



Overcoming Addiction

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“Overcoming Addiction”

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What Can I Hope to Get From this Seminar?

Whether you are here due to personal need, the needs of others, or for a general interest in the topic, we hope this seminar will benefit you. If we do our job well, parts of this seminar will speak to you personally. There will also be parts that speak to aspects of this subject that are different from your own experience. What follows are **six unavoidable facts** that should help you profit from all of the material you hear (bold faced text taken from Paul Tripp and Tim Lane *How People Change*):

1. Someone in your life had a problem this week. That person may be you. Even if you are here for yourself, chances are you know or will know others who struggle in this area. Because we live in a fallen world and have a sin nature, we can be certain that we will battle with sin and suffering in our lives. Because we love people, we can be certain we will be called on to love and assist others in their battle with sin and suffering.

2. We have everything we need in the Gospel to help that person (2 Peter 1:3). God has given us Himself, the Gospel, the Bible, and the church and promised they are effective for all things that pertain to life and godliness. Our task as Christians is to grow in our understanding of and ability to skillfully apply these resources to our struggles. These resources are the essence and source of "good advice," and we hope to play a role in your efforts to apply and disseminate this "good advice." We do not aim to present new material, but new ways of applying the timeless, eternal truths of the Gospel found in Scripture.

3. That person will seek help from friends, family members, or pastors before seeking professionals. Counseling (broadly defined as seeking to offer hope and direction through relationship) happens all the time. We talk with friends over the phone, crying children in their rooms, spouses in the kitchen, fellow church members between services, and have endless conversations with ourselves. We listen to struggles, seek to understand, offer perspective, give advice, and follow up later. This is what the New Testament calls "one-anothering" and something we are all called to do.

4. That person either got no help, bad help, or biblical, gospel-centered help. Not all counseling is good counseling. Not all advice that we receive from a Christian (even a Christian counselor) is Christian advice. Too often we are advised to look within for the answers to our problems or told that we are good enough, strong enough, or smart enough in ourselves to overcome. Hopefully you will see today how the Bible calls us to something (rather Someone) better, bigger, and more effective than these messages.

5. If they did not get meaningful help, they will go elsewhere. When we do not receive good advice (pointing us to enduring life transformation), we keep looking. We need answers to our struggles. This means that as people find unfulfilling answers they will eventually (by God's grace) come to a Christian for advice. When they eventually come to you, we hope you will be more prepared because of our time together today.

6. Whatever help they received, they will use to help others! We become evangelists for the things that make life better (this is why the Gospel is simply called "Good News"). We quite naturally share the things that we find to be effective. Our prayer for you today is that you will find the material presented effective for your struggles and that you will be so comforted and encouraged by it that it will enable you to be a more passionate and effective ambassador of the Gospel in the midst of "normal" daily conversations.

“Where Do I Begin?”

In life and counseling, finding the starting point can be difficult. Life is fluid enough that identifying where to begin with a life-dominating struggle can feel like finding the beginning of a circle. In order to help you with this very important question, Freedom Groups have developed a progression of five levels of starting points.

A struggle in one of the higher categories may have many expressions or contributing causes in the lower categories, but unless the upper level concerns are addressed first (i.e., substance abuse should be addressed before conflict resolution skills), efforts at change have a low probability of lasting success. The degree of self-awareness usually increases as you go down the page. The level of denial usually increases as you move up the page.

1. **Safety** – When the basic requirements of safety are not present, then safety takes priority over any other concern. Safety is never an “unfair expectation” from a relationship. If safety is a concern, then you should immediately involve other people (i.e., pastor, counselor, or legal authorities).

This category includes: thoughts of suicide, violence, threats of violence (to people or pets), preventing someone from moving freely in their home, destruction of property, manipulation, coercion, and similar practices.

2. **Substance Abuse / Addiction** – After safety, the use of mind or mood altering substances is the next level of priority concern. Substance abuse makes the life situation worse and inhibits any maturation process. The consistency and stability required for lasting change are disrupted by substance abuse. **The mentoring and Freedom Group materials for the sexual sin seminar can be applied to an addiction level struggle.**

This category includes: alcohol, illegal drugs, prescription drug not used according to instructions, inhalants, driving any vehicle with any impairment for any distance, and similar activities.

3. **Trauma** – Past or present events resulting in nightmares, sleeplessness, flashbacks, sense of helplessness, restricted emotional expression, difficulty concentrating, high levels of anxiety, intense feelings of shame, or a strong desire to isolate should be dealt with before trying to refine matters of character or skill. Trauma is a form of suffering that negatively shapes someone’s sense of identity and causes them to begin to constantly expect or brace against the worst.

This category includes: any physical or sexual abuse, significant verbal or emotional abuse, exposure to an act of violence, experience of a disaster, a major loss, or similar experience.

4. **Character** – This refers to persistent dispositions that express themselves in a variety of ways in a variety of settings. Because both the “trigger” and manifestation change regularly and hide when convenient, it is clear that the struggle lies within the core values, beliefs, and priorities of the individual. Skill training alone will not change character. **The mentoring and Freedom Group materials for the sexual sin seminar can be applied to a character level struggle.**

This category includes: anger, bitterness, fear, greed, jealousy, obsessions, hoarding, envy, laziness, selfishness, pornography, codependency, depression, social anxiety, insecurity, and similar dispositions.

5. **Skill** – With skill level changes there will be a high degree of self-awareness that change is needed in the moment when change is needed. However, confusion or uncertainty prevents an individual from being able to respond in a manner that it is wise and appropriate.

This category includes: conflict resolution, time management, budgeting, planning, and similar skills.

Hopefully, after reading these five points, you will have less of a “jump in anywhere and try anything” mentality towards your struggles. Change is hard but knowing where to start helps to establish confidence. Remember, you are not alone. Christ will meet you and the church will walk with you at any of these five points.

WHAT IS G4?

G4 groups provide a small group atmosphere where individuals invest a season of their life in overcoming a particular life-dominating struggle of sin or intense suffering. They provide a safe environment where members learn insights and skills that will allow them to more fully engage in biblical community.

G4 has 7 core values which guide each group:

Bible-Based & Gospel-Centered: Programs and information do not change people. God changes people through the power of the Gospel and the wisdom of His Word. The relational structure of G4 Groups is the vehicle God has ordained to transport the Gospel and Scripture into the lives of His beloved, enslaved, and hurting children.

Recognize the Difference Between Sin & Suffering: G4 Groups recognize that struggles of sin are different from struggles of suffering in terms of cause, dynamics, emotional impact, relational influence, and other ways. While every believer is simultaneously a saint, sinner, and sufferer, there are fundamental differences (practically and theologically) between a struggle an individual does (sin) and those that happen to the individual (suffering).

Built On Honesty & Transparency: The courage to be honest about our suffering or sin is often the essential expression of faith God calls for in overcoming a life-dominating struggle. G4 Groups create an environment that fosters honesty and transparency by incarnating the love of God and protecting confidentiality within the group.

Uphold Confidentiality: We all have a story to tell. G4 Groups are a safe place where group members can be open, honest, and transparent without fear that their issues will be shared outside of the group. G4 group members commit to hold in confidence things shared within the context of the group environment.

Avoid Struggle-Based Identity: We recognize that when an individual has struggled with one issue for an extended period of time that struggle begins to define them. G4 Groups are structured in content, duration, and philosophy to alert the participants to this temptation and guide them away from it. G4 Groups strive to teach and model what it means to live out of an identity as a dearly loved child of God.

Blend Discipleship, Accountability, & A Guided Process: G4 Groups are more than a Bible study on a given subject. They develop a practical theology of their subject during the group study and guide members through an intentional process during the personal study while the members hold each other accountable.

Transition Into Larger Small Group Ministry: The goal is for each G4 Group member to be in a general small group within a year. Group members may choose to be a general small group the whole time. If desired, at "graduation" the G4 Group leader would direct the participant to a small group with a leader who has completed personal study and counseling exercises for that area of struggle. It would be the participant's choice whether to disclose that was the reason for choosing that leader's small group.

The 9 Steps of G4

We do not believe there is a one-size-fits-all solution to the struggles of life. Neither do we believe there is any magic in these particular steps. However, we do believe that these steps capture the major movements of the Gospel in the life of an individual. We also believe that it is through the Gospel that God transforms lives and modifies behavior as He gives us a new heart.

In G4 Groups we attempt to walk through the Gospel in slow motion with a concentrated focus upon a particular life-dominating struggle. We do this in a setting of transparent community because we believe God changes people in the midst of relationships.

We believe that the Gospel speaks to both sin (things we do wrong) and suffering (painful experiences for which we are not responsible) to bring peace, wholeness, and redemption. We also believe that every person is both a sinner and a sufferer. However, we believe the Gospel is best understood and applied when we consider how the Gospel relates to the nature of our struggle. The nine steps below are those used by G4 Groups to address struggles of sin and suffering.

Sin-Based Groups	Suffering-Based Groups
<p>STEP 1. ADMIT I have a struggle I cannot overcome without God.</p>	<p>STEP 1. PREPARE yourself physically, emotionally, and spiritually to face your suffering.</p>
<p>STEP 2. ACKNOWLEDGE the breadth and impact of my sin.</p>	<p>STEP 2. ACKNOWLEDGE the specific history and realness of my suffering.</p>
<p>STEP 3. UNDERSTAND the origin, motive, and history of my sin.</p>	<p>STEP 3. UNDERSTAND the impact of my suffering.</p>
<p>STEP 4. REPENT TO GOD for how my sin replaced and misrepresented Him.</p>	<p>STEP 4. LEARN MY SUFFERING STORY which I use to make sense of my experience.</p>
<p>STEP 5. CONFESS TO THOSE AFFECTED for harm done and seek to make amends.</p>	<p>STEP 5. MOURN the wrongness of what happened and receive God’s comfort.</p>
<p>STEP 6. RESTRUCTURE MY LIFE to rely on God’s grace and Word to transform my life.</p>	<p>STEP 6. LEARN MY GOSPEL STORY by which God gives meaning to my experience.</p>
<p>STEP 7. IMPLEMENT the new structure pervasively with humility and flexibility.</p>	<p>STEP 7. IDENTIFY GOALS that allow me to combat the impact of my suffering.</p>
<p>STEP 8. PERSEVERE in the new life and identity to which God has called me.</p>	<p>STEP 8. PERSEVERE in the new life and identity to which God has called me.</p>
<p>STEP 9. STEWARD all of my life for God’s glory.</p>	<p>STEP 9. STEWARD all of my life for God’s glory.</p>

To learn more about G4 Groups visit www.summitrdu.com/g4

Chapter I

“I Want to be Free... Sometimes and Sometimes Not” ADMIT I have a struggle I cannot overcome without God.

“Not overcoming my addiction and accompanying deceit would be more costly than anything God would take me through in the pursuit of His freedom. God is good for having brought me to this point of admitting my bondage.”

Memorize: Romans 7:18-19 (ESV), “For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.” As you memorize this passage reflect upon these key points:

- “For I know” – These verses are the Bible’s “introduction to addiction and human experience” passage.
- “Desire to do what is right” – There are times when you want to be free from your addiction.
- “Not the ability” – Our sin nature is stronger than our personal will to be good apart from God’s grace.
- “I do not the good I want” – There are times when you don’t want to be free from your addiction.
- “Keep on doing” – The result of these truths is that our addiction continues until we fully surrender.

Teaching Notes

“I woke up and knew I couldn’t take another drink. But I also knew I couldn’t live without one (p. 15)!” John Baker in *Celebrate Recovery: Leader’s Guide*

“This is, of course, what is utterly puzzling about addiction – that we should repeatedly and compulsively do that which we know is damaging us (p. 12).” Kent Dunnington in *Addiction and Virtue: Beyond the Models of Disease and Choice*

“I am not being flippant when I say that all of us suffer from addiction. Nor am I reducing the meaning of addiction. I mean in all truth that the psychological, neurological, and spiritual dynamics of full-fledged addiction are actively at work within every human being (p. 3)... It is as if these severely addicted people have played out, on an extreme scale, a drama that all human beings experience more subtly and more covertly (p. 43).” Gerald May in *Addiction & Grace*

“Should addiction be understood as a disease or as a choice? This is the most longstanding and contentious question in addiction research. The question, however, rests on a false dichotomy. The false dichotomy arises from a failure or an inability to conceive of a genuine space between compulsion and choice, between, in philosophical terms, determinism and voluntarism... The philosophical category that covers this terrain is the category of habit (p. 31).” Kent Dunnington in *Addiction and Virtue: Beyond the Models of Disease and Choice*

“Actually, the addiction becomes a constant companion, a friend, and something to count on for a predictable effect or outcome. Some commentators on addiction describe it as a love relationship because of the intensity of the bond and the commitment to the behavior (p. 61).” Carlo DiClemente in *Addictions and Change*

“We are as sick as our secrets (p. 59)... Remember it is always better to tell the ugly truth rather than a beautiful lie (p. 60)... Truth often hurts. But it’s the lie that leaves the scars (p. 79).” John Baker in *Celebrate Recovery: Leader’s Guide*

“Perfection is not your goal; trust is. When your aim is perfection, you are actually headed away from God because you are trusting in your own acts rather than trusting in God (p. 36).” Ed Welch in *Crossroads: A Step-by-Step Guide Away from Addiction*

Embedded Study

Thank you for the courage and humility represented in your willingness to engage this material. Doubtless, if alcohol or drugs have disrupted your life and hurt those you love, many people have tried to force you to change and make you admit the problem. That is a hard context in which to explore the possibility of change.

That is why it is important for you to know that every decision in this study is yours to make or not make. Like it or not, for better or worse, the direction of your life is in your hands. No attempt will be made to compel you to do things you don't want to do.

You will be asked to honestly examine the role and impact of alcohol and/or drugs in your life. If it has become enslaving for you and/or harmful to those you love, you will be encouraged to seek freedom in the form of abstinence through the power of the gospel with the support of the community of faith. But that choice is yours.

This study is merely a guide and an option. It does not purport superiority to 12 step groups, residential treatment, medical interventions, or your personal plan to sobriety. Actually, it may be used in conjunction to any of these. What you hold is a resource, rooted in Scripture and supplemented with research, on how to find freedom in Christ from addiction.

An initial caution is in order. Don't make a pre-mature commitment that you're "going to do it this time." A formal commitment will be asked for at the end of step two. For now, seriously considering change is sufficient. By the end of step two you should have assessed whether change is *needed* and *worth it*. If your answer is "Yes," then at that point make a commitment to change and stick with it through whatever challenges and relapses may arise.

Reflection: What would you be giving up if you quit your addiction? This is an important and often neglected question.

"If addicts really believed that there were no positives to the addictive behavior and only negatives, they would be acting irrationally to continue to engage in the behavior... An accurate evaluation of what role the behavior plays in the life of the addict appears to be an important element in fostering serious consideration of change (p. 144)." Carlo DiClemente in *Addictions and Change*

Be honest about this question. You may not like what you write. You might be ashamed to let someone else read it. Or, you may really like what you write, and be offended that no one understands it. But if you are going to seriously consider changing, then you need to assess (a) what you will be sacrificing for freedom and (b) what needs to be replaced in order to maintain sobriety.

Recommendation: If your addictive struggle involves drugs or alcohol, it is recommended that you get a physical exam with your primary care physician. Understanding the potential withdrawal symptoms, ways to offset withdrawal symptoms, and nutritional deficits that may have emerged, is important for two reasons: (1) assessing the toll substance abuse has taken on your body is an important factor to weigh in determining whether to commit to sobriety, and (2) if you choose to pursue sobriety, understanding these factors allow you to create a better plan for this pursuit.

With these words of introduction, there will be four areas of focus in step one.

1. Assessing Your Level of Motivation
2. Evaluating the Severity of Addiction
3. Examining Definitions of Addiction
4. Understanding the Importance of Honesty

Assessing Your Level of Motivation

"Quitting smoking is easy. I've done it a couple dozen times," captures well the pattern of trying to change any unwanted but enjoyable behavior. We want to, but we don't. We're motivated, but we're not. We think we should, but wish people would just leave us alone. This mindset is called "ambivalence" – feeling two contradictory emotions about the same thing. Even if we didn't know what ambivalence was, we're good at it.

Read James 1:5-8. This is often a guilt passage. We read it and think, “If it applies to me, I should freak out because it sounds really bad.” Start with verse five and realize the passage begins with presenting God as generous. God is not upset about supplying what we need in our double-minded moments. This will help you not doubt that there is hope for your fickle desire to change (v. 6). God is a gentleman. He won’t change us against our will (v. 7). But God is also loving and warns us against the dangers of our double-minded tendency. At this stage in your journey, you’re just getting comfortable admitting what God already knows. There is hope because God is not surprised even if we are surprised when we admit how bad things have gotten. Hope begins where you are and God will always join you there.

You need to name this tendency early in your journey or this attempt will merely be the latest edition of your good intentions. Don’t feel ashamed of your conflicted motives. God already knows and he still wants to help. The only person you can lie to is yourself and those who love you. In this section, you will look at five levels of motivation from Carlo DiClemente in *Addictions and Change* (bold text only). In the parentheses, we’ll map out how these correlate with the nine step journey of this study.

- 1. Pre-Contemplation** (before you started): This is the stage when you don’t anticipate making any changes in the foreseeable future because you don’t think they are needed. You are probably annoyed and offended if someone suggests that you change. “Change” as a concept is either not on your radar or is met with resistance instead of consideration.
- 2. Contemplation** (Step 1): Now you are beginning to believe that change might be beneficial and are wondering what the process might look like. You are trying to decide if change is “possible,” and, if so, if it’s “worth it.” You want to know what would be required and whether these sacrifices would produce a more satisfying life than continuing to neglect them.
- 3. Preparation** (Steps 2-4): In this phase your consideration becomes more concrete. You gather the information necessary to enact an effective and sustainable plan. You assess obstacles; both logistical (external) and motivational (internal). You begin to enlist people to come alongside of you for the journey.
- 4. Action** (Steps 5-7): At this point plans come to life; ideas become choices. Progress is made and setbacks are navigated. There are successes and failures, but the trajectory of your journey is forward. Techniques become habits and habits become a lifestyle. The roles once filled by your addiction are now filled with healthier and more satisfying ways of managing life.
- 5. Maintenance** (Steps 8-9): A new lifestyle is embraced. Increasingly your emotions and thought patterns conform to this new lifestyle. Your addiction is no longer your “reward or escape of choice” so you are enjoying life. At this stage you begin the work of restoring relationships and pursuing interests that were damaged or made impossible by the addiction.

Exercise: In the margin beside these five levels of motivation write “today” beside where your motivation is now. Write significant dates or events in the margin that came to mind when you read each description. Chances are this is not your first attempt at this journey. Recognizing where you will begin to cover new terrain is important. Begin now realizing that every relapse is an opportunity to learn. There is no shame in falling; only quitting.

If you have multiple substances or behaviors with which you have an addictive struggle, you may not be in the same place – motivationally speaking – with each one of them. Be honest about that so you can weigh the implications of tackling your addictions one at a time versus all at once.

In the chart below list the substances and activities with which you might have an addictive struggle in the left hand column. Then for each one place an “x” under the stage of change that best represent where you are.

- If you doubt it is a problem, that would be “pre-contemplation.”
- If you’re willing to consider whether this item represents an addiction, that is “contemplation.”
- If you’re committed to change and are actively creating a plan, that is “preparation.”
- If you are actively working on recovery in this area, that is “action.”
- If you are working to preserve more than 6 months of sobriety in this area, that is “maintenance.”

Substance / Activity	Pre-Contemplation	Contemplation	Preparation	Action	Maintenance

“Motivation for change occurs when people perceive a discrepancy between where they are and where they want to be (p. 8).” William Miller, et al in *Motivational Enhancement Therapy Manual*

Evaluating the Severity of Addiction

Instructions: Read the following descriptive statements. Mark the answer that most accurately describes your potentially addictive behaviors when they were at their worst *in the last three months*. If you struggle with multiple addictions, you may either complete a separate evaluation for each addiction or answer according to whichever addictive behavior is most intense for that item.

(N) almost never, (R) rarely, (S) sometimes, (F) frequently, or (A) almost always.

For the most accurate results, ask one person who is aware of your addictive behaviors from each major sphere of your life (i.e., home, work, social, church small group, etc...) to complete this survey on your behalf and compare results. If you chose to enlist others, you must be willing to hear their perspective without arguing or debating. One sphere does not negate another. For instance, a good report from a friend does not mean your spouse is inaccurate about your actions.

In this assessment AoD stands for “alcohol or drugs” and can be read to include tobacco products, legal medications not used according to prescription, or behaviors known to be personally or relationally destructive.

A self-scoring on-line version of this evaluation can be found at: bradhambrick.com/addiction.

1. I have used AoD to a degree that impaired my judgement or self-control.	N	R	S	F	A
2. When using AoD I have embarrassed myself or damaged my reputation.	N	R	S	F	A
3. I have been a poor steward of my time due to my consumption of AoD.	N	R	S	F	A
4. How much I can drink or use without being impaired is a point of pride.	N	R	S	F	A
5. What or how much I have used AoD has exceeded what I meant to consume.	N	R	S	F	A
6. I have used alcohol under age, prescriptions meds for non-medical purposes, or illegal drugs.	N	R	S	F	A
7. I have been significantly impaired or passed out while using AoD.	N	R	S	F	A
8. I sometimes feel guilty after using AoD.	N	R	S	F	A
9. I have hurt or offended loved ones and friends while using AoD.	N	R	S	F	A
10. What I see as right, wrong, or permissible has changed since I began using AoD.	N	R	S	F	A
11. My conscience before I used AoD would be offended by how I use them now.	N	R	S	F	A
12. Defending my actions and my friends play a central role in how I weigh moral assessments.	N	R	S	F	A
13. I am beginning to plan my week around acquiring and consuming AoD.	N	R	S	F	A
14. Managing difficult emotions has become a reason I use AoD.	N	R	S	F	A
15. I would feel cheated if someone around me had AoD and I did not participate.	N	R	S	F	A
16. The rhythm of my week would be disrupted if there was no AoD.	N	R	S	F	A
17. When I know someone doesn't drink or use drugs I doubt how deep friendship could be.	N	R	S	F	A
18. When making financial decisions I consider whether I will have the funds necessary for AoD.	N	R	S	F	A
19. I have strong association between mundane activities (i.e., meals, places, moods) and AoD.	N	R	S	F	A
20. I lie about my consumption of AoD.	N	R	S	F	A
21. I have noticed that it takes more AoD to have the same effect.	N	R	S	F	A
22. AoD no longer has the “new high” feel I remember at first.	N	R	S	F	A
23. I spend more money to buy and time consuming AoD than I did initially.	N	R	S	F	A
24. I buy higher proof alcohol or better quality drugs than I did initially.	N	R	S	F	A
25. I have learned to manage the experience of a hangover better than I did initially.	N	R	S	F	A
26. I feel less “normal” when I have not had AoD.	N	R	S	F	A
27. Without AoD I feel anxious, restless, irritable, have headaches, or can't concentrate.	N	R	S	F	A
28. Without AoD I experience sweating, muscle tension, chest tightness, tremors, or nausea.	N	R	S	F	A
29. Without AoD my family and friends find me less pleasant to be around.	N	R	S	F	A
30. I know that quitting AoD would be a physical challenge for me.	N	R	S	F	A
31. When I have not had AoD for a while I begin to crave it.	N	R	S	F	A
32. I find it harder to manage my emotions or difficult situations without AoD.	N	R	S	F	A
33. When I have done something good, AoD is one of my top rewards of choice.	N	R	S	F	A
34. Not having AoD feels more punishing than having AoD is rewarding.	N	R	S	F	A
35. My desire for AoD is stronger than my desire for things like food or friends.	N	R	S	F	A

36. My AoD has strained my relationship with family and friends. I am more isolated.	N	R	S	F	A
37. I have chosen to continue using AoD even when it cost me friends I used to consider close.	N	R	S	F	A
38. I do not have as quality of a relationship with my children as I would if I didn't use AoD.	N	R	S	F	A
39. Family and/or friends have confronted me about my need to stop using AoD.	N	R	S	F	A
40. My use of AoD has resulted in a negative performance evaluation or job loss.	N	R	S	F	A
41. I have experienced a change in my weight because of my use of AoD.	N	R	S	F	A
42. I have sustained an injury while using AoD.	N	R	S	F	A
43. My immune system is weaker because of AoD (i.e., you get sick frequently).	N	R	S	F	A
44. I experience constipation, irritable bowel, or appetite changes because of my AoD use.	N	R	S	F	A
45. I am forgetting or losing more things (decreased brain functioning) because of my AoD use.	N	R	S	F	A
45. I have been arrested (or could have been) because of my AoD use.	N	R	S	F	A
46. I have experienced a major emotional breakdown or explosion because of my AoD use.	N	R	S	F	A
47. My actions while using AoD have resulted in life threatening events.	N	R	S	F	A
48. I lost custody of my children (even temporarily) or lost other rights because of my AoD use.	N	R	S	F	A
49. I have needed to hire an attorney or go to court for my AoD related activities.	N	R	S	F	A
50. Even in the face of negative consequences I still think life is better with AoD than without.	N	R	S	F	A

Key to Survey Scoring: Give yourself one point for an “S” response, two points for an “F” response, and three points for an “A” response. If your total score matches the total number of questions in a given subset, that is an area of concern. If your total score comes close to doubling the total number of questions, it is a significant concern. If your total score more than doubles the total number of questions, it should be considered a life-dominating struggle.

A self-scoring on-line version of this evaluation can be found at: bradhambrick.com/addiction.

The material for this evaluation is arranged into three categories, which are commonly recognized in addiction research; although different counselors use different vocabulary. Understanding these categories will help you utilize what you learn from this evaluation.

Stage of Addiction	Common Addiction Language	Craig Nakken Language in <i>The Addictive Personality</i>	Ed Welch Language in <i>Addictions: A Banquet in the Grave</i>
Stage One	Use	Internal Change	Sin
Stage Two	Abuse	Lifestyle Change	Slavery
Stage Three	Dependence	Life Breakdown	Tragedy

“Sin is the fundamental problem, from start to finish. However, there are differences between the early and later stages of certain sins (p. 37).” Ed Welch in *Addictions: A Banquet in the Grave*

Use / Internal Change / Sin: Addiction begins with unwise or immoral experimentation. In order to get to addiction we must cross lines of folly and sin. In order to reclaim sobriety we must trace our steps back across these lines. These are simple principles which are profoundly challenging for at least two reasons. First, sin is not just something we do (behaviors) but our innate inclination from birth (condition of depravity). As a result of the Fall we are all prone to self-destructive excess in some way. Second, eventually as an addiction develops, the practice becomes more instinctual than volitional and, therefore, has a greater grip on our life than more episodic sins we commit.

- Questions 1-5: (Total: _____ in 5 questions)

This set of questions describes **violating wisdom principles**. Even if your potentially addictive behavior is morally and legally permissible, in order for it to become a controlling presence in your life it must cross over the line of wisdom into folly. After an addictive behavior has gained a controlling presence in our lives, these parameters become even more important to us than they are for individuals who have not had an addictive relationship with our substance of choice. For this reason, as you go through this study you will be examining how you were willing to make unwise choices in greater detail. Wisdom will be one of your greatest friends in the pursuit of sobriety (Proverbs 1:20-33, take comfort in the fact that wisdom is pursuing you even when you are not pursuing wisdom).

- Questions 6-10: (Total: _____ in 5 questions)

This set of questions describes **violating moral precepts**. In order for an addictive behavior to gain control in our lives we must also cross moral lines into sin. Two key principles reveal this is happening. First, we begin to rely on our

addiction for things that only God can provide (i.e., comfort, strength, courage, etc...). Second, we rely on our addiction to resolve problems created by our addiction. For instance, we fail to love our neighbor as ourselves because of being intoxicated and then re-engage our addiction to escape the stress that our friend or spouse is upset with us.

