schedule
 - g. He will need help to identify the situations in which he is most tempted and to install inhibitors and facilitators in order to counteract deceitful behaviour—people, places, music, movies, aromas, habits (daydreaming), events (things going right or wrong), busy-ness/inactivity etc. Temptation, in such circumstances, can return in full force even years later.

4. He will need a **temptation plan** and a **failure plan**. He will need help to develop proper plans that will specify what he must do when he experiences temptation and when he has failed to resist temptation (excellent example in *Introduction to Biblical Counseling* pages 291-292)—to fail to deal with this is to set him up for devastating discouragement (addicts tend to want to come right in an **instant**, that is a demonstration of the nature of addictions) *Godliness Through Discipline* by Dr. Jay Adams is an outstanding resource in this regard. People who help addicts often see a failure (getting drunk again or getting drugged up again) as a uniquely catastrophic tragedy, as if all of their work is now destroyed. They become discouraged and their discouragement shows, encouraging the struggling addict to think that more damage has been done than has actually been done. As every honest believer knows, we all sin in many ways (James 3:2). While it truly is a tragedy when a child of God falls into sin, believers should be cautious not to label the sin of the addict who experiences a failure as being of a greater magnitude than the sin of a believer who struggles with another form of temptation. Understand from your own experience that we do sin, all of us. What the addict needs is strong encouragement to remain pure and to keep short accounts with God, without going to the extreme of creating a permissive environment.
5. **Very important:** He will need help to avoid seeing the whole of his life through the eyes of an addict—focus on character growth **other** than the particular “addiction” (this will help to keep him/her from discouragement in the face of failure) such as:
 - a. Begin on simple submission to genuine authority
 - b. Work on being others-focused rather than being self-focused
 - c. Work on personal pride and self-justification (Dr. Mack’s book: Humility)
 - d. Work hard on family love (Your family God’s way)
 - e. Work on communication (Your family God’s way)
 - f. Work on being a joyful person rather than being burdened (and burdening others) with a victim/martyr mentality.

A Final Word of Hope

It seems that in our day there are two words that have become inseparable. The one is “addict” and the other is “rehab”. We have come to think that the only solution to the slavery of addictions is “rehab”. Having managed a “rehab” facility myself, I place high value on being able to remove an addict from his environment of fierce temptation into a totally different environment where he can learn a new, godly, disciplined way of life, before facing the challenges he will need to face when he returns to ordinary life.

Having said this, I would like to point out that the idea of “rehab” is relatively new. I have not been able to trace the concept back any further than approximately 60 years (even the 12-step program of Alcoholics Anonymous (1950) only dates back to 10 June 1935). One must ask the question, “What happened to addicts before the era of “rehab” centres?” Surely God was able, in the past, to save His people, whether they were addicts or not? (Hebrews

7:25, Isaiah 63:1—mighty to save) My own grandfather was one of them—an alcoholic until his early 30's—saved through the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. I have every confidence that as sincere Christian people apply the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to addicted people, God is still able to save them radically, forever, for His glory. Please don't be discouraged by the failure or inaccessibility of "rehab" centres, rather arm yourself with hope in the gospel, which is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes (Romans 1:16).