- Questions 11-15: (Total: _____ in 5 questions)

This set of questions describes **fading of conscience and loss of will power**. As a potential addiction gains control the fact that the action is unwise or wrong becomes less important than the fact that our conscience is callousing and our will is weakening. We enter a new phase of danger when we no longer experience our increasingly addictive behavior as destructive and no longer have the desire to forsake it when we see the destruction. These capacities must be rekindled in order for us to be willing to fight the addiction (will) or acknowledge the need to do so (conscience). We are dependent upon God to do this perpetual awakening (Ephesians 2:1-3) and we seek God earnestly to do this awakening (Philippians 2:12-13).

Abuse / Lifestyle Change / Slavery: We often will not admit the impact of an addiction until we begin to reap its most severe consequences (phase 3 below). But there is a phase when the will and conscience have not been completely seared and life is not falling apart, yet the role of our addiction is becoming increasingly central to our lives. This phase has both the physiological markers of tolerance and withdrawal, and psychological markers of a conforming life and cravings.

- Questions 16-20: (Total: _____ in 5 questions)

This set of questions describes **lifestyle adapting to addiction**. In order to become permanent, like any other habit, addiction must make itself at home in the rhythms of your life in order to be resistant to extinction as your circumstances change. Taking note of and countering these lifestyle adaptations are another essential part of developing an effective and sustainable plan for overcoming addiction. Therefore, more attention will be given to understanding these changes in subsequent parts of this study.

“It takes choice and commitment to continue to obtain effective access and to seek the addictive behavior when there are negative personal and social consequences that begin to emerge... The addicted individual appears to be functioning more on autopilot than choosing. Nevertheless, a chosen commitment to the addictive behavior continues (p. 50)... There are virtually hundreds of little decisions that are made daily and weekly to ensure access to the behavior. Arranging schedules, making excuses, sneaking off for periods of time, and minimizing consequences are all part of the process of protecting continued engagement in the addiction (p. 52).” Carlo DiClemente in *Addictions and Change*

- Questions 21-25: (Total: _____ in 5 questions)

This set of questions describes **tolerance**. Our bodies were made by God to be remarkably adaptive; for better or worse. As you engage your addiction, your body creates a “new normal” to accommodate this new substance or practice. The result is that you have to increase the intensity of your addictive activity in order to experience the same effect. For instance, as you drink alcohol, your body adapts by producing more alcohol metabolizing enzymes. The result is (a) your body becomes more efficient at processing alcohol, so (b) it takes more alcohol to reach intoxication because of your body’s newly developed efficiency.

- Questions 26-30: (Total: _____ in 5 questions)

This set of questions describes **withdrawal**. Tolerance leads to withdrawal. If tolerance means your body is adapting a “new normal” to accommodate your addictive substance, then withdrawal is your body’s response to the absence of this “new normal.” For this reason, withdrawal symptoms tend to be the opposite of the pleasurable effects of your AoD of choice. For example, withdrawing from stimulants leaves you feeling lethargic, or withdrawing from abusing pain medications result in you feeling achy (in excess of whatever pain you may have been trying to medicate).

- Questions 31-35: (Total: _____ in 5 questions)

This set of questions describes **psychological dependence / craving**. Even for substances and activities that do not create tolerance and withdrawal, psychological dependence can still emerge and become enslaving through the experience of craving. Addictions alter the reward center of the brain and thereby our motivational systems (which are more soul-mind than body). This is why we can experience controlling cravings even when the biological phenomena of tolerance and withdrawal are not occurring. This is also why addiction cannot be reduced to biology or neurology.

“The desire of psychological cravings is unlike any other type of desire, not in its intensity – which can vary widely – but rather in its resilience. Addictive desires are indefatigably persistent (p. 49).” Kent Dunnington in *Addiction and Virtue: Beyond the Models of Disease and Choice*

Dependence / Life Breakdown / Tragedy: When you surrender control to a substance or activity that only cares for its own self-preservation your life will fall apart. Sin, the predatory evil present in and around all our lives, is seeking our demise (1 Peter 5:8). It begins by making promises (which looking back we realize it could never keep), but is only concerned with its own flourishing. This exemplifies why we believe addictions are intensely spiritual experiences. Addiction is the epitome of our flesh ruling over God’s Spirit in our lives (Galatians 5:16-24). At this point, we see the fruit of our Enemy’s selfish reign in bold contrast to the fruit of God’s benevolent reign over our lives (John 10:10-11). Sobriety is not about the absence of a particular behavior as much as it is about the presence of a new allegiance in your life.

- Questions 36-40: (Total: _____ in 5 questions)

This set of questions describes **relational and professional damage**. Sin is more relational than it is behavioral; it is about who and what we value most more than what we do. For this reason, some of sin’s most profound destruction will occur in our relationships: marriages, families, friendships, churches, and workplaces. The longer we remain willfully blind to this damage the longer and harder the restoring of trust will be. That is why the best time to begin addressing an addiction is always “now.”

- Questions 41-45: (Total: _____ in 5 questions)

This set of questions describes **health damage**. While our bodies are incredibly adaptive (see tolerance), this adaptation does not avert damaging health effects. The changes in our body and neural chemistry created by addiction leave a living state that is increasingly distant from God’s design for a healthy human body. The sooner you are willing to acknowledge these changes, the more their impact can be averted or countered.

- Questions 45-50: (Total: _____ in 5 questions)

This set of questions describes **tragic life consequences**. The ability of addiction to destroy our lives goes beyond our relationships and bodies. Financial ruin and legal consequences are only two of many examples that could be given. As with anything in the “Tragedy – Phase 3” level of the addictive process, if you are not currently experiencing these effects, do not allow this to become a “things aren’t that bad” excuse. If you are at Phase 2, then allow these Phase 3 criteria to be a warning instead of a tool for minimization and denial.

Examining 9 Definitions of Addiction

Of the things that people love to debate, “What is an addiction? Is it disease or a choice? Does it reveal a character deficit or a pitiable condition?” is likely near the top of the list; at least in counseling circles. If we frame the question in this binary, either-or fashion, we are unlikely to reach a fruitful conclusion.

Hopefully, you can already pick up that this study will draw some from both schools of thought. Every addict makes choices and addiction radically changes how we choose. The path out of addiction is lined with the stepping stones of meaningful choices and we are all predisposed (by our fallen, sinful nature) to resist these choices.

Caution: If you are struggling with an active addiction, do not get bogged down in this section. This material will make more sense in retrospect with a bit more sobriety under your belt. But the debates surrounding this subject are too prevalent to leave unaddressed until later.

Nine definitions of addiction are provided below from the resources frequently referenced in this study. Each is believed to offer a valuable perspective on the experience of addiction. This is not the time to try to write the perfect definition of addiction or deconstruct the philosophical assumptions behind each.

- “Addiction is bondage to the rule of a substance, activity, or state of mind, which then becomes the center of life, defending itself from the truth so that even bad consequences don’t bring repentance, and leading to further estrangement from God (p. 35).” Ed Welch in *Addictions: A Banquet in the Grave*

- “The critical dimensions for an addiction are (1) the development of a solidly established, problematic pattern of an appetitive – that is, pleurably reinforcing—behavior, (2) the presence of physiological and psychological components of the behavior pattern that create dependence, and (3) the interaction of these components in the life of the individual that make behavior resistant to change (p. 4).” Carlo DiClemente in *Addictions and Change*
- “Addiction is any compulsive, habitual behavior that limits the freedom of human desire (p. 24)... When we can see our freedom impaired, we should consider the presence of addiction (p. 33).” Gerald May in *Addiction & Grace*
- “Addiction is a pathological love and trust relationship with an object or event (p. 10).” Craig Nakken in *The Addictive Personality*
- “Addiction is an impulse-control disorder (p. 113).” Craig Nakken in *The Addictive Personality*
- “The language of sin that A.A. rejected was not the orthodox doctrine of sin as propounded by thinkers like Augustine. Rather, A.A. rejected a certain understanding of sin [Pelagianism] that had long been found theologically wanting. The church proclaims that sin is not fundamentally about human acts but about the human situation. The acts that we call sins are derivative of a deeper malaise called *sin* (p. 129).” Kent Dunnington in *Addiction and Virtue: Beyond the Models of Disease and Choice*
- “They become conscious of the fact that they have been merely fighting the symptoms of *some deep-seated malady*, and that they are confronted, not merely with the problem of sins, that is, of separate sinful deeds, but with the much greater and deeper problem of sin, of *an evil that is inherent in human nature* (p. 227, *emphasis added*)... Sin does not reside in any one faculty of the soul, but in the heart, which in Scriptural psychology is the central organ of the soul, out of which are the issues of life. And from this center its influence and operations spread to the intellect, the will, the affections, in short, to the entire man, including his body (p. 233).” Louis Berkhoff in *Systematic Theology*
- “The thematic has thus come full circle. What was originally understood as the universal condition of sin, then reduced to the pathology of a particular group, and then expanded into a proliferation of addictive diagnoses has simply become another name for a universal human condition (p. 110).” Linda Mercandante in *Victims and Sinners*
- Addiction is present whenever continued self-destructive behavior seems easier and more appealing than healthy living.

What are the most important take-aways for you from these definitions? _____

What important misconceptions are challenged in these definitions? _____

That is enough reflection on this question for now. Continue with the rest of the study.

Understanding the Importance of Honesty

If this entire journey could be reduced to a single step, it would be this – *be honest*. Honesty may be more difficult than sobriety. At the risk of being offensive, you can’t be a good addict without being a good liar. You won’t get far enough into the process if you can’t cover your tracks. Once you’re in the addiction, the lies you’ve told become the bars in your personal prison. Honesty is the number one “technique” to emancipate yourself from addiction.

The most dangerous lies are the ones you actually believe. The first person with whom you need to be honest is yourself. When you believe your own lies they become more convincing to everyone else and the lies cripple the motivation necessary to fuel the process of change.

“When lies become your native language, you are in trouble (p. 33)... The more lies you’ve told... the more lies you believe (p. 36).” Ed Welch in *Crossroads: A Step-by-Step Guide Away from Addiction*

“Self-deception is the red flag here, signaling a discrepancy between what the addicted person had hoped addiction could provide and what addiction does in fact provide (p. 175).” Kent Dunnington in *Addiction and Virtue: Beyond the Models of Disease and Choice*

Memorize this statement – *you will never be more free than you are honest.*

“The process of renewal starts with truth, the most healing of all principles (p. 65).” Craig Nakken in *The Addictive Personality*

Read Numbers 32:23, Proverbs 15:3, Job 34:21, Luke 8:17, and Hebrews 4:13. Chances are you have already experienced the truth of these verses. We lie because we believe we can contain and control the truth; by the stories we tell and the information we do or don't give. We believe we are larger than the truth rather than believing that truth is the reality in which we live. We can no more control truth than we can control the wind. As you read this section on lying, remind yourself regularly that honesty is not optional, only the timing and willfulness of honesty can be chosen. Truth will be known. The only question is whether your character will grow as you disclose it or whether you will live in fear and darkness until light invades your life against your will and to your shame. Pause and pray again for the courage to be honest, because truth-speaking and sobriety are also two sides of the same coin.

In many ways, this section may be the hardest part of this entire journey for you. You are going to be asked to be honest about all the ways you've been dishonest. It will be hard for at least two reasons. First, it will require you to disarm the primary mechanism of protection for your addiction. Second, it will require you to be honest with yourself about *how* you've been dishonest; not just *what* you've misrepresented.

With that in mind, stop and pray before you begin this section. Ask God to give you the courage to be honest. Ask God to show you the emptiness of living with lies. Ask God to give you a desire for freedom more than self-protection.

Fragmentation: One helpful way to think of deception within addiction is fragmentation; telling parts (i.e., fragments) of your story as if they were the whole story and expecting others to respond accordingly.

This is what we do when we ask a friend for financial help, they respond that we need to address our addiction, and we respond, “I thought you were my friend and that I should ask my friends for help when I face hard times. I guess I was wrong.” We take two fragments (i.e., friendship and hardship) and expect our friend to respond as if this were the whole story. When they point to other pieces of the plate/story (i.e., the number of times we've borrowed money and not repaid before) we get offended.

As you read through this material on deception and addiction, begin to notice how many forms of deception (i.e., omitted, facts, false emotions, minimizing, blame-shifting, etc...) are in this brief example.

- 1. **Omitted Facts:** The story you're telling is true and there are not false statements in it. However, the most relevant information for maintaining sobriety is omitted. Example – a “I went to the store and picked up a few things. Here's the milk you said we needed... (but no mention of the 6 pack you bought on a separate receipt using cash).”
 - As a rule, if there is a question you hope is not asked, then you should voluntarily disclose the answer. People should not have to ask the right question to get the needed information to help you. That is the equivalent of a patient lying to their doctor about “where it hurts” because he didn't ask, “Are you having chest pains?”

How do you lie by “omitted facts” and what are the most recent or significant examples? _____

- 2. **False Facts:** This is a step beyond omitting facts. Now the story may be true but elements of the story are false. Example – “I got to talk to my sponsor today and he said he was really encouraged by how things were going... (actually, the sponsored called because he was concerned about the lack of recent contact).”
 - If anything you say is false, then everything you've said is self-destructive. We never lie to cover up the things that make our life better. We only lie when what we've done is offensive to others or destructive to ourselves.

How do you lie by “false facts” and what are the most recent or significant examples? _____

- 3. **False Emotion:** Now you have to play the part. If your lies are true, then they would require certain emotions. If you are going to remain “free,” then you must become an actor (the role itself implies lying when the “audience” does not know it's watching a “show”).

- Violating this principle is the best way to teach people to mistrust you. When people can tell that not only our words but also our emotions are misleading them, they realize they've lost any means to trust anything we report which they cannot directly observe happening.

How do you lie by “false emotions” and what are the most recent or significant examples? _____

4. **False Story:** False facts produce false emotions. Together they require a false story. Your lies are starting to create their own world in which they could be true. You are forced to try to live between these two worlds; reality won't bend and your lies can't break without you being found out. You and those that know you (those that are left anyway) are forced to live stretched between these two worlds.

- Telling the truth now means more than correcting facts. Initially this form of lying feels the most powerful, because you're playing a God-like role. But acknowledging this type of lying is the most shameful, because we realize how much we have manipulated everyone around us.

How do you lie by “false story” and what are the most recent or significant examples? _____

5. **Minimizing:** Maybe you are “smart enough” not to take the false route. Everyone can see how that would inevitably blow up in your face. The “better” route is to not change the facts but the significance of those facts. Minimizing is one of the more popular methods of lying (to others and to yourself).

- As a rule, you should not “weigh” any addictive behavior until it has been fully disclosed to someone acquainted with your struggle. The significance of “two beers” is different when you're in addiction than when you haven't been. You should be more concerned about any setback until someone who knows you, your struggle, and is committed to your sobriety tells you to be less concerned.
- Avoid language that “sizes” a concern as small: slip, mishap, setback, mistake, etc...

How do you lie by “minimizing” and what are the most recent or significant examples? _____

What vocabulary represents your most prevalent phrases of minimization? _____

6. **Blame-Shifting:** Maybe you accept the facts and admit how serious the problem is, but you lie by shifting the responsibility. It's true and it's bad, but it's not my fault. Some of the favorite targets for blame-shifting are: your spouse, your friends, your history, your personality, your emotions, or “it just happened.” Engaging your addictive behavior is always a choice. Focusing on anything other than your choice as the cause of re-engagement puts sobriety in jeopardy.

- As a rule, explanation comes after ownership. If you are trying to explain why something happened or remedy the influences that contributed to the setback before fully owning your choices, you are blame-shifting.

How do you lie by “blame-shifting” and what are the most recent or significant examples? Who or what are your favorite targets for blame-shifting? _____

7. **“I Don't Know”:** It is legal to “plead the fifth” in a court room, but it is deceitful to do so in life. Laziness in response is not an exception clause for omitting important information. “I don't know” is often used as a way to buy time while preparing to do a “better” job at one of the other forms of lying. “I don't know” is also used to force the questioner to nag or badger so their action can become the focal point of the conversation.

- If you know the answer but are not proud of it, share it any way. If you are tempted to blame-shift, be honest about it – “Right now I’m having a hard time answering your question because I can tell I’m wanting to blame others.” If you are genuinely uncertain, allow the person to hear how far you can identify an answer – “I know this won’t completely answer what you’ve asked, but here is how far I can trace my motives or explain my actions...”

How do you lie by “I don’t know” and what are the most recent or significant examples? _____

8. **Late Truth:** Post-discovery confession is not honesty. But often we want points for admitting what people already know. When we add to “late truth” the “false emotion” of being offended that “our best is not good enough” or “I’ll never be able to please you” we only compound the situation.

- Expecting trust to be built based on merely acknowledging truth that had already been discovered is manipulative. It is like expecting to be paid for someone else’s work. Remember, you only “earn” trust for truth that you voluntarily contribute to the relationship.

How do you lie by “late truth” and what are the most recent or significant examples? _____

9. **Changing Definitions:** Altering the definition of words is one of the most prevalent tactics of manipulation. How many times has someone said, “I thought you were my *friend*?” as a way to assuage a situation where their sin was being put on the spot? Here “friend” is being defined as “someone who wouldn’t give me a hard time about offending them or living in a self-destructive manner?” Forgiveness and trust are other frequently mis-defined words during manipulative-addictive conversations.

- Be very cautious when you are hinging your defense or a request on an emotionally-loaded word like friend, forgiveness, or trust. There is a strong probability you are using these words, intentionally or not, in a manipulative manner.

How do you lie by “changing definitions” and what are the most recent or significant examples? _____

10. **Exaggeration:** This is deception by magnification. Unlike other forms of lying which seek to shrink or hide the truth, exaggeration makes truth larger than it really is. Truth moves from being an enemy to being a weapon; when it should always be a friend (even when it hurts; Proverbs 27:6). Example – use of words like: always, never, only, etc...

- Exaggeration places the emphasis on your perspective or experience more than truth. Exaggeration is an attempt to force people to live in your world rather than join them in the real world. Addiction creates a proclivity for all-or-nothing thinking. Living between minimizing and exaggerating is both the essence of honesty and the remedy for one of addiction’s primary impacts on your thinking processes.

How do you lie by “exaggeration” and what are the most recent or significant examples? _____

“In addiction, as in all of life, we overcomplicate things in order to avoid facing the truth (p. 179).” Gerald May in *Addiction & Grace*

Final Thoughts on Admitting

Now is a pivotal time in your process of change. If you remain alone in your pursuit of sobriety, you will likely fail. The most important thing you can do at this point is to involve someone else (preferably multiple people) in your pursuit of God’s freedom from addiction. If you are a part of a small group, call several of your same-gendered friends from the group. If you are still fearful of doing that, join an addiction group in our G4 ministry (information can be found at www.summitrdu.com/counseling).

“Do this work with someone else. Addictions are private, so doing this in public is a way to take a stand against your addiction (p. 3).” Ed Welch in *Crossroads: A Step-by-Step Guide Away from Addiction*

To have made it to the end of this first step is a significant achievement. It could not have been easy to wrestle through the number of subjects you’ve already addressed and faced things you’ve tried to avoid for some time. Honor the work you have put in to reach this point by continuing to take the next steps towards freedom.

“There I humbly offered myself to God, as I then understood Him, to do with me as He would. I placed myself unreservedly under His care and direction. I admitted for the first time that of myself I am nothing; that without Him I was lost. I ruthlessly faced my sins and became willing to have my new-found Friend take them away, root and branch. I have not had a drink since (AA, 13).” Bill Wilson founder of Alcoholics Anonymous

Accountability Focus (ADMIT):

With each step, we will provide questions you should invite another person to ask you openly and to confront any contradiction between your words and life.

- What is my current level of motivation to address the addiction(s) in my life?
- What is the current level of severity (use-abuse-dependence) of each addiction in my life?
- What are the forms of deceit that I use to insulate my addiction from change?

With each step, we advise you to confide at least one new element of your addictive struggle to your accountability partner and commit to restraining it. These commitments are preliminary to step six “life restructuring” but serve to build progress while you get to that point.

- _____
- _____

Chapter 2

“I’m Afraid I Can’t Handle the Truth”

ACKNOWLEDGE the breadth and impact of my sin.

**“I am beginning to see the extent and impact of my substance abuse.
It is bigger than I wanted to admit [describe] and still may be bigger than I realize.
Apart from God’s grace, I am a person in bondage.
I acknowledge that there is no safety and no freedom in minimizing my addiction [describe].
Before I can truly understand the greatness of Jesus, I must acknowledge the magnitude of
what His death and resurrection has conquered on my behalf and in my life.”**

Memorize: Proverbs 23:29-35 (ESV), “Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaining? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who tarry long over wine; those who go to try mixed wine. Do not look at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup and goes down smoothly. In the end it bites like a serpent and stings like an adder. Your eyes will see strange things, and your heart utter perverse things. You will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, like one who lies on the top of a mast. ‘They struck me,’ you will say, ‘but I was not hurt; they beat me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake? I must have another drink.’” As you memorize this passage reflect upon these key points:

- “Woe ... strife... wounds” – Personal sorrow, relational conflict, and physical pain are the results of addiction.
- “Do not look” – Seeing the pleasure of addiction distracts you from the pain it causes. Your focus is your future.
- “Smooth... bites” – This is the contrast between the lies (temporal truths) of addiction and its lasting effect.
- “I was not hurt” – Whether it’s your own pain or the pain you cause others, minimizing pain is a major red flag.
- “When shall I awake?” – In the latter stages, you drink to avoid the pain of being sober more than the pleasure.

Teaching Notes

“Addictions don’t simply pounce on unsuspecting victims. They follow a predictable pattern. They start with personal hardship and end with voluntary slavery (p. 22)... Don’t confuse feeling miserable with an acknowledgement of your sin (p. 54).” Ed Welch in *Crossroads: A Step-by-Step Guide Away from Addiction*

“Over time, heavy drinking can damage one’s relationships, job, intelligence, and emotional and physical health. Often the damage is gradual, occurring slowly over a period of years, so that one may not even notice that it is happening (p. 2).” William R. Miller in *Alcohol and You*

“The more the addictive behavior begins to replace other coping mechanisms, the greater the probability that the individual will progress from use to abuse and dependence... One of the defining features of abuse and dependence is that the behavior begins to take over a larger and larger role in the life of the individual. As other coping mechanisms drop out, the individual begins to rely more and more on the addictive behavior to cope with problems (p. 98).” Carlo DiClemente in *Addictions and Change*

“Addicts quite consciously invest the whole activity of their drug taking with significance. They tend to ritualize it, sometimes giving even the most trivial surrounding circumstances the status of inviolable rites (p. 46).” Francis Seeburger in *Addiction and Responsibility*

“Rather than being things that we *have* (as diseases are), addictions are more like things that we *become* (p. 72).” Kent Dunnington in *Addiction and Virtue: Beyond the Models of Disease and Choice*

“Therefore, a person who becomes temporarily addicted to narcotic painkillers in the hospital may be able to withdraw from the drug more quickly and with much greater serenity than another person can withdraw from the loss of a job or a loved one. The first person’s addiction, although chemically intense, involved only a few million cells directly... In the case of losing a job or a loved one, great existential systems are deeply affected by withdrawal, even though the direct impact on any given synapse may not be so great (p. 84).” Gerald May in *Addiction & Grace*

Embedded Study

Thank you for continuing on this journey. It takes courage to persevere in something that is difficult. You are to be commended for completing step one and beginning step two. In this step we will examine the breadth and impact of our addictions. In step one, we named our struggle; now we will examine it.

As we consider the impact of your struggle, I want to ask you to wrestle with a difficult question. Be as honest and objective as you can. One of the primary goals of this chapter is to help you answer this question as concretely as possible.

Reflection: What do you think will be the result if you continue with your addictive behavior(s) for the next 5-10 years?

At the end of this chapter you will be asked to make a decision, “Is change worth the effort?” The goal is not for you to engage this question in an emotional or reactionary way; making commitments out of exasperation or giving up.

You will be asked to make a reasoned conclusion to the question, “How do the benefits of continuing my life as-is compare to the costs living as I am?” If your assessment (no one else’s, you must make this choice) is that it is the most objectively wise and God-honoring thing for you to do to pursue sobriety, then you will be asked to commit to this goal and making a personalized plan to pursue it.

Before making that assessment, we will examine three areas of your life.

1. The History and Growth of My Addiction
2. The Impact of My Addiction on Me
3. The Impact of My Addiction on Others

Note: This step will require a bit of time. As with each of the other steps, this step will not be accomplished in a week. As you process this material with a group, mentor, pastor, or counselor, it make take several meetings to truly acknowledge the breadth and impact of your addiction without either getting emotionally overwhelmed or minimizing your addiction by merely giving intellectual assent without personally owning it.

The History and Growth of My Addiction

Think about a rainbow; not a bold-color-contrast rainbow like those in a children’s book, but a real rainbow in the sky. Can you tell the exact point at which “red” ends and “orange” begins? How about the point where “blue” quits being blue and becomes “violet”? On a spectrum, transitions are hard to define, but key distinctions are not. In the middle of each stripe it is easy to discern blue from green.

The movement from use, to abuse, to dependence is like this as well. But unfortunately, we often use this ambiguity in these transitions to deny that blue has become green; that use has become abuse or abuse has become dependence.

The purpose of this section is not to pinpoint moments where these transitions occurred. Likely they did not happen in moments. Instead, we want to look back and “own” (take non-self-deprecating responsibility for) the reality that these transitions have occurred.

We are not going to retrace our steps out of addictions; undoing each thing we did to get where we are. The only way out of addiction is forward. We can’t unwrite history. Even when we seek to make amends with those we hurt we are not trying to retrace our steps out of addiction. Instead, we are practicing non-denial and learning to tell our story accurately.

Exercise: On a separate piece of paper sketch out your answers to these questions. You don’t have to write in great detail, because you are outlining conversations, not writing a biography. As you build relationships with people who will play a key role in your recovery (i.e., support group, sponsor, close friends), these will be important topics for you to cover in conversation. Having these honest, accurate conversations about your history will be an important step towards having conversations with those you’ve offended or hurt as you seek to make amends.

- When did you *start* using? Be specific for each substance of abuse you consume.
- When did you *stop* being honest? Be specific about how dishonesty emerged in each circle of relationships.
- When did the pain you were *avoiding* become more satisfying than the high you were *gaining*?
- When did being sober begin to feel *less normal* than being high or intoxicated?

- At how many junctures did your addiction change who your *friends* were (or could be)?
- What rituals or *daily routines* have built up around your AoD usage?
 - Another way to ask this is, how would your rhythms of life have to change if AoD were not a part of your life?
- When did you begin to feel a *sense of shame* about the things you were not doing in order to use AoD?
- What were the key events that alerted you things had gotten worse than you meant for them to?
- Make a list of the *drinking rules* (or their equivalent) you have made for yourself?
 - When did each rule emerge?
 - What was each rule meant to disprove or control?
 - How did each new rule “move the line” for a previous rule?

“Drinkers, for example, have their own definition of the amount or pattern of drinking they consider to be out of control. If the individual’s drinking does not meet this definition, he or she believes that it is under control. Such definitions might include drinking before noon; drinking hard liquor instead of beer (because beer is not considered strong alcohol); and drinking alone instead of at bars because there is moderation in numbers (p. 91).” Carlo DiClemente in *Addictions and Change*

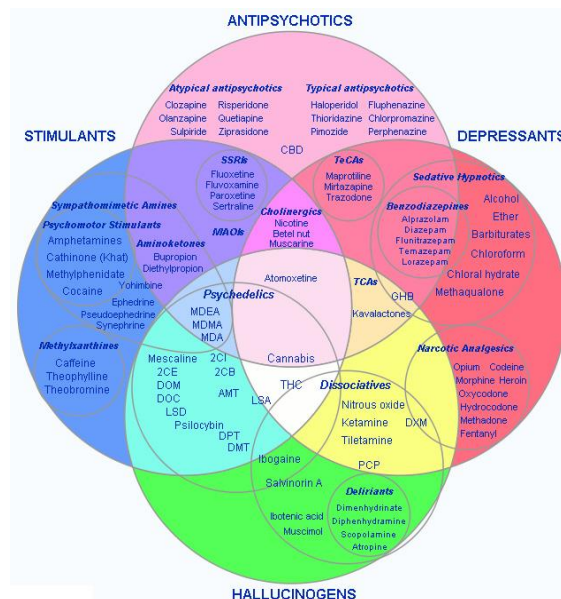
It is as important to remember the successes you want to build on as it is to assess the failures you want to overcome. In that vein, consider these questions as well.

- Since you began to abuse AoD, what are the longest periods of time you have been sober?
- What were the most important factors that contributed to these seasons of sobriety?
- What relationships or interests began to emerge during these seasons of sobriety that you enjoyed?
- What are the skills and interests you have which would emerge if they weren’t crowded out or stifled by AoD?

Read Matthew 10:4; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; and Acts 1:13. One of Jesus’ disciples was known as “Simon the zealot.” This meant he had been part of a violent group that sought to overthrow or undermine (whichever they could) the government. In our day his pre-conversion occupation would have been called terrorism or extremism. The frequency with which he is referenced as “Simon the zealot” in Scripture indicates that he learned to tell his story without shame or pride. That is the ultimate goal of this section. It won’t be completed in this step. But as you tell the story of how God changes your life it should be marked by decreasing amounts of shame (desire to hide details you wish were not true) or pride (using the severity of your struggle to discredit the ability of others to speak into your life or aggrandize the sin).

The Impact of My Addiction on Me

Every addiction has different effects. Stimulants have different effects than depressants. Hallucinogens have a different effect from pain medication. Both the short-term effects of use and the long-term effects of abuse are different. The chart below is meant to help you identify the primary effects of various drugs.



For this reason, it would be very easy for you to use this section to minimize your struggle. You will read material that does not sound like it applies to you, because your substance of choice does not have those particular effects. Please avoid the false assumption that when a particular section does not apply to you that this seminar does not apply to you.

Physical Effects

Whenever the negative health effects related to AoD are discussed, the inevitable counter is to discuss the positive health effects. Both are usually true. When both positive and negative health effects exist for the same substance their impact is represented by a bell curve; the initial benefits peak with moderate use and then quickly slide into significant health concerns. When moderation is lost, health will be compromised.

“In any event, all data agree that the consumption of three drinks per day offers no benefits over those observed with one or two, and at four drinks per day the risk for heart disease and cancers as well as other life-threatening problems increases significantly (p. 74).” Marc Schuckit in *Drug and Alcohol Abuse: A Clinical Guide to Diagnosis and Treatment*

However, this brings up a very relevant point in the discussion of addiction. Most of us had strong warnings against AoD as children. These warnings included education about the dangers of AoD. When experimentation began but these dangers did not occur, we assumed the warnings were false – exaggerations intended to scare.

The pleasures of AoD were quick, episodic, and intense. The dangers of AoD are delayed, cumulative, and lasting. This is a combination of factors that allow for a high degree of self-deception and growing mistrust for the voices that would speak wisdom into our lives. Avoid making the same mistakes with these warnings that you did with your early warnings.

Read Genesis 3:1-24. What was one of Satan’s primary strategies in tempting Eve? He called into question long-term consequences that had not had the time to come to fruition, “You will not surely die (v. 4).” Imagine Satan whispering to a 17 year old you, “You will not surely wind up with a broken marriage, jobless, or unable to think straight without your substance.” In both cases, Satan was short-term accurate and long-term wrong. Satan used this strategy to cause Eve to doubt God. Satan still uses this strategy to get you to doubt parents, teachers, coaches, friends, bosses, or any other voice that would lead you to the way of life instead of the ways of death. Become aware of this empty sales pitch so you can begin to mistrust it.

In this section we will examine ten body organs or systems affected by addiction.

1. **Kidney:** Your kidneys filter your blood. Therefore, the more (by quantity and potency) foreign substances you put in your body, the harder your kidneys have to work. Your kidney literally lays down its life to protect the rest of your body by storing these substances until they can be metabolized and removed from the body.
2. **Liver:** The liver plays a filtering function similar to the kidneys. Drugs’ negative effect on the liver can range from general symptoms (e.g., fatigue, a generic feeling unwell, nausea, itching, and loss of appetite) to more severe symptoms (e.g., jaundice, enlarged liver, pain in the upper right abdomen, confusion, disorientation, and reduced alertness).
3. **Heart:** Most illegal drugs can have adverse cardiovascular effects, ranging from abnormal heart rate to heart attacks. Injecting illegal drugs also can lead to cardiovascular problems, such as collapsed veins and bacterial infections of the blood vessels and heart valves. Any change in the energy level in your body will affect the activity level of your heart. The more you artificially change your heart rate the unhealthier it is for your heart.
4. **Lungs:** Next to the brain, drugs impact the lungs more than any other organ. Even when drugs are not consumed through smoking, drugs interact with the gas exchange that happens in our lungs, making it more difficult for our lung tissue to exchange gases. The damage to delicate lung tissue is exemplified when the drugs are smoked.
5. **Immune System:** When the body is under stress of any kind, one of the first places it pulls energy from is the immune system. As your body uses energy to return to the equilibrium disrupted by the AoD, it pulls from the immune system. Irregular sleep patterns, imbalanced nutrition, and other body stressors created by AoD abuse further decrease the amount of energy the body can devote to the immune system.
6. **Exposure to Diseases:** It is not only the suppressed immune system that leads to increased illness. With AoD abuse frequently brings an increased exposure to diseases. Habits of personal hygiene are usually not a high priority while under the influence of mind or mood altering substances. Compromises in judgement result in more risky health

behaviors (i.e., unprotected sex, sharing needles, etc...). The toll on body organs and systems combined with this increased disease exposure accounts for the escalating physical effects of addiction.

7. **Testosterone (for men):** The body has biological priorities. Testosterone is not at the top of the list. When the body is under a degree of stress that it cannot achieve all of its normal functions, it neglects its non-survival functions. So, in the same way the immune system is neglected during stress, so is the production of testosterone.
8. **Brain:** In the next section we will examine the cognitive and emotional changes that addiction produces, but here we will consider the physiological changes that happen in the brain. Addictions interfere with neurotransmitters, damage connections within the brain, reduce the ability to experience pleasure, and ingrain expectations of unhealthy habits into brain circuitry. These physical changes account for many of the difficulties in breaking an addiction.
9. **Stomach:** Anything you put in your mouth that burns (e.g., hard liquor), burns all the way down. Your digestive system was made to process nutritious food. When you frequently introduce substances that it was not designed to store or metabolize, then your stomach must adapt. Another example would be opioid drugs, which create constipation. After your body adapts to abusing these, the result is a season of irritable bowel. When our body adapts to unhealthy circumstances we force upon it, the result is pain and suffering.
10. **Tooth Deterioration:** Many drugs have the side effects of dry mouth or teeth grinding due to elevated energy level and body tension produced. Both of these side effects result in significant tooth decay.

The more parts of our body that become uncomfortable, the more prone we become to abuse AoD. The mind or mood altering effects of AoD begin to be used to offset the very symptoms they created.

“No matter how they start, addictions eventually center in distress and in the self-defeating choice of an agent to relieve the distress. In fact, trying to cure distress with the same thing that causes it is typically the mechanism that closes the trap on an addict—a trap that, as just suggested, might be baited with anything from whiskey to wool (p. 131).” Cornelius Plantinga, Jr in *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin*

Read Psalm 102. We do not know if the affliction experienced by the author of this psalm had anything to do with addiction. But, regardless, we find in this psalm an invitation to make our physical pain known to God. Notice the rise-and-fall of this psalm. It doesn't move from despair to hope. It has many ups and downs. But even its downs are Godward downs. This is the pattern God wants you to follow. Bring your pain to him; even when you caused it. God is willing to comfort your suffering even when it's caused by your sin; which He is eager to forgive if you are willing to relinquish it. Be honest about when your fear is greater than your hope. Despairing to God is a form of faith.

“It is an act of faith to bring that complaint to him in the pattern of these psalms. Your faith in God should never silence you in the dark hours of grief. Rather, this is when we begin to understand how deep, rich, and sturdy God's love for us really is (p. 9).” Paul Tripp in *Grief: Finding Hope Again*

Emotional-Cognitive Effects

Often we falsely assume our brain only has one control center. Actually, our brain has many control centers. Emotions, reason, and rewards (just to name three) have their own region of the brain where they weigh incoming data and arrive at conclusions. An imperfect metaphor would be that these control centers are like different branches of the United States government meant to hold each other in check.

One way (not the only way) to understand addiction is that reward and emotion mutiny against reason. Taken too far, this metaphor reveals why many addicts believe they will never be able to live sober: *If reason has to dominate over reward and emotion, then the only way for me to be sober is to never be happy.* But the actual goal is a balance of power, not a reverse mutiny. Restoring balance may feel like suppressing reward and emotion initially, but a livable sobriety will require balance in these three faculties.

As you read through the emotional-cognitive effects of addiction, don't just look for examples of these in your life but also consider how these reveal a diminished-imbalanced role for reason in your decision making process.

- I. **Depression:** There are at least three ways addiction can contribute to depression. First, many AoD's are depressants (review the chart earlier in this chapter). It only makes sense that regularly consuming significant quantities of a depressant would increase your level of depression. Second, it is physically exhausting to be addicted.

Fatigue increases your rate of depression. Third, addiction requires time, and this time comes at the expense of rewarding activities in which you can find satisfaction.

2. **Anxiety:** Stimulants are to anxiety what depressants are to depression. Additionally, the mounting number of daily chores and work-school responsibilities that are neglected create a growing sense of anxiety whenever we begin to allow reason to play its intended role again. It is often this sense of being overwhelmed that causes us to retreat to processing life through our emotion and reward centers again.
3. **Paranoia:** At least two factors related to addiction can foster paranoia. First, addiction involves regularly violating our conscience, at least that part that remains sensitive (I Timothy 4:2), and sometimes involves violating the law. These factors create a growing sense that we are doing something wrong and everyone knows it. Second, AoD can deteriorate the reality testing area of the brain – the part of our brain that goes dormant while we sleep which accounts for fanciful dreams. The result of this deterioration is that it becomes more difficult for us to discern rational fear from irrational fear; which fuels paranoia.
4. **Shame:** The emotion of shame is a strong indicator that our addiction is seeping into identity (more on this in the next section). One common way to differentiate guilt and shame is that guilt is a negative emotional response to what we’ve done while shame is a negative emotional response to who we are.
5. **All-Or-Nothing Thinking:** This may be the most destructive cognitive disruption that emerges (or becomes more pronounced) because of addiction. In this mode of thinking things are either great or awful, easy or impossible, perfect or ruined, etc... Because overcoming addiction (or doing anything else worthwhile) is a journey and requires a process, they are deemed impossible.

It may be helpful for you to create a chart when you find yourself getting trapped in all-or-nothing thinking.

Negative Extreme	Reality	Positive Extreme
Ruined	<i>Learning / In-Process</i>	Perfect
Impossible	<i>Worth a Bit of Hard Work</i>	Easy

6. **Distorted Sense of Time:** Addictions work fast. “Delayed onset addictive substance” is an oxymoron. If there was a cheap drug that had a long high but had a 24 hour delay between consumption and its effects, it would not be popular. The low cost and pleasurable high would not offset its delayed effect. This accounts for how addiction begins to dominate life. Most things worth doing take time. When addiction creates a life built around immediacy we lose our tolerance for these long-term investments. This undermines recovery, because recovery takes time.

“Addicts may not seem as illogical as they first appear if we understand one thing: the addictive thinker’s concept of time (p. 27)... Addicts are intolerant of delay for the sought-after effect (p. 28)... To effectively prevent chemical use among young people, we would have to establish (1) ultimate goals in life other than sense of gratification and (2) tolerance for delay. Our culture is not likely to embrace these changes. Instead, our culture embraces addictive thinking (p. 16).” Abraham Twerski in *Addictive Thinking*

7. **Negative Emotion Intolerance:** The goal of addiction is to feel good, or, at least, to not feel bad. The more we build our life around this value, the less we are able (or willing) to tolerate unpleasant emotions. Empathy, uncertainty, grief, boredom, insecurity, doubt, and similar emotions become “reasons” to use. The more we escape these normal (often healthy) unpleasant emotions through substance, the more intolerable we perceive them to be; which results in more and more emotional reasons to use.

“All of humanity's problems stem from man's inability to sit quietly in a room alone.” Blaise Pascal in *Pensées*

A primary effect of #6 and #7 combined is impulsivity. As we increase our demand for immediacy and lose tolerance for anything unpleasant, our decision making becomes profoundly reactionary. We are no longer thinking. We begin to simply demand and escape.

8. **Inflated Sense of Normal:** After the prolonged exposure to the artificial reality created by AoD, normal feels dull, painful, muted, or subdued. It is comparable to the experience we have after jumping on a trampoline. Afterwards, when we are off the trampoline, our normal jumping feels stunted.

"Regular cocaine users begin to find that 'normal' life, experienced without the influence of cocaine, has lost its color and excitement (p. 49)." Carlo DiClemente in *Addictions and Change*

Read Psalm 51. Notice that David prays that God would "restore to me the joy of my salvation (v. 12)." He was aware that his sin with Bathsheba (the artificial high of an illicit relationship and high stakes political maneuvering to cover it up) had impacted his thinking and emotions. He needed them to be recalibrated. The purpose of this section is raise our awareness of what we are asking God to restore so that we can increasingly cooperate with God's grace through faith and obedience.

Identity Change

We can't do anything for an extended period of time without it affecting our identity. This is true for our virtues and our vices. With addictions, we not only invest a significant amount of time and money, but we also sacrifice many dreams and relationships to feed our addiction. These dynamics only further increase the degree to which our addiction becomes part of our identity.

"In fact, the longer we struggle with a problem, the more likely we are to define ourselves by that problem (divorced, addicted, depressed, co-dependent, ADD). We come to believe that our problem is who we are. But while these labels may describe particular ways we struggle as sinners in a fallen world, they are not our identity! If we allow them to define us, we will live trapped within their boundaries. This is no way for a child of God to live (p. 260)!" Paul Tripp in *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hand*

Once a struggle has become who we are, we feel even more powerless to change it. This is why it is vital for you to remember there is a "you" who struggles with addiction. Addiction is the parasite. You are the host. It is powerful. It has home turf in our sin nature and world filled with suffering. But, by the grace of God, you (not "it") make every decision.

When addiction wins, you enact its agenda. That is not a word of condemnation, but a word of hope. You don't have to ask permission to change. You do have to continually surrender to a new master. But it is *you* who will make that choice every time. Remembering that addiction is not your identity is an important part of not surrendering this power of choice.

Functional Effects

Addictions don't exist in a vacuum. They exist in space and time. They cost money. They require planning. They force us to rearrange priorities. While addictions may be hard to define, it is easy to identify their functional effect in our life if we are willing to acknowledge these effects.

In this section one of the things you should learn is that addiction is not just an activity; it's an investment. When we only view addiction as recreation, it is easier to minimize it. When we see the value of what we are investing to perpetuate our addiction, it becomes harder to avoid the reality of what's going on.

In this section we will look at four functional effects of addiction for you to consider. These four forms of impact will serve as a transition for you to consider how your addiction is affecting others.

1. **Time:** There are two types of time investment in addiction: direct time and indirect time. In this point, we will consider the first.
 - How many hours do you spend using AoD? _____ per week _____ per month
 - How many hours do you spend high or intoxicated? _____ per week _____ per month
 - How many hours do you spend "hung over"? _____ per week _____ per month

2. **Planning and Covering Up:** The indirect time cost associated with addiction has to do with planning and covering up your addictive behaviors.
 - Hours spent planning for your addiction? _____ per week _____ per month
 - Hours spent covering up for your addiction? _____ per week _____ per month
 - Hours spent ensuring access to your addiction? _____ per week _____ per month

These first two points allow us to make a very practical assessment that is likely beginning to creep into your thinking, "Is the amount of time I'm spending on this study 'worth it'?" Now you can do the math.

Hours Working Steps: _____ per week
 Hours in Counseling / Group: + _____ per week
 Hours Invested in Addiction: - _____ per week
 Net Gain/Loss _____ per week

It would be easy to view this as a math trick. It's not. It's reality. These are the kinds of decisions that you have to begin to make. This is an example of allowing reason to have its right role over emotion and reward. When whether it's "worth it" to pursue sobriety becomes an emotional decision you will end up making choices that cost you huge portions of your future for relatively small slices of present sacrifice.

3. **Money:** As it does with time, addiction comes with a direct and indirect financial cost. Scripture calls us to consider the financial cost of addiction (Proverbs 21:17, 23:21) as a way to awaken ourselves to the danger and folly of our actions.

Money spent on AoD: _____ per month
 Money spent because of guilt: _____ per month
 Money lost because of work missed: _____ total
 Money lost due to injury or accident: _____ total

Now convert this total amount of money into hours (by dividing it by your hourly wage) and include it in the "worth it" computation above.

4. **Priorities:** This functional effect is less tangible. We can't create a countable commodity like hours or dollars. But the lack of tangibility does not make this impact less significant. If anything, this aspect of addiction's functional effect is more significant. The questions below are meant to help you identify the way addiction has changed your priorities.

- What dreams have died or have you stopped pursuing because of addiction?
- What relationships have been lost, or at least placed at risk, because of addiction?
- What opportunities have you not pursued because of addiction?
- What difficulties do you willingly live with instead of abandoning your addiction?
- What values and beliefs have you changed in order to accommodate your addiction?
- What would you want that is better for your children than what you experience because of your addiction?

Read Romans 5:1-11. After an examination like this, we doubtless will wrestle with shame. It is hard to acknowledge what we see in the mirror. This passage reminds us that shame need not be our destiny (v. 5). But, if we want to experience change, we must still face our shame. Jesus bore its penalty but we cannot avoid its reality. On this point, C.S. Lewis offers a helpful metaphor. Lewis compared shame to hot coffee. If we spill hot coffee on our skin we are burned, scalded, and feel disgusting. However, if we drink coffee we are warmed, nourished, and energized. When we avoid shame or wallow in shame, it becomes like spilled coffee. When we handle the stigma that may exist over addiction in the ways that are outlined in Scripture, then even our weaknesses draw us closer to Christ, remind us of the necessity of the cross, and give us testimony to share.

The Impact of My Addiction on Others

This section will take courage. It is why the word "fearless" is used in step four of AA, "Make a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves." In our nine step approach, this inventory is interspersed in our first three steps, but the courage needed to take them should not be minimized. What you're doing is necessary for change, but it isn't easy. If you struggle with this step, as with any, seek additional support from the friend, pastor, counselor, or group.

We will look at three types of impact our addiction may have had on others: (1) active offenses, (2) absent offenses, and (3) atmosphere changes. In short, we will examine what we've done to hurt others, what we've left undone that has hurt others, and the relational culture created by our addictive lifestyle; a culture which those who love us or depend on us were involuntarily forced to live.

Active Offenses

Active offenses are things you did to cover up your addiction or to perpetuate your addiction that harmed your relationship with others. These are things you did which made it clear that something (your addictive behavior) was more important than someone (the person you sinned against). Regretting those choices later does not reduce their impact. Minimizing their importance, frequency, or impact only enables your addiction.

- **Lies:** We have covered this in significant detail in step one. You cannot be a good addict without being a good liar. As your actions become more destructive you become better at covering them up in order to perpetuate the addiction.

To whom have you lied about your addiction or its impact? _____

- **Stealing:** Addictions aren't cheap, especially when they become so dominant that they impair your ability to earn money. Consider stealing in at least two forms: (a) the direct taking of money or property that is not yours, and (b) receiving pay for hours that you did not perform up to the expected standard because of your addiction.

From whom and how have you stolen to perpetuate your addiction? _____

- **Character Assassination:** If you're not honest about your vices, then you have to invent vices for others to explain why life's not working. This is not a necessity because of the act of addiction, but it is a necessity because of the life of addiction. You live with other people. If you don't own your shortcomings, then you have to push them off on others.

Whose character have you maligned to protect your addiction? _____

Absent Offenses

Christians have long held to the distinctions between sins of commission (i.e., things that we do which are wrong) and sins of omission (i.e., things that are wrong to leave undone). We can harm relationships and hurt people as much by our non-actions as we can by our actions.

- **Withdrawal:** This refers to your absence from others (we will look at the other dynamic next). There are people who love you. They want to be with you and desire your flourishing. When you withdraw, they are rightfully hurt. Friends, parents, spouse, children, and co-workers have a fair expectation of your reasonable availability. When you withdraw, you place them in a lose-lose scenario. If they pursue you, you accuse them of nagging and being controlling. If they honor your distance, then you use this as evidence they don't care.

From whom have you created a lose-lose scenario by withdrawing? _____

- **Isolation:** This refers to other people's inability to access you. There are not only people who want to enjoy your presence; there are many people who have reasonable expectations of your involvement. Those who are part of your life need access to you in order to plan for household, work, or social activities. When you are unavailable, you force them to place their life on hold or "move on without you." This is another example of how your sins of omission create a lose-lose scenario for those around you.

From whom have you isolated yourself in a way that disrupts their life? _____

- **Dependability:** When you say "yes" to something, it is right for people to take you at your word. Chances are there are many things you've said "yes" to because you knew they were reasonable or good requests, but failed to be dependable because of your addiction. This creates a third type of lose-lose scenario. If they accommodate your lack of dependability, they are enabling your addiction. If they try to force your compliance or micro-manage your involvement, then you claim this is evidence of an unfair lack of trust.

With whom have you been undependable? _____

Atmosphere Changes

These changes are less tangible and, therefore, more easily dismissed. But less tangible does not mean less real. It just means harder to define. Chances are as you read through these descriptions you will recall conversations where you felt like people were being unclear or making too much of a moment (i.e., they believed it represented a pattern, but you wanted to treat it as a single event). It may be harder to “own” these offenses at this stage in your journey, but at least begin to give them greater credence.

What is so disruptive about this type of impact is that they become a lifestyle for those who love us enough to interact with us frequently. For children, spouses, parents, and comparably close people we force them to live within this “new, unhealthy normal” mode of communication we create.

- **Emotional Confusion:** Imagine a parent who yells about misplaced socks, ignores failed tests, and falls into self-pity when their child runs away. In this example, the size of the parent’s response does not correlate with the size of the offense from the child. In addition we are like that parent. The size of our response does not correlate with the size of the subject being addressed. Those around us live in confusion because there is little discernable pattern to the size (too large or too small) of our reaction and the life context in which it occurs.

For whom have you created emotional confusion by your inconsistent reactions? _____

- **Six Degrees of Separation:** You know the game. You try to pair two things or people within six examples of other things or people they’re related to. When we live with secrets, we force people to play this game in unhealthy ways. We don’t want to talk about our secrets, which means we don’t want to talk about things related to our secrets, which means we don’t want to talk about things related to things related to our secrets, etc... Pretty soon most of our life feels off limits and those who love us can’t figure out what they’re doing wrong to get such aloof or defensive responses to seemingly innocent conversation prompts.

Who have you trained to try to crack the code of your six degrees of separation? _____

- **Addiction Replaces Relationship:** We tend to do relationships in a way that discerns where we “rank” in other people’s lives. “If I ask for [blank] and [name] asks for the same thing, who gets it?” When we struggle with addiction those who love us get used to living with a “mystery other” in our lives. Before they know about our addiction, they can’t figure out who or what they keep coming in second to. After they learn of our addiction, they begin to realize the rank of addiction is comparable to an adultery partner in a marriage. The sense of betrayal they have been feeling finally makes sense.

“Your addiction went from being a friend to a lover to a slave-master (p. 25).” Ed Welch in *Crossroads: A Step-by-Step Guide Away from Addiction*

Who has been replaced or demoted in your life due to your addiction? _____

Read Matthew 22:37-40. This is the well-known “Golden Rule” passage. Everything we’ve talked about in this section is a violation of the command to “love your neighbor as yourself (v. 39).” This simple principle is sufficient to protect us from hurting those around us in all the ways we’ve described. But it is not easy. The opposite of simple is complex. The opposite of easy is difficult. Your loved ones may have said, “It seems so *simple* what needs to be done.” And they’re right. Basic honor in a relationship is not complex. But chances are you’ve heard them say, “It should be *easy* to do these things.” The more honest you are about why it’s hard and the more faithful you are in walking this journey, the more confusion you’ll remove from your loved one’s lives and the more understood you will feel.

Making the Decision to Pursue Change

Now we come to the big question: *Is change worth it?* Before you began this study there were times when you said, “Yes!” because some moment blew up in your face and there were times when you said, “Nah” because the consequences did not seem greater than the reward in that moment.

Notice that both answers were highly situation-dependent. If your situation changed, your answer changed. Life is fluid enough that your commitment to change fluctuated frequently.

This has been the purpose of these first two steps: to get you out of situation-dependent decision making and help you make an informed choice about the future that you want. Now you're going to be asked to make a commitment to change. Engaging the rest of this material in this journey without a firm commitment to change would be counterproductive.

You know change is hard, so it doesn't make sense to “try to change” without a firm commitment to the process. The “My Commitment to Change” sheet on the next page is meant to help you solidify your commitment and quantify your next steps. Your plan will develop as you continue this study, but whenever you feel your sense of commitment begin to wane, please do two things:

1. Reach out the people supporting you on this journey. Do this immediately and without delay. Don't worry about what you're going to say or what it will sound like. Just make the call.
2. Review your “My Commitment to Change” sheet and your work from the initial two steps to remind yourself of why this journey is absolutely worth it.

Accountability Focus (ACKNOWLEDGE):

With each step, we will provide questions you should invite another person to ask you openly and to confront any contradiction between your words and life.

- Have I carefully and thoroughly provided the history of my addiction?
- Have I carefully and thoroughly acknowledged the impact of my addiction on me?
- Have I carefully and thoroughly acknowledged the impact of my addiction on others?
- How much effort does it appeal I gave to the “My Commitment to Change” sheet?

With each step, we advise you to confide at least one new element of your addictive struggle to your accountability partner and resulting commitment to sobriety. These commitments are preliminary to chapter six “life restructuring” but serve to build progress while you get to that point.

- _____
- _____



MY COMMITMENT TO CHANGE *

This is “your plan.” The most important words on this page are I, me, and my. Do not allow yourself to begin to view these things as something that is being forced upon you. Write the things that are important to you and the things you believe will be effective. As you learn more about yourself and through this study, you can modify your plan. But, at this stage, be sure that you are fully embracing this as *what you want for your future*.

You are ready to commit when you believe the freedom you’ll gain is greater than the bondage you’ll lose.

“The treatment for addiction is to want something better than your addictions (p. 3)... Hope is the conviction that the battle is worth it (p. 92).” Ed Welch in *Crossroads: A Step-by-Step Guide Away from Addiction*

“Human behavior change requires significant effort... The reasons in favor of change need to be important and substantive enough to move the individual into deciding to make the effort to change (p. 28).” Carlo DiClemente in *Addictions and Change*

The changes I want to make are:

The most important reasons I want to make these changes are:

The steps I plan to take in changing are:

The ways other people can help me are:

Person’s Name	Ways They Can Help

I know that my plan is working if:

Some things that could interfere with my plan are:

I am hopeful these consequences or results will come out of my recovery change plan:

* This resource is modified and adapted from a comparable resource in *Motivational Enhancement Therapy Manual* by William Miller, et al

Chapter 3.

“I Can’t Solve the Riddle that Is Me”

UNDERSTAND the origin, motive, and history of my sin.

“I do not know all I need to know about myself or my struggle with addiction.

I do know that my heart resists being known (Jeremiah 17:9), and that my cravings reveal the things that are most important to me (Luke 6:45).

I am coming to realize that [list] desires lead me to addiction, and that [list] experiences have contributed to the strength of those desires.

I believe God is more satisfying than those desires could ever be without Him.”

Memorize: James 1:14-15 (ESV), “But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desires. Then desire gives birth to sin and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.” As you memorize this passage reflect upon these key points:

- “Each person” – You must refute the lie that your circumstances are unique in a way that makes sin acceptable.
- “Lured and enticed” – Temptation rarely feels like sin-chasing. We pursue the bait and ignore the hook.
- “His own desires” – The why-questions will always be answered by personal desires that have become too large.
- “Gives birth to sin” – Desire is more than a feeling; it is worship that will either conceive life or death in us.
- “Brings forth death” – Echoes of this scary reality is what woke you up to your need for change.

Teaching Notes

“All sin is ultimately irrational..... Though people persuade themselves that they have good reasons for sinning, when examined in the cold light of truth on the last day, it will be seen in every case that sin ultimately just does not make sense (p. 493).” Millard Erickson in *Christian Theology*

“Dysfunctional families don’t talk, don’t trust, don’t feel. Safe families do talk, do trust, and do feel!... What we don’t talk out creatively, we will act out destructively. Your church needs to be a safe place (p. 28).” John Baker in *Celebrate Recovery: Leader’s Guide*

“Behavioral psychologists have long known that intermittent gratification is a powerful means of conditioning. A habit is more strongly reinforced when the positive effects of the behavior occur intermittently than when they are constant. This is one reason gambling, fishing, hunting, and other behaviors that have intermittent and unpredictable payoffs are so addictive. It is also why attempts to moderate or cut down an addictive behavior usually fail so abysmally. In my struggle to make gratification less constant, I am actually reinforcing my attachment (p. 60).” Gerald May in *Addiction & Grace*

“The voice of your addiction really is your own Mini-me. That’s your voice you’re hearing (p. 8)... That is what you did with your addiction. You practiced... Secretly, more and more of your life was becoming about your addiction (p. 24).” Ed Welch in *Crossroads: A Step-by-Step Guide Away from Addiction*

“Addiction can be interpreted as one available modern response to the lack of any common consensus about the *telos* of human action (p. 104)... Addiction is in fact a kind of embodied cultural critique of modernity and the addict a kind of unwitting modern prophet (p. 123).” Kent Dunnington in *Addiction and Virtue: Beyond the Models of Disease and Choice*

“Like the Israelites in the Exodus, we know we do not want to go back to imprisonment, and we sense we are moving on to a better existence, but still we must mourn the loss of the life we had known... It is important to note that the spiritual growth process involves far more relinquishment than acquisition. In our culture, we are conditioned to expect growth to involve acquisition of new facts and understandings (p. 105).” Gerald May in *Addiction & Grace*

“Addicts begin to trust the addictive mood change caused by their addiction to an object or event because it’s consistent and predictable... Because addiction is predictable for addicts, they believe it can be trusted (p. 12)... Addicts get intensity and intimacy mixed up (p. 18).” Craig Nakken in *The Addictive Personality*

Embedded Study

It is unfortunate that this step will likely not be as satisfying as we would like. We often fall into the trap of thinking that if we understand the “why” better, then the “what” will be easy, or at least easier. There are at least two realities that disrupt this seemingly sound logic.

First, sin is not rational, so it refuses to play by our rules of logic. Sin is not a simple behavior that operates according to single-variable motivations. Rather sin is a condition and a predator. Sin has its roots in our fallen human nature. Sin is aided and abetted by an enemy who desires our destruction (1 Peter 5:8). This means that sin both has the home field advantage and is willing to cheat to win. This is why simple, temporary measures will never be sufficient.

Second, our goal must be effectiveness-at-change rather than ease-of-change or our best intentions will lead us back into addiction. Sin is always willing to wait for a more opportune time (Luke 4:13) if its interests are not best served in a given moment. The moments when we let our guard down are the times when our intelligent adversary will strike. Anything that undermines our vigilance is an asset to our adversary.

But these realities do not make an examination of the history and motives of our addiction fruitless. It just means that what we intuitively want from this examination is overly optimistic. What we can gain is a better understanding of (a) what motives drive our addiction, (b) the context in which those desires became excessively dominant, and (c) how those desires began to take on a god-like function in our lives.

The more honestly and accurately we are able to make these assessments in real time, the more effectively we will be at relying on God and reaching out to our support network for help. The more “foreign” or “crazy” our motives feel to us, the less likely we are to tell others what is going on. The more these things make sense to us, even if we disagree with the values behind the motives, the more willing we will be to ask for help.

We will consider this step in three sections:

1. Another Look at Your History
2. Identifying and Talking to Your Motives
3. Capturing Each Struggle in Real Time

Another Look at Your History

In step two, we looked at your history that was directly related to your addictive behaviors. This was helpful for seeing how the breadth and impact of your addiction grew. In this step, we will consider parts of your history that have the potential to contribute to motives.

The level of value each person receives from this section will vary. Some will find it very helpful; others only moderately so. Regardless of how much insight this develops for you, the most important thing you can do with what you learn is honestly share it with those in your support network.

Even if you don’t gain significant insight from this exercise it will afford an opportunity for you to feel more known and understood by people who care about you. This is excellent fuel for your motivation to change. Honesty is the road to sobriety. Lack of transparency or authenticity is the road back into addiction.

- *Have members of your family struggled with addiction?* This both removes the taboo of addiction and provides you a working model of what it looks like to live in addiction.
- *How did your family handle emotions and conflict?* Much of addiction is about artificial emotional regulation. The less healthy your family handled emotion and conflict, the less equipped you may feel to handle life without addiction.
- *How safe was it to have weaknesses or make mistakes in your family?* The unrealistic pressure to always be strong or “on” creates an emotional climate where some unhealthy outlet or deception is felt to be needed.
- *How socially competent have you felt at various stages in your life?* AoD are often used as “social lubricant,” at least initially. The more we rely on a crutch like AoD, the less the skills to navigate social contexts without AoD develop.
- *When challenges come, are you dispositionally disposed to address them or ignore-escape them?* The more avoidant we are in our approach to life challenges, the more appealing substance abuse becomes.

- *When you were first “wowed” by your AoD of choice, what created the “wow”?* Often addiction is an attempt to get this first experience back.
- *When you have tried to quit before, what kind of experiences had the biggest impact on your relapses?* Relapses should always be viewed as learning experiences. Important motives or areas of weakness can be discovered from a relapse.
- *What warnings about AoD proved untrue, at least at first?* These often become key parts of our rationalizations. When the long-term impact of AoD abuse do not occur initially, we discredit the voices of wisdom who cared enough to warn us.

Read Romans 12:3. This passage tells us to think of ourselves with sober judgment. “Sober” here doesn’t mean non-intoxicated; it means with a realistic and accurate assessment. That is what this section, and the rest of step three, is all about. This passage recognizes that God gives each one of us different “measures of faith.” Part of this is the strengths, weaknesses, and aptitudes that allow us to endure certain stressors or temptations better than others. This passage tells us not to be ashamed of this, but be honest (i.e., sober) about it and order our life accordingly.

Identifying and Talking to Your Motives

Identifying and assessing motives is not as straight forward for addiction as it can be for other life struggles. With anger or anxiety, you can ask, “Why am I angry?” or “Why am I anxious?” and once you have an answer, the steps towards resolution are relatively clear. You may need to repent of your pride, back off how much you value a pet peeve, change how you manage finances, or modify expectations in relationships. But identifying motives makes the logistics of change decently clear.

This is not the case with addictions. The category of addiction implies enough time has passed for the addictive behavior to (a) potentially have many motives feeding its life, and (b) for the addiction itself to influence the motives that fuel it.

For an example of “A,” a young person may begin to drink based on peer pressure, find that alcohol serves as an effective emotional suppressant, and begin to drink to offset loneliness or the seeming monotony of life. These broad-based motives that may change by season of life still get mingled with in-the-moment “reasons” from earlier seasons of life (i.e., “It would be rude not to drink at my friend’s wedding when everyone else is.” or “How am I not supposed to drink after a stressful day when three people got fired at work?”).

For an example of “B,” addictions create problems and problems becomes “reasons” to continue the addiction. When impaired, we neglect responsibilities. When responsibilities pile up, we get stressed. When stressed, we want relief from addiction. Or, when impaired we hurt people. When we hurt people, there is conflict and guilt. Conflict and guilt become the “reason why” we need a break (by which we mean, to re-engage our addiction).

With this in mind, you will be asked to think about each of your addictions in terms of multiple layers of motives. As you examine the motives listed later in this chapter, place them in the chart below.

- *Early Motives* – These are the things that were initially appealing about this addiction. These are often the motives from when your addiction seemed innocent and fun.
- *Later Motives* – These are things you used your addiction to do as it became more developed but are less prevalent or meaningful to you now. These frequently represent when you felt like you were becoming “good at” your addiction and were mastering it.
- *Current Motives* – These are the primary drivers for your addiction during this season of your life. When we begin to work towards recovery these are the motives we can clearly see (at least when we’re actively fighting temptation) as self-defeating.
- *Self-Perpetuating Motives* – These are the problems your addiction “solves” but which it also caused. These motives usually still seem the most “necessary” because the problems are real, but our addictive-solution is the equivalent of throwing water on a grease fire.

Addictive Behavior	Early Motives	Later Motives	Current Motives	Self-Perpetuating Motives

Reflection: What did you learn from placing your motives for addiction in this kind of historical sequence? _____

We will look at 10 motives that are frequently associated with addiction. These are not meant to be exhaustive, but represent the alternative uses we try to derive from their addictive behaviors. If you don't find your motive on the list, then reading through the list should allow you to put into words what you're trying to get from your addiction.

1. **Social Lubricant:** "Gateway drugs" (i.e., cigarettes, alcohol, and marijuana) tend to get introduced at a time when none of us feel socially competent or like we have access to the "unwritten rules" of relationships. Whether it is the disinhibition created by these substances or shared comradery of kids doing something bad together, addictive substances ease many of the insecurities that socially impair us. Even into adulthood, many of us are uncomfortable enough being ourselves we think we "need" a social lubricant to have friends and be likeable.
2. **Achievement:** This motive can be "Social Lubricant 2.0." Many of us battle through school trying to find our stand out trait. We find we can't be the valedictorian, captain of the sports team, or prom king-queen. These take aptitudes we either don't have or won't cultivate. But it doesn't take much to be a world-class partier. Here is a road to achievement that is attainable without sacrifice. We can be validated without any threat of anyone knocking us off our throne. Addiction seems to be the easy road to greatness.
3. **Reward:** Beginning with this motive, it requires some experimentation with AoD for the motive to take root. Once you begin to enjoy your substance of choice, it quickly becomes your reward of choice. Have you worked hard all week? Have you finished a project or a test? Did you clean the garage or a closet? Did not return a few e-mails and feel good about it? As the addiction becomes stronger, the size of activity that merits a reward gets smaller. Soon everything is a reason to engage your substance of choice.

"You do your addiction because you like it (p. 14)." Ed Welch in *Crossroads: A Step-by-Step Guide Away from Addiction*

4. **Relaxation:** A step away from reward is relaxation. Now, we don't have to have done anything good, we just need a break. AoD becomes a form of "me time." Addiction becomes our hobby. Instead of golf, shopping, fishing, crafts, or taking a nap we engage our addiction. Our addiction becomes how we unwind. That is a scary transition because now, if we don't have our substance, it is no longer a "good day" because we couldn't relax.
5. **Escape:** A bit beyond relaxation is escape. Now, more than our hobby, addiction is becoming our refuge. Addiction is where we run when life is scary. And, if we're honest, life is often scary; even without the complicating problems introduced by addiction. In life there are many things it would be good to know but we don't and there are many things we need to do but we're not good at. Now every challenge is a trigger for addiction.
6. **Boredom:** With boredom, addiction no longer needs a reason. When boredom becomes our motive, it is up to the world around us to give us a good reason not to engage our addiction. The artificial high of addiction has, at this point in the motive progression, rendered "normal life" to be "boring." When normal becomes unacceptable or unbearable, addiction becomes the only option (at least that's how we experience it).
7. **Loneliness:** For some, perhaps many people, addictions are more relational than behavioral. Even if loneliness was not the initial motive, the isolation that develops as relationships deteriorate results in addiction becoming an attempt to fill the void of loneliness. Addiction is like a friend-on-demand; the only problem is that addiction is a bad friend. When an addict is married, their spouse often is left feeling like the addiction is adultery. The addiction is trusted more than the marriage and the allegiance to the addiction is stronger than it is to their spouse. Even if you're not married, the same dynamic emerges with your close relationships.

"It really is the case for the alcoholic that the good times are vacuous without alcohol, that the hard times are unbearable without alcohol, that loneliness doesn't feel lonely with alcohol, that loving relationships are mediated by alcohol, that success can only be celebrated with alcohol, that only alcohol can insulate from rejection and so on. To be an alcoholic is to enter into such a relationship with alcohol that everything else in life makes sense only if it is accompanied by alcohol (p. 153)." Kent Dunnington in *Addiction and Virtue: Beyond the Models of Disease and Choice*

8. **Cynicism:** When life seems arbitrary, addiction is the way many people quit in rebellion. When we feel like a game is rigged, our natural form of defiance is to quit trying. We demonstrate that we’re not fooled by stopping. When we feel this way about life as a whole, then addiction becomes a form of volitional suicide – we wisely don’t end our life, but addiction becomes a way we clearly communicate “I’m not playing your game anymore.”
9. **Order:** This motive seems odd. We might think addiction creates disorder, but it would be more accurate to say that addiction created dysfunctional order. Many of us struggle to meaningfully answer the question, “Why do I do the daily things I do? Why do I go to work, make money, keep house, etc... month after month, year after year?” In a culture where the only answer is “to do what makes you happy,” the rituals and rewards of addiction can provide a satisfying (even if dysfunctional) answer to these kinds of questions.

“Addictions exert enormous control over human persons in part because they supply this need for an ordering principle... The person in the grips of an addiction finds that she operates in a profoundly simplified moral terrain, in which every activity, every relationship, every object of value is reinterpreted and invested with meaning only as it relates to the end of the practice of the addiction (p. 150)... Addictive objects are addictive because they enable persons to regulate their lives. That is why, among the various classes of mind-altering substances, very few persons are addicted to hallucinogens, like LSD or mescaline. Hallucinogens are unpredictable in their effects such that the user can never know what type of ‘trip’ to expect (p. 152).” Kent Dunnington in *Addiction and Virtue: Beyond the Models of Disease and Choice*

10. **Punish:** If we can’t avoid pain, we use it. A common use of pain is to punish. Some people use addiction to punish themselves, as a form of self-abasing penance. Other people use addiction to punish loved ones who disappoint them or won’t do what they want. In this case, pain is not avoided by addiction, but harnessed.
- Other _____: What was missing? What motive(s) fit your addiction(s)? How would you describe what makes them enticing and what makes them ineffective? _____
-
-

Read Luke 9:23-24. In light of what you’ve been learning about yourself, reflect on this well-known passage that summarizes what it means to be a follower of Christ. Often we view this passage negatively, “You have to be willing to give up everything that’s important to you in order to follow Jesus.” But hopefully you can see the beauty of this passage now. What God offers through gospel-based self-denial is not punishment, but freedom.

Read Ecclesiastes (yes, the whole book). The entire book of Ecclesiastes is one long book of motives for the pursuit of peace, hope, and happiness. As you read, realize this is the journal of a very wise and influential person. Realize your motives are not new and your disappointment in what they cannot provide is not unique. Be encouraged that someone has walked your same path, experienced the same emptiness, and learned where to find the security and fulfillment you’re seeking.

Talking to Your Motives

We learn about motives in order to start healthier conversations; conversations with God, others, and ourselves. In the final part of this step we will look at our internal conversations. In step four we will look at our conversations with God and in step five our conversations with others.

A large part of overcoming addiction is navigating conversations between your old self and new self (Eph. 4: 20-24), the spirit and the flesh (Gal. 5:16-24), or your sin nature and your new nature in Christ (Rom. 5:12-21). The Bible speaks of this internal battle in many different ways.

Here is your basic strategy from this point forward:

1. Recognize the distorted motives above as belonging to your old self, which is bent on destruction.
2. Express faith by doubting the messages of your old self.
3. Challenge the messages of your old self with the truth of what God says about who you are.
4. Choose in ways that honor God and contribute to your flourishing based upon God’s truth.

Realize in this process you have four options about how to address the messages from your old self or sinful-flesh nature.

- a. agree and obey – worst case scenario
- b. disagree and obey – a step in the right direction
- c. agree and disobey – a further step in the right direction
- d. disagree and disobey – healthy and free

These four options are represented in the chart below. Hopefully, what you see in this chart is that you do not have to condemn yourself for hearing the destructive messages of your flesh. Instead, your goal is simply to disagree and disobey. The part of you that clings to these destructive messages will slowly be put to death through faith and obedience. Don't allow a sense of condemnation over your flesh's continued presence to strengthen your flesh through guilt, shame, or a sense of failure.

	Obey	Disobey
Agree	Most Dangerous: We believe what our flesh nature tells us about ourselves and obey what it tells us to do to make the situation "better."	Reality of Growth Step: There will still be times we are prone to agree with our flesh nature about ourselves, but even in these moments of weakness we are able to resist the "remedies" our flesh offers.
Disagree	First Growth Step: We disagree with what our flesh nature tells us about ourselves but still obey what it tells us to do to make the situation "better."	Ultimate Goal: We consistently disagree and disobey our flesh because our confidence in what God says and what God offers is the strongest voice guiding our life.

Pick one of the dominant motives for your addiction (_____) and fill in the blank chart below with what your internal dialogue is likely to sound like as you grow into the freedom God has for you.

	Obey	Disobey
Agree		
Disagree		

Use this chart (whether you write on it or not) to help you identify what your options are in moments of temptation. When you take the time to articulate your four choices, instead of just feeling pressured by your temptation, the best choice not only becomes “obvious” but it also becomes easier (not to say “easy”). Better yet, call a friend in your support network and use this chart as a way to allow them to get to know your inner struggle.

In an effort to help further your understanding of your struggle with addiction we will combine this four quadrant exercise with a journal tool that is the focus of the next section.

Capturing Each Struggle in Real Time

The overarching goal of step three is to allow you to see yourself more accurately “in real time.” When we are experiencing temptation towards addiction, it is hard to see ourselves and our situation accurately. When our assessment is distorted, it is unlikely that our efforts at resolving these challenges will be effective. However, when we slow down enough to assess our situation, what seems impossible (i.e., sobriety) becomes possible with God's grace.

The journaling tool that concludes this step is designed to help you do two things in the midst of each moment of temptation you experience.

1. Gather the relevant information you’ve learned to assess during the first three steps.
2. Gather information that will allow you to be more equipped to effectively implement the remaining steps.

This should be very encouraging. You can now begin attacking your addiction. Whereas, before you likely felt like your addiction happened to you. Now, your addiction will not be able to manifest itself without you gathering important information that will become part of the remedy. The battle may still be hard, but the momentum is shifting in your favor.

Accountability Focus (UNDERSTAND):

With each step, we will provide questions you should invite another person to ask you openly and to confront any contradiction between your words and life.

- Did I take the time to transparently share about each aspect of the history of my addiction?
- Did I “own” the motives for my addiction without minimizing their significance?
- Have I shown a willingness to disagree and disobey my addiction during moments of temptation?

With each step, we advise you to confide at least one new element of your addictive struggle to your accountability partner and resulting commitment to sobriety. These commitments are preliminary to chapter six “life restructuring” but serve to build progress while you get to that point.

- _____
- _____



ADDICTION JOURNAL

Have you called your sponsor, accountability partner, pastor, or counselor? Yes No*

* Don't begin reflecting or writing until answer to this questions is "yes." It is foolish to fight addiction alone.

STEP ONE: ADMIT:

What was the situation? Summarize the “who, what, before-after, where” of your temptation towards addiction.

How did I react? Summarize the content of your thoughts and the choices you made. Use the four quadrant tool to identify both your actual reaction and other possible options.

What is my current commitment level to change? Weak | 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Strong

STEPS TWO & FIVE: ACKNOWLEDGE & CONFESS:

What are the most relevant components of “My Commitment to Change” plan?

How willing am I to enact “My Commitment to Change” plan? Low | 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 High

What are the consequences if I succumb? For me? For others?

STEP THREE UNDERSTAND:

What motives are present in this moment of temptation? Circle or write in your motives/triggers.

Social Lubricant	Achievement	Reward	Relaxation
Escape	Boredom	Loneliness	Cynicism
Order	Punish	Other: _____	

STEP FOUR REPENT:

How would God have me run to him in this experience? What do repentance and faith look like *in this moment*?

STEPS SIX & SEVEN: RESTRUCTURE LIFE & IMPLEMENT:

How did I leave myself susceptible to this struggle? What change is needed to prevent this from happening again?

What actions would be most effective at thwarting my cravings and overcoming my addiction?

What aspects of this struggle do I need to share with a friend, pastor, or counselor?

Chapter 4.

“Returning to God as Refuge from Substance as Escape”

REPENT TO GOD for how my sin replaced and misrepresented Him.

**“My addiction is a counterfeit god mocking my Savior.
I am beginning to see how offensive my addiction is to God and
how much pride I express trying to be/replace God with my addiction.
I repent not merely because my addiction hurts other people or disrupts my life, but
because God is superior to my addiction and lovingly enables me to love Him (I John 4:19).”**

Memorize: Acts 3:19-20 (ESV), “Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus.” As you memorize this passage reflect upon these key points:

- “Repent... turn back” – The core meaning of “repent” is not “feel very bad” but “make a U-turn” back to God.
- “Blotted out” – God has no intention of shaming you with your sin. Instead, he wants to free you from false idols.
- “Times of refreshing” – If we rightly understood repentance, our anticipation of the effect of repentance would be more enjoyable than the effect of our substance of choice.
- “The presence of the Lord” – Repentance is what reconnects us with the source of our strength and hope.
- “May send the Christ” – Repentance unlocks the door of our life to unleash the return of the hero, Christ.

Teaching Notes

“When it comes to addictive behaviors, individuals often refer to that elusive characteristic called ‘will power’ as the only thing needed for change. However, the definition is often circular and unhelpful. Successful changers have it and unsuccessful ones do not (p. 157).” Carlo DiClemente in *Addictions and Change*

“The only master who is not harsh and enslaving is Christ himself (p. 213).” Ed Welch in *Addictions: A Banquet in the Grave*

“It is possible to approach grace as if it were just another thing to be addicted to... Grace itself cannot be possessed; it is eternally free, and like the Spirit that gives it, it blows where it will. We can seek it and try to be open to it, but we cannot control it... Our addictions fill up the spaces within us, spaces where grace might flow (p. 17).” Gerald May in *Addiction & Grace*

“Repentance is how you begin to enjoy the freedom of your loving relationship with God. True repentance affects our whole person and changes our entire view of life. Repentance is to take God’s point of view on our lives instead of our own (p. 91).” John Baker in *Celebrate Recovery: Leader’s Guide*

“If we don’t surrender to Christ, we will surrender to chaos (p. 16)!” John Baker in *Celebrate Recovery: Leader’s Guide*

“The real reason God can deliver you is because he is the only one who is more beautiful than your addiction (p. 16).” Ed Welch in *Crossroads: A Step-by-Step Guide Away from Addiction*

“Thus the more we become accustomed to seeking spiritual satisfaction through things other than God, the more abnormal and stressful it becomes to look for God directly (p. 93).” Gerald May in *Addiction & Grace*

“Sin can’t thrive in a humble heart (p. 128).” Kris Lungaard in *The Enemy Within*

Embedded Study

You probably feel like your soul has been laid bare in the first three steps. You have looked at yourself, your behaviors, and your life as a whole in ways that you have probably resisted for a long time. In this chapter you are going to bring that honest self-awareness before God. You are not bringing Him something (by way of information) that He needs in order to act. You are placing yourself in a position to receive what He has already done on your behalf.

If you presume upon God's forgiveness (i.e., "God has to forgive me. He's already sent Jesus to die. It would be a waste if He didn't follow through. Besides, God would be a liar if He promised to forgive and didn't honor His Word. I'll go through the ritual to get what's coming to me if that is what He wants."), then you are not repenting. You are making a legal transaction with someone you believe to be too stupid to know better. Additionally, you are leveraging God in a manipulative fashion against anyone you offended in your sin (i.e., "If God has forgiven me, why can't you?"). If this fits you, receive the strong warning of Galatians 6:7, "God is not mocked."

"There can be no secrecy between the soul and God, and therefore there can be no manipulation (p. 122)." Gerald May in *Addiction & Grace*

If you neglect seeking God's forgiveness (i.e., "I don't deserve to be forgiven. I should have to pay for what I've done wrong. I've made enough people suffer because of my selfishness, so I shouldn't add Jesus to the list."), then you are wallowing in self-pity and will remain in the same shame-cycle that has likely fueled your addiction for a long time. Relationally, you would be remaining an "unsafe" person who, by virtue of your self-pity, will manipulate others with your use of guilt.

The only way out of sin is through genuine repentance. All lasting change is built upon repentance. Repentance is when we change our primary allegiance from self to God. Repentance is when we turn from trusting our ways to trusting God's ways. Repentance is when our primary goal changes from self-satisfaction and self-protection to glorifying God and loving others according to God's design.

This chapter solidifies all the work you have done so far and serves as the foundation for each step remaining in the process. You have learned a great deal about yourself and your sin in the first three steps. Repentance is when you commit to quit trying to make your broken ways work.

We will look at repentance in three sections.

1. To Whom Are You Repenting?
2. Key Elements of Repentance
3. Sample Prayer of Repentance

To Whom Are You Repenting?

The identity of God is a significant point of controversy in Christian recovery circles. The generic "God of your understanding" that can be a chair or a doorknob makes many Christians uncomfortable. However, this utilization of the "God of your understanding" phrase departs significantly from how Bill Wilson, founder of AA, originally used the phrase.

The original usage was meant to be an expression of humility, not universalism. Bill Wilson recognized that he, like all of us, have many misconceptions about God, and that as he pursued God these misconceptions would be progressively corrected. None of us have a completely accurate view of God when we first come to faith or begin recovery. We reach out to God as we understand him at that time. Like in any relationship, the depth and accuracy of our knowledge grows with time.

In this material, we do not believe all conceptions of deity are equal. We believe there is one true God, who stepped into time in the form of Jesus Christ, lived the life we were supposed to live, died the death our sin deserves, and is scandalously willing to offer his righteousness for our surrender. Talking to any other god is a form of talking to ourselves and has the power of talking to a doorknob or a chair.

In this section, we will look at common misconceptions about God that hinder our willingness to forsake our addiction and surrender to His care. You will find that correcting these misunderstandings is more than an intellectual exercise. Placing an increasing amount of emotional weight on these truths (trust) takes time.

Knowing God is more than knowing propositions. Having a relationship with a president is different from knowing their name, hair color, and facial features. Over time you will find that the God you talk to in prayer is more and more the one true God. That doesn't mean you've been placing the wrong "mailing address" on your prayers, but that your knowledge of the person who lived at that address was skewed. God receives our prayers even when we don't know him well.

To whom you pray is more important than what you say. Too often we are not praying to the one-true God who made us with a purpose and loves us beyond measure (Eph. 2:8-10). Too often we think our words have to convince a stingy God to be generous with us. Too often we believe that God is only paying attention to our lives when we speak up and turn his head.

"What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. The history of mankind will probably show that no people has ever risen above its religion, and man's spiritual history will positively demonstrate that no religion has ever been greater than its idea of God. We tend by a secret law of the soul to move toward our mental image of God... The most (determining) fact about any man is not what he at a given time may say or do, but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like (p. 1)." A. W. Tozer in *The Knowledge of the Holy*

What we want to do in this section is to debunk four misconceptions about God that make repentance either seem powerless or punitive. With each we will provide counter-arguments to help you see how a right relationship with God is foundational to enjoyable sobriety. When we don't know God accurately or rely on him fully, then other areas of life will necessarily begin to try to fill a role that is too large for them.

1. **God as Unemotional:** The number one reason we avoid repentance is because we think God is more concerned about what we've done (addictive behavior) than what we're going through (what we're escaping through addiction). It feels as if God is only concerned about our sin and not our suffering. Our expectation of God's response to our repentance is Him sarcastically saying, "What did you think was going to happen?"

"The problem comes when you misinterpret that warning light to mean, 'God is mad at me (p. 84)'... The process of being forgiven can't end with your bad feelings. It must end with an acknowledgement of God's holiness and love. He doesn't treat you as your sin deserves (p. 85)." Ed Welch in *Crossroads: A Step-by-Step Guide Away from Addiction*

But think about the way your addiction is affecting you and those you love (step two). Would God be loving if he were content for you to multiply these effects? God is concerned about your sin because it's multiplying your suffering.

God wants to bring comfort to the parts of your history that contribute to your addiction (history components of steps two and three). But you must trust him enough to forsake your self-destruction before you can experience his comfort.

Read Hebrews 2:14-18. Notice how important Jesus' compassion is for the gospel. God was not merely concerned to pay the full price for our sin (e.g., propitiation) so that we could get into heaven; he was also very concerned that we know he understands our struggles, so that we would want to be near him. Heaven is not meant to be an eternal all-inclusive vacation where there is so much to enjoy we never get bored. Heaven is about being with our heart's-desire, God himself, so the gospel must contain this kind of emotional-relational concern.

Do this thought experiment. Review the history for your addiction you wrote out in steps two and three. Imagine reading this to God as a prayer for how you're hurting. Now look up and imagine what expression is on God's face. Is he angry or compassionate; frustrated with you or concerned for you? Now read the end of Hebrews 2 again. Does your instinctual response accurately represent God?

Realize that God doesn't want you to know him accurately so that you can pass a theology test and pray fancy prayers. God wants you to know who he is so you will turn to him in hard times and allow him to be a refuge from Satan's lies, a comfort in hard times, and the Savior from your sin.

2. **God as Irrelevant:** Okay, so God cares; what can he do? God's not going to make the addictive cravings disappear. God's not going to instantly change my neuro-chemistry so that my brain doesn't feel like it needs my drug-of-choice to feel normal; that was his work anyway. So I understand that God cares, doesn't that still leave everything up to me and my choices?

Yes and no. God won't change you against your will. God is a gentleman and will not force himself upon you. In that sense, everything is up to you and your choices. But relationships enhance the number of choices that are available to us. In isolation, you have the choices that your strength, wisdom, or abilities provide.

When it's just you, it's your desire to be sober against your distorted-desire to [blank; insert dominant desire(s) from step 3]. Good intentions are simply that... good intentions; what we know we should do until what we want to do trumps wisdom. When it's just you, it's your word against your word. Your voice, "I'm bored... hurting... worthless," competing with your voice, "Drinking will only make it worse."

When God enters, "healthy" and "happy" no longer have to compete, because God's voice can serve as the final-loving arbitrator between our fickle desires. This doesn't mean we can't choose what is destructive, but it does mean we have more options than we did when we were alone and that we can pursue those options in God's strength.

Read Matthew 11:28-30. In this passage, God represents us as weary oxen carrying a load too great for us. He offers to share that yoke – the piece of wood fashioned to connect two oxen to a plow. God offers to come alongside of us to offer his strength to our toils and to guide the process. It was customary practice in biblical times to pair an inexperienced ox with an experienced one, so that the older ox could guide the younger one to plow straight. God's relevance does not eliminate our requirement to "walk out" the change process, but God does offer needed strength and direction for the task that is too great for our strength.

3. **God as Unpleasable:** "I won't ever do it good enough for God. After all, doesn't God require perfection? There is no way I going to be sober every day for the rest of my life. I get that God is beside me, but I know me. I'll stray even with a yoke-thingy connecting me to God. I'm an expert at wandering."

It may be helpful to think of repentance as a commitment rather than a promise. God makes promises. He can keep them. We make commitments. We would break promises, but can continue in one direction even after we slip. Our repentance is not a promise never to fail again, but a perpetually renewed commitment to follow after God and what he designed to be satisfying for our lives.

Realize, God is pleased with progress as much as, often more than, perfection. When God designed the Christian life he decided to transform our character over time; this is something theologians call "progressive sanctification." This was God's idea and not a concession he made because we couldn't do any better. God, as the epitome of a good father, delights in the maturation of his children over time. He loves being part of the process of growth.

Read Hebrew 10:14. Contrast the verb tenses. In the ESV, it says God "has perfected" (past completed action) those who are "being sanctified" (ongoing action). This is not a contradiction, but a picture. Why is it that God is not so displeased with your failures that he would give up on you? He knows what he has already made you. Why is God still calling you to faith and obedience? This is how he brings into reality of what he has already guaranteed. As you faithfully, yet imperfectly follow, God faithfully and perfectly keeps his promise.

4. **God as Unapproachable:** Until you come to him, all these truths about God are merely "nice thoughts." God must be approached or we are alone with our addiction. God is compassionate, relevant, and pleasurable in Christ. This, however, does not remove your responsibility to come to him.

This is where many people pull up short. They learn many things about God. They learn how God feels about them and what he's done to make renewed relationship possible. But they don't come to him. For some this is failing to come to God for saving-faith (initial salvation). For others it is a failure to come to God for sustaining-faith (ongoing battle with indwelling sin). Either way, information is mistaken for relationship.

Think of a child with a favorite sports hero. The child could tell you that player's every statistic and piece of life history. But what they have is information, not relationship. If that player was the child's father, then they would play catch, shoot baskets, get ice cream, cry, ask questions, and just hang out. That would be relationship. Have you brought all of your life, not just your addictive struggle, to God in this way?

Read Hebrews 4:14-16. Underline the phrase "with confidence draw near" (or the equivalent phrase in your translation). Does this describe your relationship with God? God intends to be supremely approachable. If you did not have parents who were approachable in this way, it may feel very odd to have this kind of father-child relationship with God. But don't allow that lack of familiarity to prevent you from embracing what God offers. Repentance is not punishment, it's not God putting you in time out to think about what you did. Rather, repentance is God's provision to allow the relationship he always intended to have with you to be restored.

Read Romans 2:4. Notice that it is the kindness of God that brings us to repentance. This is what accounts for the risk of repentance. The outcome is guaranteed; God has already promised forgiveness. We hesitate not because we doubt the offer, but because we doubt the character of the one making the offer. Before moving to the next section on the key elements of repentance, realize your ability to have this conversation will be directly proportional to how much you trust the character of the one with whom you're having this conversation.

Reflection: How has this section challenged your view of God? How is God different than you imagined him to be?

"In the case of addiction, we see precisely the opposite relationship between shame and addictive behavior. For persons with addictions, shame is not a check on addictive behavior but rather an impetus to it. Shame and guilt are moral deficiencies that, in the addictive mind, can be redressed through addictive behavior (p. 95)." Kent Dunnington in *Addiction and Virtue: Beyond the Models of Disease and Choice*

One of the main goals for this section has been to reduce the shame often associated with addiction. We often fail to deal with the guilt of addiction through repentance because we are paralyzed by the shame of addiction. It may be beneficial to differentiate a couple of types of shame from the experiences of guilt and regret.

- Guilt is a sense of *legitimate condemnation* in response to personal sin. God resolves guilt through forgiveness and we access God's remedy through repentance.
- Shame can be a *sense of identity* we take on as we allow our sin to define us. God resolves this type of shame by providing us with an identity greater and more lasting than our sin, and we access God's remedy by continually embracing this new identity. Self-deprecating statements are a sign we're living out of our old shame-based identity.
- Shame can be a *sense of illegitimate condemnation* in response to suffering. God resolves this type of shame with comfort and acceptance, and we access God's remedy by entrusting God with our sorrows (Matthew 5:4) and countering the impact of suffering in our lives. Addiction is often an alternative-empty remedy for this type of shame.
- Regret is a *form of grief* for a reasonable good circumstance that was never realized. Addiction introduces many regret-based griefs into our lives. God promises that the life of future obedience is sweeter than past regret is bitter. We realize God's promise is true when we grieve our regrets without allowing them to distract us from obedience.

Key Elements of Repentance

There is no formula for repentance. The six points below are merely meant to help you experience the full redemptive impact of repentance. In this sense, repentance and God's forgiveness can be like a smart phone. They have many features that we may not know are present or how to utilize. When we buy the phone, we get them all; but we do not get the full benefit of them until we realize they're there and how to use them.

After each point, we will offer an area of self-assessment. These questions are meant to help you determine whether you are placing yourself in a position to receive the benefits God intends to provide through each aspect of repentance.

1. **A desire to live for God and submit to His Lordship.** Repentance does not begin with remorse. If that were the case, then we would be saying the cure for guilt begins with feeling worse.

Repentance begins with a genuine desire to submit to God's Lordship out of trust for His character. Repentance begins with the belief that what God wants for us is actually what is best. We trust God to lead our lives more than ourselves.

"Honesty before God requires the most fundamental risk of faith we can take: the risk that God is good, that God does love us (p. 170)." Gerald May in *Addiction & Grace*

When we see God's ways as best, we are sorry we strayed from them, but this remorse is not "icky" like shame; instead it is like the sense of reunion with a trusted friend after you realize you were wrongly upset with them and they graciously embrace the friendship again.

- Self-Assessment: Are you surrendering to the Lordship of Christ because you trust his love for you or are you only seeking relief from unpleasant emotions and destructive habits?

2. **An understanding of how our sin sought to replace God.** It is not just actions or distorted motives for which we repent. We repent for having replaced God with ourselves.

The idols that fuel our addiction want to control all of our lives; to interpret all the events and people in our lives. Repentance acknowledges this false worship as an affront to God and wants him to have his rightful place in our lives; allowing God to again rightly interpret the events and people in our lives.

- Self-Assessment: Were you able to see the "against God" nature of your addiction in the motive assessment from step three? What did you learn and what was hardest to acknowledge? How did these idols distort the way you interpreted people and events in your life?

3. **Brokenness over the nature of our sin.** A healthy life begins with recognizing our fallen human condition. Ultimately we sin because we are sinners. The myriad of factors that led to our sin are not the root cause. The root is that our nature has been distorted by the Fall (1 Cor. 15:21-22).

True repentance is not just sorrow over particular idols or behavioral failures but brokenness over our condition as a sinful person. When we acknowledge our depravity, we gain an accurate self-assessment that motivates us to perpetually rely on God. Realizing this is the perpetual need of every person allows for a non-shame-based honesty in which a real relationship with God can thrive.

Repentance is what allows you not to have to be either fake or fatalistic about your short-comings and perpetual struggles. Repentance allows you to be honest and have hope at the same time.

- Self-Assessment: Do you resist seeing yourself and allowing yourself to be known as someone who is in perpetual need of God's sustaining grace?

4. **Expression to God.** After sin, our pride or fear causes us to hide from God rather than talk to God (Gen. 3:8). Too often we think that a directionless sense of regret for sin is the same thing as repenting to God.

You will not feel restored to God as long as you are avoiding God because of your sin. It does no good to address your repentance "to whom it may concern." Any ambiguously addressed repentance is little more than talking to yourself differently. Talk to God when you repent so that you can know His response to your repentance.

- Self-Assessment: Have you talked to God in your repentance? If not, might it be that your repentance seems ineffective because the "no one" you spoke to can have no power to forgive or comfort?

5. **Faith in God's willingness to forgive.** Repentance is an expression of faith. We come to God with nothing to offer in exchange for our forgiveness. If we do not believe God will freely forgive, we will continue in our "try harder" or "hide more effectively" approaches that allowed our addiction to fester.

All this does is inadvertently reinforce the false beliefs that our sin is good and God is mean. Unless we believe that God is willing to forgive on the basis of His grace and Christ's death, then repentance becomes a form of penance that is more like putting peace in layaway than receiving a gift.

"The problem isn't that God has abandoned us in our pain, but that sometimes we refuse to face it with him (p. 49)." Mike Wilkerson in *Redemption*

- Self-Assessment: How do you view God (i.e., expression on His face, posture of His body, tones when He speaks, words that He says, gestures of His hands) when you come to God in repentance? This question will be very important for the material below.

6. **New direction of life usually expressed first by confession.** What this looks like will be clarified more in steps five and six. Repentance is our part of entering into or recommitting to a covenant relationship (i.e., like marriage) with God. This is why sin is frequently called spiritual adultery.

Repentance is our vow-renewal ceremony that expresses our renewed commitment to covenant fidelity. Marriage ceremonies and vow renewals are not done in private. They are public declarations of who has our ultimate allegiance. This parallels why repentance doesn't remain private. It is also expressed through confession.

- Self-Assessment: Does it startle you to think of repentance as a vow-renewal ceremony? How does that image extend the implications of repentance beyond the moment of prayer?

Question: Do you think of repentance as an event or a process? _____

The answer is "both." This is vital to your utilization of this material in the pursuit of freedom from addiction. When we think of repentance as only an event we are prone to believe, "We did it and it didn't work," when we continue to struggle with sin.

How we come to faith – the event of giving our life to Christ – is also how we grow in faith – the lifestyle of repentance. We don’t need Christ any less after our salvation than we did before our salvation. Whether you have been a Christians for decades or are still considering whether to give your life to Christ, this is important to understand.

As you reflect on the sample prayer in the next section, don’t think of it as an outline of a speech (single event) that you need to perform before God one time to get him back on your team. Instead, think of it as a conversation (ongoing process) that you will have with God daily as your relationship with him deepens in authenticity and connection.

A Sample Prayer of Repentance

There is no magic in these words or this outline. The intent is to help you assimilate what you’ve learned from the first four steps in a repentant conversation with God before you begin having confessional conversations with other people (step five) or extend your plan for restructuring your life in a way that is less hospitable for addiction (step six).

Take this sample and use it as a conversation outline with God. As you talk with God, review through your notebook and verbalize what you have learned. Know that God is interested in what you are saying; not because you have finally “learned your lesson” but simply because he cares for you (1 Peter 5:7).

Heavenly Father,

I am glad I can come to you in the midst of my addiction. I have been hesitant to come to You, because...

[describe your misconceptions about God and/or repentance]

I also haven’t wanted to admit the full extent of my addiction; to myself or to you.

[describe what you saw about yourself in chapters one and two]

I am beginning see that the things that have become more important than you (i.e., idols) are fueling addiction without providing the relief they promise.

[list your motives from chapter three and describe how you have lived for them]

You know how those things came to be so precious to me. You know what I need (Matthew 6:8). Where my desires are good, I trust you to provide. Where my desires are bad or excessive, I ask that you would change me in whatever ways necessary.

[talk about how this scares and/or confuses you]

I have replaced you in my life with my fears and desires. I have declared myself more capable of caring for me than you. I see how wrong and foolish that is. Please forgive me.

[talk with God about the six elements of forgiveness]

Thank you for loving me and walking with me through these unsettling emotions (Psalm 23). I look forward to learning more about your character as I strive to trust and rely on you more in my daily life. Lord, grant me the perseverance to continue on this journey even when I’m emotionally weary. Even though this road with you may be hard, the side roads without you are harder. I know this. Help me not to forget it. Amen

Accountability Focus (REPENT):

With each step, we will provide questions you should invite another person to ask you openly and to confront any contradiction between your words and life.

- How have my misconceptions about God and repentance hindered my willingness to take this step?
- Have I evidenced a willingness to embrace each of the six elements of repentance?

With each step, we advise you to confide at least one new element of your addictive struggle to your accountability partner and resulting commitment to sobriety. These commitments are preliminary to chapter six “life restructuring” but serve to build progress while you get to that point.

- _____
- _____

Chapter 5.

“The Courage of Honesty in the Pursuit of Sobriety”

CONFESS TO THOSE AFFECTED for harm done and seek to make amends.

**“I have not represented God well in your presence. [List]
 You have been hurt by my un-God-like actions, attitudes, and beliefs. [List]
 My goal in life is to make God’s character of love known.
 That starts with this request for forgiveness.
 I value our relationship more than my pride.
 I am currently working on submitting my life to God’s control and
 understand if you need time to consider my request for forgiveness.”**

Memorize: I John 1:6-10 (ESV), “If we say, we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sin, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.” As you memorize this passage reflect upon these key points:

- “If we say” – Part of your confession needs to acknowledge that verses six and eight were true of you.
- “Walk in darkness” – It is important not to see your addiction as “the good life,” but as destructive.
- “Walk in the light” – True confession is a lifestyle and not an event; not something we can just “get it over with.”
- “Deceive ourselves” – Begin to see how you deceived yourself as the first step in being dishonest with others.
- “Make [God] a liar” – When we refuse to acknowledge the wrongness of our addiction we call God a liar.

Teaching Notes

“Sin demands to have a man by himself. It withdraws him from community. The more isolated a person is, the more destructive will be the power of the sin over him, and the more deeply he becomes involved in it, the more disastrous is his isolation. Sin wants to remain unknown. It shuns the light... It is a hard struggle until sin is openly admitted. But God breaks gates of brass and bars of iron (Psalm 107:16). Since the confession of sin is made in the presence of a Christian brother, the last stronghold of self-justification is abandoned (p. 112).” Dietrich Bonhoeffer in *Life Together*

“Solitary drinking or use becomes the tragically ironic pinnacle of major addiction (p. 120).” Kent Dunnington in *Addiction and Virtue: Beyond the Models of Disease and Choice*

“Our secrets have isolated us from each other long enough! They have prevented intimacy in all our relationships (p. 137)... In five words, here’s the secret to making successful amends: *Do not expect anything back!* You are making amends, not for a reward, but for freedom (p. 162).” John Baker in *Celebrate Recovery: Leader’s Guide*

“A rule of thumb: when in doubt, it is wiser to err on the side of speaking more openly (p. 33).” Ed Welch in *Crossroads: A Step-by-Step Guide Away from Addiction*

“If the temptation hooks our desires, we go public (p. 240).” Ed Welch in *Addictions: A Banquet in the Grave*

“An environment that supports the change can be a wonderful asset to the individuals struggling to maintain a change of an addictive behavior. Understanding employers, reinforcing and supportive spouses, inspiring sponsors, caring family, and accepting peers help the person leave the past behind and create a new and alternative life pattern. These reinforcing effects support and consolidate the change. Unfortunately, the damage done during the time of engaging in the addictive behavior and a prior pattern of relapsing and recycling may have compromised the supportive environment available to most Maintainers (p. 199).” Carlo DiClemente in *Addictions and Change*

Embedded Study

You will only be as free as you are honest. Privacy kills change and fuels sin. Transparency kills sin and fuels change. Chances are this step may scare you as much as any step you have taken since the first one. But remember it is not nearly as scary to move forward as it is dangerous to go backward. Don't allow fear to make you forgetful.

When you are tempted to think, “This is not worth it. Too much is being asked of me. Why do I need to confess my addiction to others?” remind yourself of these things. Our tendency has been to face difficult situations through addictive escape and avoidance. That can no longer be our life pattern. Now we will face hardship by being honest with others.

Confession serves two functions:

1. Acknowledging how we've harmed relationships, seeking forgiveness, and making amends
2. Inviting people to become a more informed part of our support network

Confession is what invites other people into our lives and points out to them where they can help. Confession is how we acknowledge our weakness and admit that we need their help; we won't lie, dismiss, or lash out. Confession is what ensures others that we have the humility and realistic expectations necessary to be safe to receive help.

Confession is the door to community; the door through which we must pass if we do not want to be alone in the dark with our addiction.

In this chapter we will examine five subjects:

1. Excuses for Not Reaching Out for Help
2. How to Effectively Let Someone Into Your Struggle
3. Key Elements of Confession
4. Preparing for a Confessing Conversation
5. Guidance on Making Amends

Excuses for Not Reaching Out for Help

Hopefully by now you are growing less defensive towards the word “excuse.” If so, that is a sign of growth and something for which you should give thanks to God. We all make excuses when change is hard. Excuses always get in the way of important things. The best thing to do with an excuse is acknowledge it and move on. The worst thing to do with an excuse is to believe it or become ashamed of it and get stuck.

Consider this suggestion: ask a friend to read these excuses to you or, at least, read each of these excuses in the voice of a friend before you read them in your voice. That will make the debunking statements after each one seem much more convincing.

1. *“I should be able to handle this on my own.”* This is “The Great Lie” of change. We were never designed to live in isolation. We were made for community. We would never accept this logic from a friend. But we will believe it, because it somehow makes us feel like we're being “strong” and “noble” to attempt the impossible.
2. *“I don't want people to know.”* At least now we're being honest in our excuse. The question is, “What do you want more: authentic friendship and freedom from addiction or a falsely positive reputation with your friends that you'll feel the continued pressure to live up to?”
3. *“I am ashamed.”* This one is even more honest. We feel “less than” when we acknowledge our struggles. But this excuse, like most fears, evaporates when we test it. When you confide in good friends, they admire your courage instead of condemning your weakness. Why? Because we all have challenges we need to face and when we see someone face “The Great Silencer” of shame, we know the internal battle they're winning.
4. *“I don't want to be a burden.”* Galatians 6:2 says Christians are to, “Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ.” The more we listen to this excuse, the less the church is the gift of grace that God intends it to be. When God gives you a weapon with which to fight your sin, it is not noble to lay it down before the battle.
5. *“I don't have anyone to call.”* Start by asking yourself, “How many people would be deeply offended to hear me say this?” If the answer is truly no one, call a pastor or Christian counselor as you begin to build quality friendships. If names come to mind, allow those individuals to be the hands, feet, and ears of Jesus that God intends his church to be.

6. *“People won’t know what to say.”* You’re not asking for answers; you’re asking for forgiveness and-or support. Another suggestion would be to ask them to go through this study with you. This would be a great way to review-reinforce the ground you’ve already covered within a deepening network of support.
7. *“By the time I realize I’m in trouble, it’s too late.”* The more you talk, the sooner you’ll talk. Maybe the first few times you call, it will be after you’ve fallen. But if you establish the pattern of refusing to struggle alone, you will begin to call before the time when temptation has expressed itself as sin.
8. *“What if I reach out but still act out?”* You will. Do you really expect to live with no dishonesty or escaping behavior for the rest of your life? This is precisely why you’re reaching out. This excuse is actually a great reason to follow the counsel of this chapter.
9. *“I tried this and it didn’t work.”* Again, “work” can’t mean “never struggle again.” Wise counsel only “quits working” when you “stop trying.” Change is a process and the process stops when you stop. When you are continually committed to making the next God-honoring, healthy choice in a context of good friends, it is working.
10. *“I’m not sure I want to stop.”* If you’re still uncertain about being willing to confide in more people how you’re struggling, this is likely the root of the problem. Don’t be ashamed of it. Be honest with yourself and weigh the consequences. Go back to step one and assess yourself on the five levels of motivation, look at the consequences of not changing in step two, and ask yourself if your idols from step three will ever keep their promises. Then realize these are not just conversations you need to have with yourself; they are conversations you need to have with some trusted friends.

Read James 5:16. Notice that this command is given in the closing section of James’ letter. It is a general call to every believer. Unconfessed sin is “abnormal” in the biblical depiction of the Christian life. When we experience as normal, what Scripture depicts as abnormal, we should expect significant disruptions in our life, relationships, and emotions. Confession is one way we stop trying to make dysfunctional functional in our relationships.

How to Effectively Let Someone Into Your Struggle

Knowing that you should do something is different from knowing how to do it. Let’s begin to turn that next corner.

- **Begin with those you trust most and move out from there.** When something is hard, it is wise to begin where it is safest. Start with friends or family you believe are most likely to forgive where you have been deceptive and supportive in your continued journey. After these conversations, get feedback on the conversation. Learn from each confession as a way to become more confident that this is a wise step.
 - Who have you already told? _____
 - Recall how nervous you were in these confessions and the benefits these relationships have provided.
 - Who should be in your second tier of disclosures? _____
- **Don’t dwell on their anticipated reactions.** The more time you spend imagining how the conversation will go, the worse it will get in your imagination. This is the natural human tendency for anything we want to avoid. Know what you need to say (next section) and resist the urge to rehearse the conversation further than that.
- **Be honest, simple, and concise.** Your opening statement should be as simple as, “I have been addicted to [blank] for a while. I don’t want to pretend like the struggle doesn’t exist. I want to understand how it has harmed our relationship and ask forgiveness for the ways I’ve offended or hurt you.”
- **Disclose where you are at this point in time.** Confession is step five of nine, so it’s literally a mid-journey activity. Confession is not saying “I’ve arrived;” it’s acknowledging you have a ways to go. It would be appropriate to say, “I am at the point in my struggle where I am consistently resisting the urge to minimize my struggle, but am still in the process of learning how to overcome it.”
- **Give your friend a quality resource on addiction.** Again, this study could be a resource you could point your friend to if they would like more information. It’s free, sequential, and available in an assortment of formats (e.g., written, video, and audio) for their convenience.
- **Don’t rely on just one person.** The smaller your support network, the more weight each person will bear. You care well for your support network and increase the likelihood someone will be available in your moments of struggle when you allow your network to grow. Meeting with a pastor, mentor, recovery group, or counselor who is experienced with addictions is also a way to improve the longevity of your support network.

- **Be patient with yourself.** Chances are even this list is starting to feel over-whelming. That's okay. Change is never easy and when we grow impatient with ourselves change becomes even harder. Remain committed to taking the next healthy, God-honoring step and you'll reach your destination.
- **Be encouraged by your courage.** Courage isn't the absence of fear. Courage is the continued pursuit of your goals in the face of fear. You're doing that or you wouldn't have reached this point. That's not making lemonade out of lemons. It's affirming the perspiration that came with your faithful obedience to God to reach this point.

Read Ecclesiastes 4:9-12. Often this is read as a marriage passage, but it is about friendship in general. Notice two things. First, implied in this passage is the mutual awareness of our struggles. Everybody in this passage is facing a challenge. Second, notice the number change from two to three. When we obey God by reaching out to other believers in our struggle, God's presence is added to the impact of these relationships to magnify their impact.

Elements of Confession

Knowing how to do something is different from knowing what to say. Now we will begin to outline a conversation.

In this section, we want to borrow from Ken Sande's book, *Peacemaking for Families*, where he develops seven key elements of confession (bold text only). This captures well the key elements of a conversation of confession.

1. Address Everyone Involved. One of the questions you have already examined is, "Who has been affected by my addiction?" These are likely the people close enough to care about you and you care about them.

Remember, confession is not extreme and it is not punishment. Those who really want to change involve others. Those who believe their change is good want others to know about that change (so it can encourage them to make similar changes). Confession is an important transition from a temporary-change-initiative to a lasting-lifestyle-change.

- Continue writing your list of the people you need to confess to because (a) they have been negatively impacted by your addictive lifestyle and (b) they will notice or be affected by the changes you need to make.

2. Avoid If, But, and Maybe. These are words that radically change the nature of a confession conversation. They are the "prepositions of blame-shifting and minimization." When you use them, the person you are talking to will likely (and rightly) be concerned that these words are evidence of regression in your journey. But because you are trying to take an important step forward, you will be tempted to be defensive towards their concern.

Let's look at the impact of each word.

- "If" indicates that you doubt the certainty of what you're saying and, therefore, weakens your confession.
- "But" in the middle of a confession shifts responsibility from what precedes the "but" to what comes after the "but."
- "Maybe" reduces the level of personal commitment to what you are saying and gives little confidence to the listener.

Look at each of these examples and notice the impact of the three words in question.

- "If I lied to you about my drug usage and tried to hide it from you, I am sorry."
- "I know I shouldn't seek comfort in alcohol, but that's just what people in my family have done."
- "Maybe I could try to call you when I can tell I'm down and know temptation will be stronger."

This language is very common and represents the kind of tentative phrasing we fall into when we're uncertain. But it is also the kind of language that reveals a weak commitment to persevere in the change process. As a way of learning to speak in a way that neither shifts blame or minimizes your struggles, rewrite each of these statements without the troublesome language.

- _____
- _____
- _____

3. Admit Specifically. One goal of confession is to help you be known accurately. When we know we're being fake, it is more tempting to buy into the false reality of sin. When we minimize our struggle, the minimal response from others seemingly confirms that our addiction "isn't that bad." We interpret the calmness of those we've deceived as an indicator we're okay.

Generic confession leaves us in complete control. We have all the relevant information. Those we're confiding in aren't equipped with the necessary questions to ask. This leaves us vulnerable in the same ways we were before.

Being specific also helps us and our friend to identify where “doing better” should be evident first. When our confession is generic, we have little guidance on where our efforts towards overcoming our addiction should be focused.

Being specific in our confession does two things: (a) it reveals to our friend that we are a safe person who can talk about needed changes in our life without falling into self-pity or blame-shifting, and (b) it helps us identify more realistic expectations of what change will look like.

The exercise below is meant to help facilitate this aspect of confession and several other aspects of change coming later.

- Use the “web diagram” exercise (see Figure 1) to identify the specific actions or attitudes you are confessing – “Ring B” in the example below. We will explain the Rings D and E in the next point of this section.
- Instructions and Sample: A sample web diagram is provided below using concentric circles (a different version of the same exercise that is easier to read in a type-print format). In this sample we will follow an addiction emerging from an exaggerated desire to escape.
 - A. Write each ruling desire / motive(s) you identified as too strong in your life (step three) in the center of a blank piece of paper.
 - B. Out from that motive draw lines and write the sinful actions you commit in an attempt to obtain this desire. How did you fail to love God and love others in attempts to obtain this desire?
 - C. From each of the actions draw lines and write specific occasions when you have sinned in this way – when have the actions from “Ring B” occurred?
 - D. From each occasion of sin draw lines and write the type of impact this had on your friend or family member – how are the lives of those I care about different because of the events of “Ring C”?
 - E. From each impact draw lines and write the evidences of this impact in the life of your friend or family member – what changes do I see, direct or indirect, that reveal the “Ring D” changes have occurred?

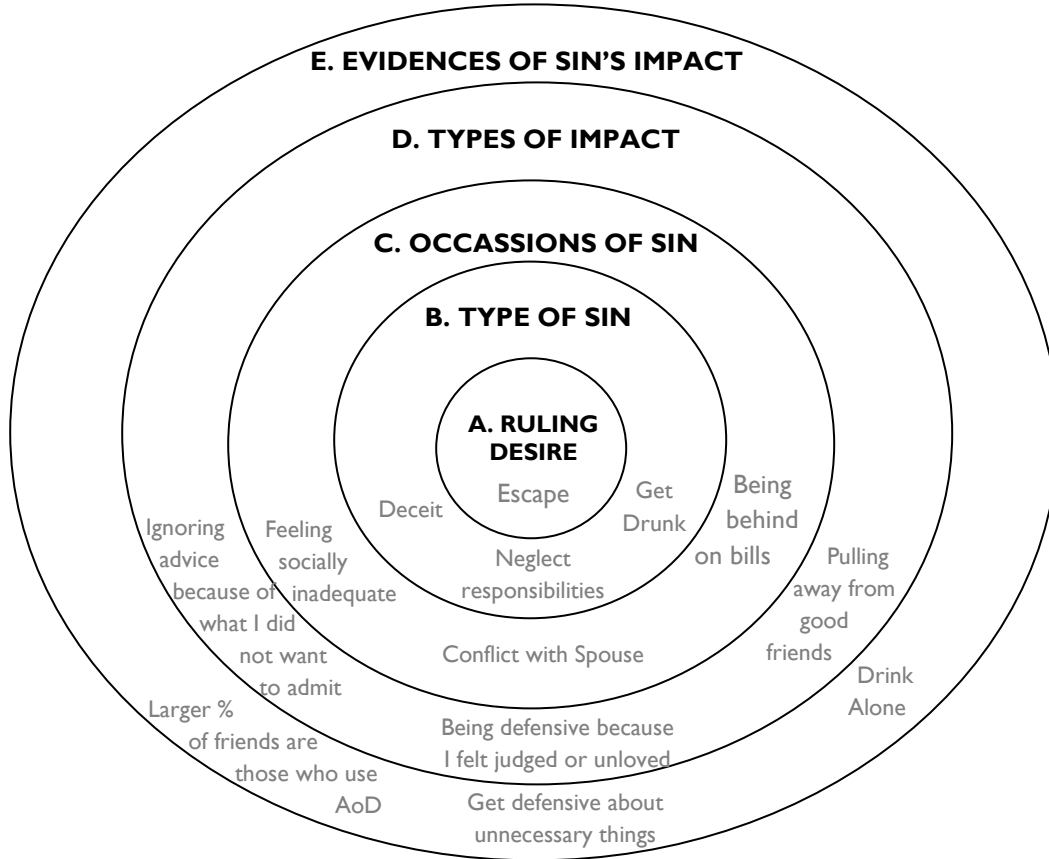


Figure 1: The Five Rings of a Web Diagram to Prepare for Confession

Notice how this exercise allows you to see the destructive life patterns (both sin and suffering) that emerge from your addiction. Your confession should say more than, "I am an addict and I've hurt you." It should say, "I am beginning to see how my addiction explains many things in my life that I tried to blame on or hide from others. You are one of those people and, in addition to asking for your forgiveness and seeking to make amends, I would appreciate the opportunity to understand my life better by hearing your experience of me."

4. Apologize (Acknowledge the Hurt). Sin has consequences; both intentional and unintentional. Confession expresses empathy and takes responsibility for the dominoes that result from the trigger event of our sin.

This is not groveling or penance; both of which are emotionally manipulative and reveal the "value" we place on our sin. The "value" of sin is Jesus' death on the Cross.

A key point to remember about the step of confession is; it's not about you. You take this step to care for those you've hurt and deceived. You realize that self-centeredness and selfishness fueled your addiction. Confession is a vital part of living differently.

By contrast, confession is an exercise in other-mindedness. Resistance to expressing empathy reveals that the self-centeredness that made our sin seem reasonable in the moment of sin is returning.

- Complete with Rings D and E of your "web diagram" if you have not already.
- Your goal in confession is to represent God more accurately to the person your sin has affected. God is compassionate and understanding to our hurts (Psalm 56:8). Therefore, our confession should include evidence that we have reflected on the impact of our sin on others.
- When sharing this aspect of your confession, avoid using verbs of completion (i.e., "I know..."); instead use process verbs (i.e., those ending in "-ing," for example "I am learning..."). Avoiding verbs of completion allows the other person to talk about other ways our sin has affected them without it feeling like they are "piling on."

5. Accept the Consequence. Confession is not a plea-bargain or the beginning of a negotiation. In your confessions, the following things should be on the consequence list for some of the people in your life:

- "Because I see my need to change..."
 - "... I will no longer carry cash so that it will be more difficult for me to hide when I may fall."
 - "... I will be transparent about my schedule so that there are fewer times when I feel alone and able to sin."
 - "... I will forego [activity, group, or friendship] because the temptation towards addiction is strong there."
 - "... [Blank] allowed me to lie and cover my activities so I will [how to remove that opportunity to deceive]."
- Other consequences that seem important for you to note after reading this list:
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____

It is important to remember that consequences are not punitive. Consequences can play a disciplinary role (reinforcing life lessons and solidifying prevention measures) or a trust-building role (providing tangible fruit for an otherwise unverifiable desire to change). When we are confessing, our voluntary participation in the process means we should be viewing the consequences that are required as trust-building measures.

- Begin by stating the obvious. If there are clear changes you need to make, state them in your confession. Don't phrase them as, "I will do [blank] for you," as if it were a favor or concession, or "If you insist, I will [blank]," portraying change as punishment. It is more in keeping with confession to say, "Because I see my need to change, I will [blank]."
- End by asking an open ended question. Honest questions are a sign of humility. They reveal that we are not presenting a contract or deal, but that we are seeking to restore a relationship and our life to a state of healthiness. A simple, "Are there other ways I can show you the sincerity of my desire to change or help you trust me?" would suffice.

6. Alter Your Behavior. Confession is not the culmination of the journey. It is merely the drawing of the map and acknowledgement that the journey is needed. There has been a great deal of emotional energy spent to get to this point, and that is why many people stop their travels at the step of confession. But when we stop at confession our lack of future effort gives the person reason to say, "You didn't really mean what you said." This is why our study still has four more steps to go.

- **Read Luke 14:28-33.** Part of embracing the Gospel is counting the cost of following God and embracing the sacrifice. Obviously, it's worth it. We give up our life of sin and its misery. We gain a life of being transformed into what God intended and Heaven. But it feels painful and often we want to back out because of our doubt. The same is true with confession, because it is rooted in the gospel paradigm of dying to self and living for God's glory through serving others. As you prepare to confess, realize this dynamic is part of the emotional battle.

7. Ask for Forgiveness & Allow Time. "I'm sorry" is not the same thing as asking for forgiveness. "I'm sorry" is an appropriate statement after a mistake or a misfortune. "Will you forgive me?" is the appropriate statement when we have sinned against another person. Be sure you are requesting forgiveness and not merely asking to be excused.

It is also important to remember that while forgiveness is commanded by God, Scripture never calls on the confessing party to remind others of this command or to insist that it be obeyed on a certain time table. If your sin created mistrust in the other person, then you honor them by being patient. Impatience only exacerbates mistrust.

While Scripture commands others to forgive, it does not appoint you as the time keeper.

- Allow at least as much time as it took you to come to repentance. It is hypocritical to expect someone else to process suffering (your sin against them) faster than you acknowledged and committed to change your sin.
- During the interval between confession and granting forgiveness, love and serve the other person while continuing to work on your personal change. This helps you remain other-minded and it honors your friend.

Preparing for a Confessing Conversation

Knowing what to say is different from communicating what you intended in the moment of conversation. In the previous section we outlined a conversation. In this section you will fill in the outline.

At the end of this step is a tool to help you outline the conversations you need to have.

1. Begin with the list of people you made under "Address Everyone Involved" above. Print one copy of the confession guide for each person on the list. Write the name of each person at the top of one edition of this guide (PDF copies available at www.bradhambrick.com/addiction).
2. The top paragraph is meant to overview for you the flow of this conversation. It does not need to be spoken, but is a kind of map to help you not get lost in the details.
3. Complete the open-ended statements that follow using your notes from earlier chapters and the work you did on your web diagrams.
4. If you are concerned about whether you succumb to blame-shifting or self-pity during your confession, rehearse confessing with a pastor, sponsor, mentor, or counselor.
5. Request a time to meet with each person and follow through with your confession.

Read Philemon. This short letter tucked in the back of the New Testament is a prepared confession. Paul came to learn of how Onesimus, prior to becoming a Christian, had stolen from Philemon, his employer at the time. Onesimus later became a Christian under Paul's teaching. Paul sent this letter with Onesimus when he returned to make things right with Philemon. So if you are wondering if this kind of action is necessary or biblical, realize that it was important enough that God devoted a book of the Bible as an example of what you are preparing to do.

Guidance on Making Amends

In the 12 Steps of AA step 8 asks you to, "Make a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all," and step 9 asks you to, "Make direct amends to such people wherever possible, *except when to do so would injure them or others.*" These tasks are combined in step 5 of this study.

The earlier sections of this step covered how to take ownership of your sin, the need to see how your addiction affected others, and how to have a confessional conversation without blame-shifting, minimizing, or falling into self-pity. Now we will look at the final part of this step – seeking to restore what we can of what our sin destroyed.

Remember, making amends is meant to be restorative not cathartic; you are not trying to get something off of you (relief) but to make something more whole for others (repair). This is the reason for the exception in AA’s step 9. If you have doubt about whether your confession would be more harmful than helpful, then seek the guidance of a pastor, sponsor, or counselor.

Making amends can include efforts to do any of the following:

- *Direct Amends* – for those offenses that are tangible and measurable.
 - Example: Paying back money that you stole.
 - Example: Repairing property damage resulting from your addiction.
- *Narrative Amends* – for those offenses which result in damage in the form of mistrust or confusion.
 - Example: Explaining and making right expressions of past slander.
 - Example: Clarify that damage to the relationship was because of your deceit or addiction – removing false guilt.
- *Living Amends* – for those offenses that can only be relieved over time through a commitment to healthy relating.
 - Example: Committing to authenticity with a friend or family member you closed out during your addiction.
 - Example: Committing to a process of handling anger differently to someone you regularly lashed out at.
- *Symbolic Amends* – for those offenses that are highly inaccessible, but result in significant emotional disruption.
 - Example: If you killed a child in a drinking-driving accident, then finding a way to serve parents in your church or community who have lost children.
 - Example: If your parents died before you began to pursue sobriety, perhaps you would write a letter to read to several of their close friends or to leave at their graveside.

This step can be one of the more emotionally painful steps to take. Looking into the eyes of those you’ve hurt and hearing their experience (even hearing their forgiveness) can be very emotionally straining. That is why it is important to have a mentor, sponsor, pastor, or counselor guide you in this step.

Be patient with the process. When something is painful, our tendency is usually to either quit or speed through it. But both of these are addictive responses to an unpleasant event (even if substances are not involved). One of your goals in this step is to engage recovery with sober-mindedness (that is, with the mentality and life habits of someone not given to addiction).

As we conclude the instructional part of this step and you begin enacting it, it is good to remember the purpose of step five. We are prone to view this step as penance – a form of punishing ourselves for being bad, so we’ll be less likely to be bad again in the future. This is not the purpose of confessing and making amends.

We confess and make amends to terminate the lifestyle of living as if nothing happened and imposing that lifestyle on those who love us. We acknowledge past sin and seek to mend its impact so that we, and those around us, can live cohesive lives instead of lives segmented by a collection of “off limits” subjects and false assumptions.

This is the step when you realize that John 8:32 is not an individualized truth. “You will know the truth and the truth will set you free” when you are not in control of the “truth” everyone has access to, but when you allow yourself and those around you to live freely without secrets, guilt, or shame.

Accountability Focus (CONFESS):

With each step, we will provide questions you should invite another person to ask you openly and to confront any contradiction between your words and life.

- Is there an important element of confession that I neglect when I speak of my addiction?
- Am I resisting confessing to someone to whom I should confess?
- Can I rehearse my confessions without getting off message (i.e., self-pity or blame-shifting)?

With each step, we advise you to confide at least one new element of your addictive struggle to your accountability partner and resulting commitment to sobriety. These commitments are preliminary to chapter six “life restructuring” but serve to build progress while you get to that point.

- _____
- _____



CONFESSION GUIDE

Name of the person to whom you are confessing: _____

"I have not represented God well in your presence [explain]. You have been hurt by my un-God-like emotions, attitudes, and actions [describe]. My goal in life is to make God's character known. That starts with this request for forgiveness. I value our relationship more than my pride. I am currently working on submitting my life to God's control and understand if you need time to consider my request for forgiveness."

I am now willing to admit that I sinned against you by... [list specific sins and avoid words like if, but and maybe]. These actions were my choice and wrong. Review Rings B and C of your web diagrams.

I am learning to see how much my life was ruled by the desire for [list motives for your sin]. You did not cause my sin. Refer to the relevant motives from chapter three and Ring A of your web diagrams.

I am beginning to see how my sin has affected you. [Describe] Describe what you can understand of how your sin negatively affected the life, emotions, trust, and relationships of this person – Rings D and E of your web diagrams.

I know I must change to honor God and to bless those I care about. Because I see my need for change, I will [list obvious needed changes]. I am still learning what other changes honoring God will require of me. State those changes that are foundational.

Are there other ways I can show you the sincerity of my desire to change or help you trust me in the areas I've brought unhealthiness into our relationship? [pause and take notes on their answer] This section should be blank until you speak with the person.

I understand if it will take some time but I am asking for your forgiveness. Thank you for showing me the honor of listening.

Chapter 6.

“Exploring a Satisfying Sober Life”

RESTRUCTURE MY LIFE to rely on God’s grace and Word to transform my life.

“I have learned a great deal about my self [list with examples], my sin [list examples], and my Savior [list with examples]. Because of these truths I want and need to make the following changes [list]. My temptation is to see these changes as ‘what I do’ rather than merely cooperating with and celebrating God’s grace in my life.”

Memorize: Titus 2:11-14 (ESV), “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.” As you memorize this passage reflect upon these key points:

- “To renounce ungodliness and worldly passions” – You should be able to put your addictive behaviors in this category.
- “To live self-controlled” – Your goal is not to live a “super hero life” but a “self-controlled life.” It is possible.
- “Waiting” – Waiting means being self-controlled, is not easy, and it is always a work-in-progress.
- “Gave himself” – The sacrifice you’re making is more than matched by Christ; he is for you and with you in this battle.
- “Zealous” –God wants you to pour the passion you poured into addiction into something good and satisfying.

Teaching Notes

“Addiction is not something we can simply take care of by applying the proper remedy, for it is in the very nature of addiction to feed on our attempts to master it... Understanding will not deliver us from addiction, but it will, I hope, help us appreciate grace (p. 4).” Gerald May in *Addiction & Grace*

“We too are in danger of using Scripture as a practical ‘how to’ manual, relying on useful principles rather than focusing on the crux of the gospel message (p. 142).” Ed Welch in *Addictions: A Banquet in the Grave*

“Paradoxically, urges often strengthen when the individual concentrates so strongly on resistance to a present cue. Refusing to engage in the behavior helps break the conditioned connection with the cue, but it is not necessarily the most efficient way to do so (p. 178)... Individuals who have not found alternative activities that can provide some measure of relief, pleasure, or satisfaction are at significant risk for returning to the addictive behavior (p. 179).” Carlo DiClemente in *Addictions and Change*

“The life of recovery requires the development of new habits, but an addicted person may engage in the external acts necessary to the development of such habits without also undertaking the ‘internal’ work necessary to the development of such habits (p. 78).” Kent Dunnington in *Addiction and Virtue: Beyond the Models of Disease and Choice*

“Meditation forces us to reflect on the stories that we tell ourselves about our lives, and it therefore represents a very real threat to any addiction since it threatens to reveal the insufficiencies of those stories (p. 176)... Thus Christian worship graciously displaces us from being the center of our story and instead incorporates us into the story of God (p. 178).” Kent Dunnington in *Addiction and Virtue: Beyond the Models of Disease and Choice*

“Freedom and security have always been uneasy together; the things that secure us tend to bind us down, and those that free us often feel like risks (p. 32).” Gerald May in *Addiction & Grace*

“Recovering addicts should keep in mind that addiction is not just a way of interacting with a specific object or event; it’s a way of interacting with one’s self and the world (p. 63).” Craig Nakken in *The Addictive Personality*

Embedded Study

This is probably the chapter you were looking for when you started this study. Thank you for your patience and perseverance in getting to this point. The foundation you've laid will help to ensure that your current efforts towards sobriety do not meet the same fate as previous, well-intended efforts.

You've probably known that living an enjoyable sober life required more than insight and remorse. But you needed to see more clearly how your AoD of choice was being asked to fulfill a bigger role than it ever could and how this dysfunctional relationship with substances developed. You also needed to allow God and others to play the vital role in change that God desires for you.

Now you've done those things; which means the practical advisements below have the opportunity to be incorporated into a healthy lifestyle. No longer are these plans your “savior.” No longer are you merely mustering will power. No longer are you striving to make yourself acceptable to God and others by a longer streak of days “being good.”

You are now merely seeking to be a good steward of the life God gave you. We will consider how to be a good steward of your life after a struggle with addiction in five sections:

1. Stimulus Control – Avoidance Strategies
2. Counter Conditioning – Reframing Strategies
3. Personal Strengthening – Enhancement Strategies
4. Healthy Fun – Pursuant Strategies
5. Worship – Awe Strategies

As you prepare to work through this step, here are three principles to keep in mind. First, change is not as complicated as dysfunction. If you are expecting to read something as profound as your struggle has been enslaving you'll be disappointed. Sobriety is a much simpler way to live. That is probably why you've dismissed many of the things you'll read in the past.

Second, you have more influence over your addictive experience than anyone or anything else. We have spent much of this study emphasizing the truth that we are powerless without Christ (John 15:5); we will now begin to emphasize the complementing (not contradicting) truth that God intends to deliver you in your day-to-day, seemingly inconsequential choices.

Third, effective plans must be (a) *acceptable* – something you voluntarily embrace because you believe in it, (b) *accessible* – feasible for your circumstances so you are without excuse, and (c) *effective* – well-suited for your struggle so you won't dismiss it in a moment of temptation. As you select from the buffet of strategies below, allow these criteria to help you select the best-fit options for you.

Stimulus Control: Avoidance Strategies

The longer you have struggled with an addiction, the more things in your life become associated with the addiction; activities, locations, times of day, and people are just a few of the everyday things that get associated with addiction. One important way to manage your temptations is to rearrange your life to eliminate or limit your exposure to these temptations. Sometimes we have to be strong by actively resisting temptation, but more often than not we should be strong by wisely avoiding temptation.

Read Matthew 6:7-13. As you read this model prayer from Jesus, focus on verse 13. Your implementation of this section is a large part of God's answer to this part of the Lord's Prayer. One of the ways God “leads us not into temptation,” is by providing wise principles in Scripture that help us organize our lives to avoid predictable temptations. Pray for God to supernaturally limit the number of unpredictable temptations in your life. Obey God to radically eliminate the ones you know are coming (Matthew 5:27-30). We will look at 5 areas of your life you need to examine.

1. **Relationships:** Begin with the assumption that no one in your life is neutral. Ask yourself, “Does this person contribute to my sobriety or a relapse?” List out the top 10 people in your life who contribute to your sobriety and rank their influence on a 1-10 scale. List the top 10 people who would contribute to your relapse and rank their negative influence on a 1-10 scale.

Note: The terms “sobriety” and “recovery” are sometimes used interchangeably and other times used with distinct meanings. When they are used with distinct meanings “recovery” is the broader term referencing the pursuit of a full and satisfying life without AoD, and “sobriety” is the narrower term referencing the abstinence from AoD. In this material, the terms are often used interchangeably, but the holistic nature of this journey should make it clear that the aim of this material is “recovery” and not mere “sobriety.”

Rank	Name	Influence	Rank	Name	Influence
1			1		
2			2		
3			3		
4			4		
5			5		
6			6		
7			7		
8			8		
9			9		
10			10		

“The overwhelming majority of addicts testify to the power of friendship as the single most important factor in their recoveries from addiction (p. 185).” Kent Dunnington in *Addiction and Virtue: Beyond the Models of Disease and Choice*

Evaluative Questions:

- i. Do you have at least 10 people who are positive influences towards your sobriety?
- ii. How can you invest in those relationships in such a way that increases the amount of influence they have?
- iii. What have you been unwilling to relinquish that would decrease the number of negative influences in your life?

Read I Corinthians 15:33-34. These are strong words that have direct implication for how much you interact with the people you listed in the right column. Many would object, “But wouldn’t God want me to be a part of reaching these individuals? Isn’t that the loving thing to do?” The loving thing to do is to be an example of the freedom that Christ can provide and the choices necessary to pursue that freedom. You don’t love them well by making their life seem okay or sabotaging your own recovery. You love them by being a light on a hill (Matthew 5:14-16). If they want to take the same journey, they need a mature guide (Galatians 6:1-5). You are not that person yet. Trying to be more than you are prepared to be will result in more pain for both of you.

- 2. **Routes / Routines:** Addictions make themselves at home in the rhythms of our lives. We use AoD “before” or “after” parts of our day. We pick up AoD “on the way” to places or events. In order for addiction to be life dominating, these rhythms necessarily become very well established. We no longer feel like we’re doing them. They just seem to happen; like our morning routine before our coffee kicks in.

Make a list of the routes and routines where your addiction can easily feel mindless. These are points when cravings can feel particularly intense.

I use AoD before _____

I use AoD after _____

I pick up AoD on the way to or from _____

Other routines or routes strongly associated with addiction are _____

This is where your plan has to be tailored to you. You need to talk with your sponsor, support group, pastor, or counselor to devise alternative life rhythms to eliminate or mitigate these influences. For those that cannot be eliminated you need to make your support network aware of the occasions when temptation is likely to be heightened. Raising awareness in your support network is an important way of feeling less alone in moments of temptation.

- 3. **Household:** Where have you hidden or preserved access to AoD in your home? Our homes should be places of rest and refuge. But, because addictions often degenerate to private activities, home often becomes our place of greatest temptation. You restore your home to the refuge God wants it to be when you radically remove and disclose all access to AoD in your house.

This does not mean merely removing all alcohol from the refrigerator. But disclosing where you would hide AoD to your spouse, parents, or roommates (whomever you share a residence with).

What changes or disclosures would be needed to make your home as safe as possible from temptation? (Note: We are the source of our temptation, so we are not "building a better mouse trap" to resolve addiction. However, we are seeking to make every wise step possible to reduce temptation.)

4. **Irregular Events:** Many one-time events are closely associated with AoD usage: weddings, graduations, New Year's parties, birthdays, etc... Approaching these kinds of events is different from relationship and routines.

Are you willing to forego attending any event that is unwise for your recovery? Yes No

This is the first and foremost question. If your answer is "no," then irregular events are likely to derail your recovery. You will miss things that are important to you as you pursue sobriety. It is better to intentionally miss small portions of life than to miss large chunks of life because of addiction.

These questions can help you assess the wisdom of your attendance at irregular events where there is likely to be AoD.

- i. Awareness: Have I talked about this event with people in my support network? If no, don't go.
- ii. Journey: Where am I in my journey of recovery? If my sobriety were an ankle injury and recovery a sport, would a doctor let me in this game?
- iii. Companion: Will there be someone in my support network or someone committed to sobriety there?
- iv. Energy: Where are my current emotional and relational reserves? Am I walking into this depleted?
- v. Plan: Do I have a plan for how to avoid temptation and accountability for key junctures in the event?

When considering an irregular event where there is likely to be AoD present, you need to discuss these questions with multiple people in your support network. If they are hesitant to affirm the wisdom of you attending this event, you need to be willing to forego attending.

These kinds of events are when we are prone to begin arguing for folly over wisdom; which is a dangerous step towards relapse. But since no substances are involved yet, we feel justified in downplaying the significance of this change in our mental and emotional attitude.

5. **Simplify:** Less is more. Stress is a near universal temptation to relapse. We won't eliminate stress from our lives, but we can significantly reduce it by removing unnecessary activities and commitments from our lives.

What activities or commitments in your life are contributing more stress than blessing? _____

Writing these things doesn't mean they're bad. It just means they are likely a bad emotional investment during recovery. There are only so many things you can do well during each season of life. During this season of life one of the big things you need to do well is recovery. This will require removing other things.

As you get to steps 8 and 9 in this material, you will make a decision about what things to reintroduce to your priorities as your recovery becomes more solid. Having stepped away from excessive business (if that has been a temptation for you), will help you assess what things are most worth investing in when you get to that point in your journey.

Counter-Conditioning: Reframing Strategies

Some temptation contexts cannot be avoided. This is partly because of the logistical realities of life and partly because temptation is a predator (I Peter 5:8) looking for our destruction. In moments when you cannot get out of the context of temptation, you are going to have to relate to the temptation differently. A summarizing principle for this is reframing: temptation makes danger look enticing, but wisdom (rightly) reframes temptation as danger.

1. **High Risk Moment Plan:** You need a short, simple plan for moments of intense temptation. This plan should consist of fleeing temptation with good people. Don't be cute or elaborate in your initial plan. Get away and get with people you can trust. This means you need to have several trusted friends on speed dial in your phone and you need to think through any irregular events (see point above) you plan to attend.

“So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.” 2 Timothy 2:22

2. **Constructive Self-Talk:** No one is more influential in your life than you because no one talks to you more than you do. What you say to you matters... A LOT! What you say to yourself during a moment of temptation matters even more than usual. During moments of temptation, our unproductive self-talk is usually either shameful or grandiose.

An example of shameful self-talk would be:

“I am such a loser. I can't believe I am weak and struggling again. I should have known better than to think I could be sober. Why do I ever let myself believe such stupidly positive things? This is why I'm all alone. Everyone can see how pathetic I am, but me.”

An example of grandiose self-talk would be (usually before temptation):

“I can handle this. If I don't learn how to handle situations like this on my own, then what good is being sober? I know what I need to do and am willing to do it. What is someone going to tell me that I don't already know? If God is with me, then why wouldn't I be able to handle that kind of situation? It's time to start living my life. I'm tired of being cautious and fearful. Is that how God would want me to live?”

Which of these two modes of thinking are you prone to and what does it sound like? Shameful Grandiose

A constructive self-talk during or after temptation would sound something like this:

“I know I need God every moment to live the life he calls me to live. I'm just more aware of my need during moments of temptation than other times. God promises that his strength is made perfect in my weakness. God is not annoyed by my prayers right now. God cares for me through my friends in moments like this. Thank you God for your presence, patience, and my friends... [phone call].”

A constructive self-talk before temptation would sound something like this:

“False confidence is the most dangerous disposition I can have. Like pride, I never see it until it destroys me. God protects me from false confidence through the people he's provided to walk with me. Freedom is not evidenced by making cavalier choices, but through making wise choices. Whenever I feel that wisdom is limiting my freedom (angry or resentful at wisdom's implications) I need to be most concerned and most honest.”

Read 2 Corinthians 10:3-6. Notice that the reframing exercises listed above are an example of “taking every thought captive to obey Christ.” The kinds of moments in which you wrestle with the destructive self-talk styles described above are the moments when this spiritual discipline is most relevant. Use the chart below to begin to capture your characteristic style of destructive self-talk and begin to write replacement scripts. Allow every moment of temptation to expand your arsenal of ways to resist Satan's attempt to derail your life.

Destructive Self-Talk	Constructive Self-Talk

3. **Relaxation Training:** Temptation is stressful. Addiction is living in a state of perpetual, elevated temptation. Unless we learn to manage stress well, we may defeat temptation in the short-term but it will wear us down into submission over the long haul. Our long-term approach to addiction must take into account methods for managing stress.

“One’s ability to cope with stress – in particular, with anger, frustration, boredom, anxiety, and depression – has been identified as a critical deficit area in many theories or models of addiction (p. 13).” Carlo DiClemente in *Addictions and Change*

There are two forms of body relaxation that are easy to practice during times of stress.

3a. *Breathing.* This technique may sound odd. But deep breathing can have a significant impact upon your experience of stress. One area that the body monitors to determine its sense of safety is the temperature of the nasal cavity. When the nasal cavity is hot, it triggers the stress response. When it cools the body turns off the stress response.

Think of the athlete who begins to breathe through his mouth as he runs. This causes his nasal cavity to heat up and triggers the adrenal system; part of the flight-fight stress response. Adrenaline provides an energy boost and intensifies his emotional state (hence the reactivity of competitors at many sporting events).

This is one reason many people feel relaxed when they smoke cigarettes even though nicotine is a stimulant. The calming power of the breathing required to rhythmically inhale a cigarette is more powerful than the medical agent in cigarettes are energizing. Awkwardly, this means many smokers are as addicted to breathing as they are nicotine; especially if their primary appeal to smoking is relaxation.

When you feel stress mounting, it is recommend that you take a few deep breaths in through your nose (drawing in cool air) and out through your mouth (exhaling the warmer air away from you nose). This will cool the nasal cavity. It does not extract adrenaline already released, but prevents the release of additional adrenaline. In this sense, it is the emotional equivalent of taking your foot off the gas pedal of your car more than stepping on the brakes.

3b. *Progressive Muscle Relaxation.* Consider this exercise as you do it, then we’ll explain it. Flex the muscles in your hands making a fist as you slowly count to ten (slows the pace of your thinking, which also offsets stress). Feel the slight burning sensation as lactic acid builds in your muscles. Release the grip after ten seconds. Now do the same with your forearms; then biceps, then triceps, then shoulders.

As you do this, you are both focusing your attention away from your stress and countering the effects of stress in your body. The buildup of lactic acid in your muscles absorbs the free radicals that stress creates and causes us to feel tight after a time of prolonged stress.

As you do this with each muscle group from your hands to your feet, you are reclaiming your body from the effects of stress while willfully focusing your attention on what you choose.

4. **Distraction:** Distraction is not used with a bad connotation here. During moments of temptation, the battle with addiction is largely a battle of attention; what you focus on will determine what you do. Focusing on the addiction, even resisting the addiction, during moments of temptation only feeds the intensity of temptation.

After you’ve reached out to God and your support network for help (de-isolating temptation), the best thing you can do is engage your mind with non-addictive enjoyments – distractions. When you’ve done all that wisdom allows, temptation does not immediately dissipate. After wisdom comes waiting. Passive waiting is dangerous.

Make a list of enjoyable activities or relationships you can distract yourself with after temptation or during boredom.

These distractions should be readily available, enjoyable, and not contributing to temptation.

5. **Filling the Void:** If distraction is for moments of temptation, filling the void is for the time period between temptations. Overcoming addiction will create large segments of empty time in your life. How you manage these segments of time being vacated by addictive behaviors will go a long ways towards determining your sobriety.

If distractions are short-term activities, filling the void are more long-term pursuits of hobbies. Filling the void is more about beginning to pursue the life you want than occupying your mind during difficult times.

This strategy can easily be overwhelming, so it is wise to only begin pursuing one or two goals at this stage. You do not want to addictively pursue a better life; you want to healthily pursue a better life. What are one or two pursuits you would like to consider?

- i. _____
- ii. _____

You may find that investing in mid-to-long-term goals is as difficult as avoiding addiction. If that is the case, do not let it discourage you. It is another opportunity for growth. You are not racing anyone. You are pursuing a God-honoring sobriety. Whatever pace allows you to arrive at that destination is the right pace for you.

Personal Strengthening: Enhancement Strategies

In addition to avoiding and reframing temptation, you need to be personally strong – physically, mentally, and spiritually. In this section we will look at approaches to building your physical and mental stamina for your battle with addiction.

Read Matthew 26:41. Notice that Jesus ties the strength of temptation to the condition of the body; in this case fatigue. In the preceding hours, the disciples had traveled, secured a place to hold a ceremony, prepared an elaborate meal, eaten a meal high in carbohydrates, and then walked to a dark-quiet place to pray. When they repeatedly fell asleep, Jesus’ response was, “Your spirit is indeed willing, but your flesh is weak.” There is comfort in knowing God is patient with our weakness, but we should also apply wisdom and avoid creating physical challenges that will heighten our temptation. That is what this section is all about.

1. **Regulate Sleep:** Getting adequate sleep has a multifaceted impact on addiction. First, sleep has a significant impact on our physical energy and self-control. These are vital to resisting temptation. Second, good sleep hygiene serves as an effective schedule regulator. An irregular schedule provides more opportunities for temptation to arise in moments for which we will be ill-prepared. Finally, being awake late at night results in boredom at a time when our support network is least available.

If at all possible, arrange your schedule to get 7-8 hours of sleep each evening between the hours of 10pm and 8am.

If you are having trouble sleeping, consider the following suggestions to help with sleep at this time.

- Establish a bed time routine to help habituate your body towards sleep.
- Establish a deep slow breathing pattern as you lay in bed that simulates sleep breathing.
- Believe that sleep is intended as a good gift from God and do not feel guilty for resting.
- Pray that God would give you restful sleep and believe He wants you to have it.
- Memorize a passage of Scripture related to God’s care for you and repeat it slowly as you lay down to sleep.
- Play soft music or nature sounds to help prevent your mind from drift-thinking while trying to sleep.
- Reduce the level of caffeine and sugar in your diet, especially after the noon hour.
- Avoid daytime naps so that your sleep is in concentrated blocks; the physiological benefits of sleep are less when we break our sleep into smaller units.
- Take a warm bath to relax your body.
- Try muscle relaxation or stretching exercises about an hour before going to bed.
- Talk with a medical professional about the possibility of a sleep aid; disclosing your history with addiction and asking for non-habit forming medical interventions.

2. **Balanced Diet:** The addictive lifestyle is often a lifestyle of extremes. The more areas of your life that you bring into intentional moderation, the less hospitable your life will be for addiction. A balanced diet also has a multifaceted impact on the experience of addiction.

First, making healthy eating choices is a form of self-care; addiction is a form of self-abuse. Addiction doesn’t care about your body. Making healthy food choices is a demonstration that you matter. Second, a balanced diet contributes to a healthy self-image instead of feeling ashamed. Third, a balanced diet reveals that little choices matter. As you begin to experience the effects of these choices, your sense that you can positively influence your life (self-efficacy) will grow. Self-efficacy is highly correlated with continued sobriety.

In addition, a healthy diet contributes to balanced emotions. Where does our body get the component parts that comprise our brain chemistry? From our diet. If we recognize how much our diet influences our cholesterol, blood pressure, and energy levels, why don't we equally appreciate its role in our brain chemistry and emotional states?

If you are not already, implement the following practices.

- Eat at least three meals each day at consistent times in the morning, around noon, and evening.
- Have at least one serving of fresh fruit or vegetables at each meal.
- Limit foods that are high in fat or sugar content; which create blood sugar imbalances that enhance temptation.
- Begin taking a multi-vitamin to offset any nutritional deficiencies that your addiction may have created.

3. **Physical Exercise:** Here we will talk about exercises for both your body. But is should be remembered, we have already discussed how a healthy-strong body contributes to having a healthy-strong will.

Similar to improving one's diet, exercise also has the psychological benefit of being an emotional investment in one's self-care. Exercise is evidence that you are caring for yourself and usually results in improvements in energy and appearance. Exercise can also contribute to your sleep regulation. In this way, exercise contributes to all the other enhancement strategies we've listed.

Additionally, exercise triggers the releases of the body's natural endorphins and dopamine. Much of addiction has resulted in the artificial stimulation of these molecules. A consistent exercise program can be an excellent way to begin to re-establish your body's natural production of these pleasure molecules at healthy levels.

4. **Self-Control Exercises:** Addiction often results from or, at least produces, low impulse control. Growing in impulse control is both an important part of overcoming addiction and a skill that is highly correlated with life satisfaction. Impulse control is the ability to tell yourself “no” or “wait” and obeying.

Make a list of the non-AoD substances and activities over which you struggle to exhibit impulse control.

	Certain Foods	
	Recreational Activities	
	Social Activities	

Begin to intentionally practice moderation in one of these areas. Do not try to tackle them all at once. Pre-determine what a reasonable amount of time or quantity for the item you want to moderate. Inform a friend of how you are seeking to grow and explain the impulse control goal behind this discipline. Begin to allow your recovery process to be about more (not less) than AoD as you grow in self-control in a variety of areas in your life.

5. **Emotional Endurance:** Emotional endurance is another form of personal enhancement. Working through recovery is a very emotion-laden process. As you continue to work through the latter steps in this process, you may begin to focus more intently on particular emotions that are prone to disrupt your recovery. Materials, similar to this study, are available for a variety of emotions at bradhambrick.com.

However, some general guidance may be beneficial on how to increase your emotional endurance.

- *Continue to grow spiritually and intellectually.* Growth brings hope. It also brings fresh perspectives that may present new ways of addressing challenges. When you are intentionally growing, it is sign that you have not surrendered to the hardship of life; that is endurance.
- *Always face the truth.* Retreating from the truth is a step back towards addiction. However hard the truth may be, it is more liberating than a lie. Refuse to fall back into a life of escape; emotional escape (avoiding truth) is a precursor to substance escape.
- *Practice gratitude.* Grumbling is a very exhausting mental activity. Rehearsing your disappointments does not lighten or decrease them. You may think that rehearsing your blessings is cheesy or a form of denial. But realize there is an attractational quality to our attention; whatever we pay attention to we will notice more. If you focus on your disappointments, you will notice more disappointments; the same is true for your blessings.

- *Forgive.* Sin must be paid for. But when you persist in unforgiveness, you are paying the penalty for the sins people have committed against you through the burden of bitterness you bear. The souring of your disposition becomes a temptation to relapse and a drain on your emotional resilience.

“But holding on to that hurt and not being willing to forgive the person who hurt you in the past is allowing them to continue to hurt you today, in the present (p. 56).” John Baker in *Celebrate Recovery: Leader’s Guide*

- *Live in the present.* God promises to give you what it takes to live each moment well (Matthew 6:25-34). Think of this like a “manna promise” (Exodus 16). God provided enough manna for each day. It was an act of faith for Israel to only gather what they needed for that day. Similarly, living in the present is an act of faith in God’s faithfulness to provide what you need each moment. The obedience that emerges from this faith – staying in the moment – is a primary means by which God keeps this promise.

Healthy Fun: Pursuant Strategies

The goal of sobriety is not sobriety. If we fixate on sobriety, then our substance of choice is still at the center of our lives; only we focus on its absence instead of its presence. We pursue sobriety in order to live a God-glorifying, personally-satisfying life that is a blessing to those we love. That means, at this stage in your journey (if not sooner), you should be intentionally setting aside time for things you enjoy.

1. **Addiction Jar:** How much did you spend on AoD per week (\$ _____) or per month (\$ _____)? Create a jar where you put that much money for each interval when you are sober. This does two things. First, it gives you a more tangible expression of how much you were investing in your addiction. Second, it provides funds you were already sacrificing that can be invested in serving those you’ve hurt or pursuit of addiction alternatives.

Warning One: If cash is a trigger for you, then would be an approach that you would want to avoid, or at least modify, by allowing someone else to hold the cash and know the goal to which you are using as an incentive to enhance your motivation for this journey.

Warning Two: You won’t entertain yourself out of addiction. That is not the point. If entertainment is your primary goal, you are merely exchanging a self-destructive form of escape for a functional form of escape (which is still a worthwhile trade, but likely to lead to an addictive relationship to your new interests).

The goal is to create a balanced rhythm of purposeful activity (things that are good and worthwhile, but are physically, emotionally, or mentally taxing) and restorative activity (things that are healthy and fun, so that they allow you to engage your purposeful activities with renewed vigor).

In our day, these restorative activities likely cost money and time. The addiction jar simply helps you see that, if you choose to invest the money and time you already have differently, then you have ample resources to pursue a much more enjoyable life.

2. **Engage Your Interests:** The previous section may beg a question, “What did you enjoy before addiction began to dominate your life?” If you know the answer to that question, this section is for you. If you struggle to answer this question, then the next section will provide guidance.

What are things you used to enjoy which were crowded out by addiction?

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

How might you feel after reviewing the list you just made? You may feel robbed. If so, allow those emotions to further cement the notion that your addiction was never your friend. It systematically dismantled everything you enjoyed about life for its own self-preservation.

You should also feel free. Now that you are, by the grace of God, declaring your independence from addiction, you can pursue these interests again. A full and satisfying life is in front of you. You can’t obtain it all at once. That is false-high mentality of addiction. But you can begin to daily take steps in that direction while enjoying the entire journey.

- 3. **Experiment with New Interests:** What if you don't know what your interests are? Often addiction dominates phases of life when your current stage-of-life interests would have emerged. What's the answer? Experimentation. Try a smorgasbord of random healthy activities and see what you think.

Too often people think, “I'm not sure I'll like it,” or ask, “What if I don't like it?” Is that how you approached your addiction? Did you come to a new substance or beverage and pessimistically wonder, “What if it's not that good?” No, you allowed unhealthy experimentation to become an open door to destruction. All we're asking now is to allow healthy experimentation to become an open door to delight.

Whether your list under “Engage Your Interests” was full or sparse, make a list of things you *might* enjoy.

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

One of the values for this list is that it can become cognitive filler for times of temptation. Boredom is a prime trigger for relapse (see Step 3). Anticipating or planning for a new, enjoyable activity can be a way to productively fill boredom, even if you do not have the time or money to engage the activity yet. Again, think about it: during your addiction you spent a great deal of time anticipating your next high (not just being intoxicated). Anticipation is an important part of any pleasure. We want to learn the “discipline of anticipation” for our healthy pleasures.

- 4. **Savor Every Moment:** Life will never be a series of epic moments. In order to enjoy life, we must learn to savor the ordinary. This is the essence of contentment, the secret Paul discovered to thriving in any circumstance (Phil. 4:11-12).

The opposite of addiction will not be “highs” that are the comparable equivalents of the “highs” of intoxication. Instead, the alternative to addiction will be the ability to enjoy the “mids” of day-to-day, normal life. While this may not be as exciting as many people would like, it provides a much more realistic goal.

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-19. Consider this point of application for what it means to “give thanks in all circumstances” (v. 18); the spiritual discipline of savoring life. Living out this discipline is a primary way we “do not quench the Spirit” (v. 19). When we see and acknowledge the goodness God put in each moment, we are emboldening the Spirit in our lives. How do we do this? Consider the following practices:

- Grow the habit of asking “What is good?” about each situation and relationship you are in? If this is hard for you, then pray God would give you “eyes to see” what is good.
- Resist the tendency to grow bored with God's blessings. We do not want to be God's spoiled child who says we have nothing to do while surrounded by toys.
- Begin to grow your in ability to take pleasure in small things. If addiction is fueled by savoring (mentally rehearsing) bad things, then exercise the same cognitive-emotional muscle in how you savor good things.
- Allow the memory of good things to be an extension of their goodness. We do this with holidays, weddings, and other major events. Carry the same discipline into less intense pleasures.

Worship: Awe Strategies

We do not engage spiritual disciplines primarily for therapeutic reasons; we engage them to know and enjoy God. However, when engaged well, these disciplines have significant therapeutic benefit. There are even particular benefits that can be generally ascribed to particular disciplines. We will explore a few of these.

“We believe that a clearly articulated Christian worldview and a congruent and credible Christian lifestyle constitute a form of primary prevention (p. 136).” Mark Yarhouse, Richard Butman, and Barrett McRay in *Modern Psychopathologies: A Comprehensive Christian Appraisal*

- I. **Bible Study:** How much of the struggle with addiction is the “bad content” in our thinking (commonly referred to as “stinkin’ thinkin’” in recovery circles)? These thinking processes and thought content need to be replaced. We hear “go to your happy place” and roll our eyes. If only addiction were that light-weight. Go to the Bible for the Words of Life (John 6:68). At least once per day immerse your mind in pure, wholesome truth.

For instruction on how to institute this, consider the following chapters from books that provide guidance for the spiritual discipline of Bible study.

- Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, chapter five
- Donald Whitney, *Spiritual Discipline for the Christian Life*, chapters two and three
- John Ortberg, *The Life You’ve Always Wanted*, chapter ten

2. **Prayer and Worship:** How much of the struggle with addiction results from our thinking caving in on itself (i.e., shame, self-condemnation, circular reasoning, etc...)? Our thinking needs an outlet and purpose in order to be healthy. Prayer and worship provide direction for our thoughts. Prayer allows our inward thoughts to “connect” with someone who cares and understands. Worship provides a focal point for our thoughts that is grander than our situation is bad.

For instruction on how to institute this, consider the following chapters from books that provide guidance the spiritual discipline of prayer and worship.

- Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, chapters three and eleven
- Donald Whitney, *Spiritual Discipline for the Christian Life*, chapters four and five
- John Ortberg, *The Life You’ve Always Wanted*, chapter four

3. **Silence, Stillness, and Meditation:** How much of the struggle with addiction is our inability to reign in our thoughts? Silence, stillness, and meditation are disciplines that tame (harness, not harm) the wild horse that is our thought life. They are practices advocated by Christians for centuries because of their benefits for the life and character of believers.

For instruction on how to institute this, consider the following chapters from books that provide guidance for the spiritual discipline of silence and meditation.

- Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, chapters two and seven
- Donald Whitney, *Spiritual Discipline for the Christian Life*, chapter ten
- John Ortberg, *The Life You’ve Always Wanted*, chapter five

4. **Journaling:** How much of the struggle with addiction is the seeming pointless disconnection of day-to-day life? Life can easily begin to feel like a bad novel where one page has little to do with the page before it. Events keep happening but they don’t seem to be contributing to anything. This is what led Socrates to say, “The unexamined life is not worth living.” Addiction responds, “Amen!”

For instruction on how to institute this, consider the following chapters from books that provide guidance for the spiritual discipline of journaling.

- Donald Whitney, *Spiritual Discipline for the Christian Life*, chapter eleven
- Using a Personal Journal for Spiritual Growth at www.bradhambrick.com/journal

Conclusion

Remember this chapter was meant to be a buffet; there was more offered than you’ll be able to implement. That is intentional and designed so that you can select those strategies that are the best fit for you. Start by ranking the five areas discussed in terms of where your weaknesses are contributing most to your ongoing struggle with addiction.

Based upon what you write in the chart below, pick the three strategies from this chapter you want to implement next. Allow them to become a comfortable part of your lifestyle before you consider implementing other strategies. If you have trouble identifying what you want to begin with, ask the counselor, pastor, or friend who is going through this study with you.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

One final suggestion to help you assimilate the material from this chapter, go back and review the “My Commitment to Change” sheet from Step 2. Update this plan again based on your work through the last four steps. Mark your calendar to review this plan

with your sponsor, pastor, or counselor every three months. Step 7 will provide you with important areas to consider in this plan review process.

The main points are that (a) as your life changes, your sobriety plan needs to be updated, (b) key people in your life need be aware of and have the opportunity to speak into these changes, and (c) your commitment to the plan needs to remain fresh and strong in order for the plan to be effective.

Rank: 1 – Most Change Needed 5 – Least Change Needed	Focal Area	Weakness: What needs to change in this area?	Impact of Weakness: How does this weakness contribute to struggle?
	Stimulus Control: Avoidance Strategies		
	Counter Conditioning: Reframing Strategies		
	Personal Strengthening: Enhancement Strategies		
	Healthy Fun: Pursuant Strategies		
	Worship: Awe Strategies		

Accountability Focus (RESTRUCTURE LIFE):

With each step, we will provide questions you should invite another person to ask you openly and to confront any contradiction between your words and life.

- Did I diligently assess how I’m doing in each of the five areas of restructuring discussed in this step?
- Have I shared my needed changes with the relevant people to reinforce my commitment to change?
- Have I prioritized my list of changes and updated my plan for change?

Chapter 7

“Learning to Enjoy Living Free”

IMPLEMENT the new structure pervasively with humility and flexibility.

“Plans are easier than life. They exist outside my sinful heart and broken world. Trying to live out my plan has taught me more about my self, my sin, and my Savior. As I have had victory, the old expressions of addiction have taken new forms. I have had to remember that my plans are merely how I intend to rely on God and not, themselves, my deliverer.

Here are the unexpected challenges I faced [list], how I failed [list], where I succeeded [list], what I learned [list], and how God was faithful [list]. I now see that [list] is really the most important part of my plan.”

Memorize: Romans 6:12-13 (ESV), “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments of righteousness.” As you memorize this passage reflect upon these key points:

- “Let not” – Overcoming addiction requires a persistent commitment to oppose new forms of temptation.
- “Reign” – You must remember that sin’s desire is to rule (Gen. 4:7). Its initial returns will seem innocent. Beware!
- “Obey its passions” – In God’s design for life your passions/desires are made to obey you as you seek to honor Him.
- “Members... yourselves” – Sin compartmentalizes and divides life. God wants your whole life to be whole and holy.
- “As those” – Remember you fight as one who has already been brought back from the death of sin to life in Christ.

Teaching Notes

“One’s ability to cope with stress – in particular, with anger, frustration, boredom, anxiety, and depression – has been identified as a critical deficit area in many theories or models of addiction (p. 13).” Carlo DiClemente in *Addictions and Change*

“Marital problems usually get worse soon after the addict begins walking a path of change (p. 124).” Ed Welch in *Addictions: A Banquet in the Grave*

“When you want to change and don’t want to change, the truth is you don’t want to change (p. 15)... To succeed, you must learn how to fail... The difference between the wise and the foolish is that the wise learn from their failures (p. 82).” Ed Welch in *Crossroads: A Step-by-Step Guide Away from Addiction*

“Less frequent events and intense stressors are two critical types of triggers that must be negotiated successfully to sustain change and manage the Maintenance stage of recovery (p. 195).” Carlo DiClemente in *Addictions and Change*

“The brain does not forget. From the standpoint of psychology, this means we can never become so well adjusted that we can stop being vigilant. From a neurological viewpoint, it means the cells of our best-intentioned systems can never eradicate the countless other systems that have been addicted. And from a spiritual perspective, it means that no matter how much grace God has blessed us with, we forever remain dependent upon its continuing flow (p. 90).” Gerald May in *Addiction & Grace*

Embedded Study

As you reach this chapter, the momentum of change has probably already fluctuated several times. Getting started was hard. It felt like an uphill battle. Old patterns of life didn't want to let go of you and you didn't want to admit they had a hold on you. Changing your addictive lifestyle can feel like betraying a friend; breakups are never easy even when they're good and needed.

But honesty with self, others, and God has a great way of building momentum. You began to let go of the weights of sin that clung to you so you could run free (Heb. 12:1). This second phase is almost always exciting. When there are so many ways that your life can be healthier, it can bring a great sense of hope and progress.

In the third phase, the one we're starting now, life restructuring may begin to feel more like work again. “Implementation” is not an exciting word or process. Lasting change happens in incremental units and mundane moments. Change begins to impact moments that feel “less relevant” to your battle with addiction. The freedom you've gained tempts you to think you can risk a few of your previous bad habits.

In this chapter you will evaluate the effectiveness and needed modifications to the life restructuring plan you made in chapter six. This step will require the passage of time. Implementation (chapter seven) takes longer than creating a plan (chapter six). For this reason, if you are in a group program, it is recommended that you give at least two months to this step. You will need to see how your plan responds to the changes of settings, relationships, and emotions that happen over months rather than days.

As this time passes, there are two areas of assessment that you will be performing from this chapter. First, you will be learning how to measure lasting progress. What is the difference between “I'm having a good day” and “My life is beginning to conform to God's design”? Second, you will be looking at key areas of your life to make sure that you have not overlooked something that was less immediately relevant during the emotional crisis that precipitated your seeking help.

But before we engage those subjects, we will spend a couple of sections discussing the topic of relapse. What is a relapse? How do I know if I've relapsed? If a relapse doesn't “just happen,” what contributes to a relapse? What do I do if I realize I've relapsed?

Discussing Relapse

Is every slip a relapse? Does every bad choice mean I'm “starting over”? How can I not expect myself to be perfect for the rest of my life without making excuses for myself that will make it easier to slip back into destructive behaviors? You can see why relapse is such a difficult subject in a recovery program.

On one hand, you can expect to relapse many times in the journey of recovery. If we don't relapse, then our struggle was probably not “life dominating” and didn't warrant the level of attention this study provides.

On the other hand, we don't want to expect to fail. We want to face every moment with the expectation that we'll rely on God to make healthy, God-honoring choices.

With that said, here are the expectations of this study:

- We will face relapse.
- Relapse is the recurrence of self-destructive behaviors related to our desired change.
- More dangerous than relapse are dishonesty and hiding.
- Dishonesty and hiding are the difference between a relapse slip (short) and relapse slide (long).
- Relapse begins to end when honesty begins.
- We are more likely to be honest about something we've openly discussed.
- We include this section, not to excuse or predict relapse, but to place ourselves in position for a healthy response.

In their book *Lose It for Life*, Stephen Arterburn and Linda Mintle lay out four phases of a relapse (p. 228-230; bold text only). The presence of an early step does not make the latter steps inevitable. Rather we will look at each in order to help you prevent moving further into relapse when you realize you're in a vulnerable condition.

- I. **Complacency:** “I just want a break from being good.” This is the mild, passive-aggressive defiance of fatigue. It likely means we've been trying to change too fast (perfectionistic approach to change) or that we've got too much in our schedule. Early honesty with people in your support network is the best response to this fatigue. Don't try to press through in private. Evaluate what would be a sustainable approach to change with people who care about you.

2. **Confusion:** It has been said by many, “Worldliness is what makes sin look normal and righteousness look strange.” The further we get into temptation, the more this dynamic affects our thinking. You begin to view “healthy choices” as an “unhealthy burden.” You begin to view “unhealthy choices” as “moments of freedom.” You begin to view “supportive friends” as “people who don’t understand and expect too much.” When this disorientation begins to emerge be honest ASAP. This is the pattern of thought that will extend a relapse. Even if you don’t know what to disclose at this point, call a member of your support team and say, “I’m struggling. I don’t think I’m thinking well right now. Can we talk?”
3. **Compromise:** This step can be fueled by self-pity, denial, or defiance. But we begin to think, “I deserve my self-destructive behavior,” as if it were a form of relief. The duration of time that has passed since we last engaged our addiction allows the sense of high or relief to be greater and the negative physical effects not to be as immediately felt. It is as if our bad friend really has learned to be good like they promised. We also know those who care about us will be disappointed and hurt, so we are more prone to remain secretive about what we’re doing. Frequent warning are:
 - Fantasizing about your addiction as if it were “the good old days.”
 - Believing that you can use again without falling back into addiction (over confidence).
 - Your emotions become moody and your attitude becomes selfish
 - You begin reconnecting with your old friends from when you were actively in addiction.
 - You begin to pull away from or neglect friends who have been part of your recovery.
 - You are defensive when someone brings up changes in your mood, attitude, or actions.
 - You begin to neglect your outlets for healthy fun or enjoy them less.
 - You begin to engage healthy interests in excessive ways (i.e., excessive exercise, compulsive cleaning, etc...).
4. **Catastrophe:** Destructive choices destroy. There is no way around that. When we fail to acknowledge compromise (stage three), catastrophe (stage four) will eventually get our attention. While our goal is to interrupt a potential relapse before it reaches catastrophe phase, the earlier in the deterioration process we acknowledge what is happening, the better. Don’t allow shame or pride to prevent you from reversing the impact of your choices.

Read I Corinthians 10:13. “God will not let you be tempted beyond your ability” doesn’t just mean the type or intensity of temptation, but also means at any point in the temptation cycle. Too often we conceptualize a fictional “point of no return” in our battle with addiction. If a “point of no return” exists, it is the point at which we decide not to be honest with God, ourselves, and others. The grace of God means there is always hope in honesty about our sin and struggles. When God promises to provide “a way of escape” that refers, not to some secret passage way (hidden is never free), but to the context of grace and support which the gospel provides, that allows us to be honest.

John Baker provides five dispositions, using the acronym HEART, that alert us to time when we are particularly susceptible to relapse (p. 192, *Celebrate Recovery: Leader’s Guide*). When you experience these dispositions, reach out to a member of your support network. A quick phone or text that says, “I can tell I’m tense right now and wanted to let you know. Will you pray for me?” can make a big difference. Being alone with these emotions can be as dangerous as being alone with your AoD of choice.

- **H**urting
- **E**xhausted
- **A**ngry
- **R**esentful
- **T**ense

How to Measure Lasting Progress?

Measuring progress is tricky for many reasons. First, measuring progress is an attempt to measure something very fluid and dynamic. There is a rise and fall, acceleration and deceleration in progress that makes it hard to get a concrete reading. Second, measuring progress has a tendency to measure performance over dependence. This tendency can easily begin to undermine the God-reliance stressed throughout this material; as if we are going to “master sobriety.” Finally, measuring progress can foster shame when there is some type of regression. How regression is handled is pivotal to establishing lasting change; hence the last section on relapse.

C.S. Lewis gave a very instructive metaphor for how to deal with shame. Lewis compared shame to hot coffee. If we spill hot coffee on our skin we are burned, scalded, and feel disgusting. However, if we drink coffee we are warmed, nourished, and energized. When we avoid shame or wallow in shame, it becomes like spilled coffee. When we handle the guilt and shame of

relapse in the ways that are outlined in Scripture, then even our weaknesses draw us closer to Christ, remind us of the necessity of the cross, and give us a testimony to share.

David Powlison gives seven indicators that progress is being made with sin (bold text only). These are discussed to give you a more robust understanding of progress than merely counting the number of days since your last drank or used. As you read these, consider how each point helps you see and/or maintain progress even when you are tempted towards addiction.

1. **Decrease in Frequency of Sin:** Progress does mean that we should sin less; trust and rest in God more. As you implement these materials in the context of loving community, there should be noticeable and quantifiable decreases in the frequency of addictive behaviors. A holistic plan to combat addiction lived with the encouragement-accountability of friends disempowers the shame and sense of inevitableness that fuels addiction.
2. **Repenting More Quickly:** Progress means that when temptation gives way to relapse, we will respond to those occasions differently. Quick repentance is the key to stopping a relapse. No longer will you give into the mindset, “If I’ve already been bad, I might as well enjoy it.” Your conversational comfort in going to God in repentance should be increasing (review step four). We should now be convinced, “The quicker I am honest, the quicker I will be free.”
3. **A Change in Battleground:** Progress should mean that you see an advance in your battle against sin; from behaviors and belief to its core fortress—your heart commitments. This is a key part of what you’ve been tracking with the journaling tool we introduced in chapter three. These changes should excite you. This realization is what allowed Paul to say “I am the chief of sinners” (1 Tim. 1:15) without shame. He was excited to take his battle with sin to its core. While each new battleground may require different strategies and durations of time to win, there should be a joy as you see God’s kingdom penetrating new territory in your soul.
4. **Having a Greater Sense of Need for Christ’s Mercy and Grace:** Progress that does not persistently realize its reliance upon Christ, degenerates into pride and becomes a stronghold for the enemy; especially for those who struggled with addiction. The enemy may use this stronghold as the basis for generating new expectations of failure that tempt us to retreat back to our addictive behaviors. The point is not to try to predict where every new challenge will come from, but to remain humble and reliant upon God regarding whatever challenge may arise.
5. **Increase accountability and honesty:** Progress means that you do not need a “reason” to be honest and things do not have to be “that bad” in order for you to have accountability. In many ways, this variable is one of the primary, practical expressions of humility. Humble people refuse to fight sin alone and refuse to trust their own hearts apart from the community of caring, Christian friends (Heb. 3:12-14).
6. **Not Responding to Difficulty with Addiction:** Difficulty is the time when progress is most clear. When we forget this, we become discouraged by difficulty and this discouragement adds to our temptation. Recognize that when difficulty comes (i.e., conflict, stress, setbacks, etc...) this will be a time when your progress will be most evident. Realizing this should help you maintain the will to persevere during these challenges.
7. **Learning to Love and Consider the Interest of Real People:** This is the epitome of progress because it is the fulfillment of the whole law of God (Gal. 6:2). The opposite of addiction is not merely sobriety. The opposite of addiction is the ability to engage genuinely with real people in the ups-and-downs of real life with an accurate self-perception. We no longer categorize people as “addicts like us” or people “too good to understand us.” We don’t disdain or fear people; we seek to love them. We don’t misconstrue them to embolden our defense mechanisms; we seek to get to know them for who they really are.

There is another way we can think about measuring our progress with addiction. We can look at markers of reliance upon God in the moment of struggle or we can consider a multi-dimensional way of measuring the decreasing size of our temptations. We want to do both; we want to increase our reliance upon God in the midst of the experience (criteria above) and we want to see the size of our temptation decrease in as many ways as possible (criteria below).

As you face the ebb-and-flow in your temptation towards addiction, we want you to look for three markers of progress with temptation: intensity, duration, and frequency. Even when you’re struggling with temptation, look for these markers as evidences of God’s grace. To help you make sense of what growth looks like practically, imagine a sound wave (see the illustration below). A sound wave can be measured three ways:

- Intensity (height: A to B)
- Duration (width: Y to Z)
- Frequency (peak to peak: 1 to 2)

Our temptation towards addiction can be measured in the same three categories. This now gives you three ways that you can begin to gauge the weakening of temptation. Is your temptation less intense? Does your temptation last for briefer periods of time? Are your temptations less frequent? Your journals should provide a fairly objective basis of comparison for how these changes have already begun to occur since you began this study.

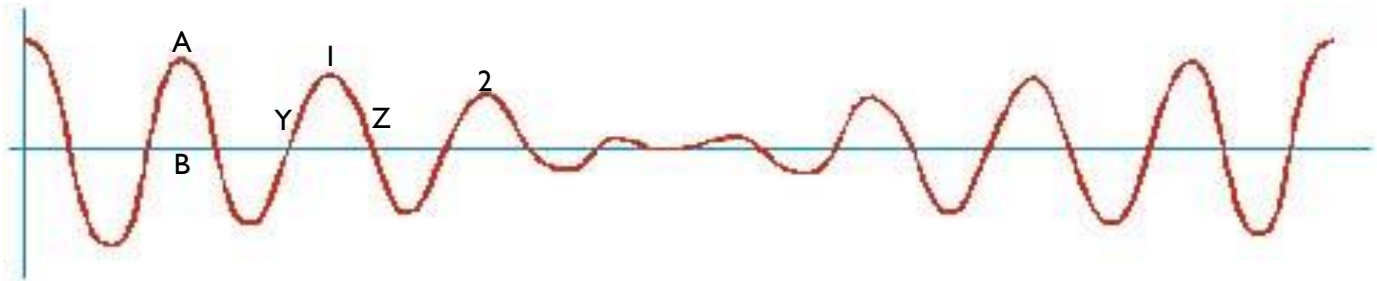


Illustration: Disordered Eating Temptation and Sound Wave Comparison

To provide some encouragement consider the following “life disruption score” (LDS). LDS is an arbitrary statistic, but it highlights a valid point. Let’s assume that the intensity, duration, and frequency of your temptations were maxed out on a 1 to 10 scale. That would create a LDS score of 1,000.

$$10 \text{ (intensity)} \times 10 \text{ (duration)} \times 10 \text{ (frequency)} = 1,000$$

Now let’s assume that you are able to decrease the impact of each variable only by two increments. How much do you think that would improve your LDS score?

$$8 \times 8 \times 8 = \underline{\hspace{2cm}} \text{ (yes, you have to do the math)}$$

Are you surprised at what a small amount of progress in each area can do? It is not just a math trick. It is the grace of God. If our sanctification (spiritual, relational, and emotional maturity) required a level of effort that matched the impact of our sin, that would be self-atonement. Instead, what sanctification takes is dying to self and wisely living for God’s glory by relying on God’s grace. When that starts, the momentum of Heaven is at our back. Each step of faith is caught up in the current of God’s grace.

You might ask, “What is the variable that makes this work?” The answer is hope. When we begin to see that we can, by God’s grace, have victory over our temptations, we gain hope. We feel less powerless. Addiction thrives in an environment of perceived-futility. Once we gain gospel-hope, much of the bondage of sin is broken.

Looking for Progress

Now that you have a more complete picture of what progress is, you need to do a thorough examination of your life to determine how well this progress is being actualized in various parts of your life. In the material below you will examine the key relationships (who?), times (when?), locations (where?), and activities (what?) in which progress should be becoming increasingly evident.

It is important that as you assess these areas that you are as honest about them as you have been with everything else in this study. It would be easy to allow change-fatigue to tempt you to become less authentic with others or honest with yourself. However, if you treat non-crisis sin differently than you treat crisis sin, then it will become a crisis situation again.

Inspection Area One: Who?

Spouse: If you are married, then your spouse is either a significant asset or liability in your pursuit of sobriety. Your spouse not only shares more space and time with you than anyone, your spouse also navigates more challenges, stressors, and conflicts with you than anybody else. Your spouse will be more affected by changes in your lifestyle than anyone. If you haven’t already, begin to share your journey with them.

If marriage enrichment is needed to create a home environment that is more God-honoring or home systems that are more-functional-less-stressful, the “Creating a Gospel-Centered Marriage” enrichment seminars are available for guidance in the areas of foundations, communication, finances, decision making, and intimacy at bradhambrick.com/gcm2.

Marriage enrichment should not replace working your steps of recovery at this phase. But marriage enrichment, managing life and conflict better, will begin to be an important part of your recovery process at this stage in your journey.

Individual Person: Are there particular people who trigger heightened temptations for you?

If you have safety concerns, it is advised that you seek guidance from a supervisor, administrator, teacher, or other suitable authority figure over the relationship. If the relationship does not have a suitable overseer, then seeking the guidance of a pastor or counselor is advised. The book *The Emotionally Destructive Relationship* by Leslie Vernick is also recommended.

If the struggle is rooted in insecurity rather than safety, then learning to vocalize those concerns, learning social skills to overcome points of insecurity, or becoming less dependent upon this individual's approval are likely advisable. The resources below address various aspects of these concerns.

- *When People Are Big and God Is Small* by Ed Welch is good for relationships with a codependent dynamic.
- *The Peacemaker* by Ken Sande is good for those who are intimidated by conflict.
- *Relationships: A Mess Worth Making* by Paul Tripp and Tim Lane outlines normal relational expectations.
- *Picture Perfect* by Amy Baker describes how to handle perfectionistic expectations of yourself.

Group: If your temptations toward addiction are attached to particular groups of people (i.e., those perceived to have more status than you, those whose appearance you rank higher, those who are different from you in some way you deem significant, etc...), then you need to examine the motivation and history for that reaction.

Generally these temptations triggered by a group can be attributed to (a) an idolatrous over-valuing of certain “desired” attributes and social roles, (b) aspects of an abusive personal history that changed your instinctual response to those who remind you of the abusive experience, or (c) a prejudicial response towards a particular group of people.

If your temptation is strongly influenced by a history of abuse, then it is recommended that you utilize a resource such as counseling or one of the books listed below to help you overcome these responses.

- *On the Threshold of Hope* by Diane Langberg
- *Mending the Soul* by Steven R. Tracy
- *Is It My Fault?* by Justin and Lindsey Holcomb

If your group-related temptation is rooted in idolatry or prejudice, then it is recommended that you take to heart the truths found in the passage below.

Read Galatians 3:28-29. Strong emotional reactions based upon group identification reveal that we are valuing as “most essential” things that are not “most important” about a person. Our reaction reveals our preferences have become a strong measuring system. We sin when we deem people (individuals or groups) as safe-unsafe or good-bad without knowledge of whether our assessment is true. We must allow the gospel, rather than our fears, to be the lens through which we see people.

Role: Sometimes our emotional reactions have less to do with a particular person than it does with the dynamic of the relationship or the responsibilities we bear in a particular position. If a particular role is preventing you from experiencing greater freedom from addiction, then it is important to discern whether it is because of (a) inadequate training or preparation to fulfill that role, or (b) the weight-significance that you place upon that role.

If a lack of training or preparation for a particular role creates the angst that prompts temptation, then ask yourself the questions, “What training do I need?” and “How could I begin to pursue it?” Much of this study has prompted you to be proactive towards life struggles rather than trying to emotionally manage them with substances. Continue in that with how you seek the training you need to be more comfortable in the role generating stress.

If you are over-valuing a particular role in a way that makes your life imbalanced, then you will have to wrestle with your priorities and values. Imbalanced priorities will crash even the best of systems; meaning, however excellent your step six plan for

change may be, it will migrate back towards what you previously knew unless your values change. In this scenario, the type of insights that you gained in step three on motives will be important focal points for your accountability relationships.

Read Ephesians and fill in the chart below. The message of Ephesians can be summarized as, “Don’t be who you were.” As you read Ephesians, pay special attention to columns one and three with old identity and new identity contrasts. You may find other old identity versus new identity contrasts. Add those to your chart. After making that list, go back and capture the experience of each identity – particularly as you have experienced in your spiritual maturation. An example is given for “far off” versus “brought near” to help you get started.

Who I Was Before Christ	My Experience	Who I Am In Christ	My Experience
Dead (2:1-10)		Alive	
Children of Disobedience (2:2; 5:1)		Adopted Children	
Far Off (2:11-22)	Feared people; felt rejected	Brought Near	Secure in Christ, willing to be vulnerable
The Least (3:7-13)		A Minister of God’s Grace	
Morally Confused (4:14-19)		Lovingly Confident	
Old Man (4:20-24)		New man	
Crude (4:29-32)		Thankful	
Idolaters (5:3-6)		Set Apart	
Darkness (5:7-14)		Light	
Fools (5:15-17)		Wise	
Drunkard (5:18-21)		Filled with the Spirit	

Inspection Area Two: When?

Time of Day/Week/Month: Try to pay attention to whether temptation emerges at predictable times in the rhythms of your life. Are there regular points in your day, week, or month when the struggle is stronger? If the answer is yes, then ask yourself,

“What type of rhythm best accounts for this – sleep cycle, work load, social interaction, meal times, financial pay cycles, hormonal cycles, etc...?”

If your addiction is linked to biological or time-related rhythms, then it would be wise to consult with a physician (if you have not already) who could help identify how to regulate the body functions that account for these changes in mood.

If your temptations are linked to behavioral or social rhythms, then, at the very least, you need to examine your life management systems. How well do you manage time and money? How willing are you to say “no” to over-commitments? How assertive are you in unhealthy relationships? If you find your mismanagement is rooted in bad priorities, which is often the case, then repent and commit to change. If the mismanagement is rooted in ignorance, commit to learn and change.

Some resources that might be of benefit in this area are listed below.

- Time management – bradhambrick.com/burnout
- Financial management – bradhambrick.com/gcmfinances
- Recommendations on the relational aspects are provided in the sections above

Season: Seasonal or annual rhythms can be similar to day-week-month rhythms. Different seasons present different challenges. Summer has cookouts that are associated with a cold beer. Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Years have both celebrations that often include AoD, break out life rhythms (which have become a source of protection), and create stress.

Seasonal temptations are predictable—talk with people in your support network about how you plan to face them.

Energy Level: Fatigue impacts temptation to addiction. When we’re tired, our capacity for self-control is diminished. Also, when we are tired, we often think we deserve a break or reward (which during times of temptation may still be interpreted to mean AoD).

The questions below are meant to help you assess if your lifestyle is setting you up to have a consistent energy level, thereby reducing your level of temptations.

- Are you managing your life so that you have time and the mental freedom to get adequate sleep?
- Are you eating a healthy diet so that your body has the nutrition it needs to be nutritionally balanced?
- Are you getting cardiovascular exercise to help your body eliminate the chemical by-products of stress?
- Are you engaging with activities you enjoy so that your morale for a healthy life remains high?
- Are you using caffeine or other stimulants to offset unhealthy sleep habits?
- Can you thrive for the next decade if you live like you have for the last week? Month?

Before / After: The before/after might be an event (i.e., work deadline, visit to family, etc...) or interactions (i.e., conflict, interview, etc...) that are stressful or a “let down” compared to your expectations. Learning to manage anticipation, disappointment, and achievement are important parts of maintaining sobriety.

Anticipation – looking forward to a future event marked by uncertainty – is a frequent trigger for stress that we want to manage with AoD.

Disappointment – looking back at a past event that fell short of one’s preferences – is another frequent trigger for guilt or shame that we want to erase with AoD.

Achievement may be a trigger based on the fact that we think the “reward” should be our old AoD of choice.

Life Transitions: Major life transitions can also be times of emotional disorientation. Leaving for college, empty nest, first “real job,” becoming a parent / grandparent, mid-life crisis, retirement, and similar transitions impact us in at least two ways: (1) they cause us to question our identity, and (2) they make it hard for us to know how we “should” feel.

As you examine how prepared you are to sustain the progress you’ve made, consider whether there are any major transitions in your near future. If there are, then there are at least three recommended ways to prepare:

1. Expect some level of emotional disorientation. Don’t allow surprise to magnify the disruption.
2. Begin now introducing this into conversations with your support network.
3. Get guidance from others who have already faced this type of transition; especially those who have navigated this kind of transition while struggling with addiction.

Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-8. “For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven (v. 1).” God is not annoyed that you have to consider how these time-factors impact addiction. God is not tapping his foot wondering when you’re going to get back to “important work.” God is as, if not more, concerned with your health as he is your productivity. For God, your productivity is merely an indicator of your health. Healthy people living out the gospel change the world. So God wants you to take the time to ensure your long-term health so that you can enjoy your ongoing role in advancing his kingdom.

Inspection Area Three: Where?

Home: There are dynamics to home-life that are distinct from other relationships. Home is where we get to relax and not be “on” anymore. Home is a place where we keep our stuff (meaning it is easier to hide and protect things at home). Home is a place where we engage more comfort-seeking behaviors than anywhere else.

You can quickly begin to see how home will either be a great protection from or contributor to our patterns of addiction; and why it is hard for home to be a neutral influence.

What are the aspects of your home-life (routine and physical layout) that contribute to your addiction?

What are the aspects of your home-life (routine and physical layout) that help alleviate your addiction?

How or when can you refine or alter those aspects that contribute to your addiction?

If your home-life has significant influence on your addiction, ask a friend from your support network or a counselor to review your answers to the questions above. Be sure that you are assessing what changes are possible and how to best accomplish them well. If addiction has been your “normal” experience, then it is likely that you may miss or over-under estimate the impact of potential changes.

Work / School: Outside of our homes, work or school is where we spend the most time and energy. Our occupation or education is usually how we answer the second standard question of social protocol – “What do you do?” Our sense of accomplishment and identity, for better or worse, often emerges from these domains.

If you experience significant uncertainty and dissatisfaction with life based on your work or selecting the schooling that would help you connect with a satisfying career, then the resources below may help you discern how to connect your vocation with God’s general call to advance his kingdom in a way that is more purposeful and satisfying.

- *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God's Work* by Tim Keller
- *The Gospel at Work* by Sebastian Traeger and Greg D. Gilbert
- *Step by Step* by James Petty (not about vocation, but excellent book on the decision making process)

If your stress related to work or school is tied more to the social dynamics, then the evaluations you made in the “Who?” portions of this chapter are likely to provide the guidance you need.

Activity: Like relationships, particular activities can become triggers for various temptations and insecurities. The weight that we place on our performance in particular activities can become so significant that it becomes a “reason” to act out. How we perform in a sporting event, on an exam, at a task at work, in front of particular people, or during an once-in-a-lifetime moment activity can become the measure of who we are.

This emotional reaction loses touch with reality. You existed before any activity. You exist during any activity. You will exist after any activity; even death. When we live as if a particular moment will define our life, we are living a lie. God is better and more faithful than that.

In financial negotiations, people are advised to “never lose their walk-away power.” When they want something so badly they cannot walk away, they will not get a good deal. Similarly, in emotional regulation “never lose your walk-away power.” When a moment becomes so large that you believe your future hangs on it, you will be emotionally crippled and compromised in how you handle temptation.

Read Luke 9:23-25 and Matthew 6:33. God does not want to withhold any good thing from you (Psalm 84:11), but God also does not want you to be owned by any good thing (1 Cor. 10:23). When an activity becomes the source of your temptation towards addiction, then that is a strong indicator that this line has been crossed. Your joy will be greater in any activity when you are content in God without that activity.

Inspection Area Four: What?

Entertainment: One of the things we glean from our entertainment preferences is a sense of the ideal: the ideal figure based upon our favorite movie star or an ideal day based upon our hobby. Ideals can either be very good or very bad. Often, when we’ve had a prolonged struggle with addiction, they can be really bad.

When we think we can live up to our ideal day, whatever level of euphoria or transcendent peace we believe it should have, we are prone to use AoD to make it happen. When we don’t think we can live up to our ideal day, we escape into AoD in order to cope with the sense of disappointment and failure.

Our entertainment habits often come with the availability, or even expectation, of AoD. The momentum of fun makes it easier to slip into relapse when AoD has been associated with a form of entertainment. While having fun, we want to relax and not have to be intentional. That is what makes the association of AoD with a form of entertainment particularly dangerous.

List: What forms of AoD-associated entertainment or hobbies do you still engage? _____

Assess: What level of temptation risk are you willing to endure for this form of entertainment? _____

- Note: This assessment question should be read as a “red flag” question. Risk is more folly than courage in addiction.

Plan: How can you mitigate the temptation associated with addiction-related forms of entertainment that are important to you? _____

Albatross: “Albatross” here refers to occasions that deviate from your “regular” schedule; those occasions for which your instincts and habits may not be well-suited. “Albatross” moments are often “more opportune times” (Luke 4:13) that Satan uses to regain a foothold in our life. Perfectionists often take comfort in routine and, therefore, can find these kinds of moments more emotionally disruptive.

Remember: What are a couple of occasions when an unexpected moment resulted in reverting to addiction? _____

Reflect: How do we typically respond to an unexpected activity or free time? _____

Plan: If you experience temptation in an unexpected moment, what is a wise response plan? _____

Evaluating Your Implementation

The chart on the next page is meant to help you assess how well your life restructuring plan is prepared to adapt to changes in each area of your life.

- The first column corresponds with the major headings and subheadings of this chapter.
- The second column is for you to identify the areas of needed change.
- The next three columns correlate with the “sound wave” criteria for measuring progress.
- The final column is to make notes about changes that need to be made to your life restructuring plan.

You will likely need more space to write than this document provides. This document is meant to help you sketch out general modifications to your life restructuring plan. If beneficial, these brief notes could be expanded in a larger document.

The primary value of this tool is as a conversation outline with your counselor, pastor, or accountability partner. Allow this to be an instrument that teaches you the value of regularly examining life with those who care about you and are committed to pursuing God with you.

A PDF copy of this document can be found at bradhambrick.com/addiction.

Accountability Focus (IMPLEMENT):

With each step, we will provide questions you should invite another person to ask you openly and to confront any contradiction between your words and life.

- Have I been honest about instances of relapse and responded wisely when temptation has been very strong?
- Am I finding legitimate evidence of progress in all seven areas that indicate lasting change is taking place?
- Have I shown evidence of carefully evaluating my effectiveness in pursuing sobriety in each area listed?



OVERCOMING ADDICTION IMPLEMENTATION EVALUATION

	Improvement in Intensity	Improvement in Duration	Improvement in Frequency	Needed Changes to Plan
WHO?				
Spouse				
Person 1				
Person 2				
Person 3				
Person 4				
Group 1				
Group 2				
Group 3				
Role 1				
Role 2				
Other				
WHEN?				
Time 1				
Time 2				
Time 3				
Season				
Energy Level				
Energy Level				
Before/After				
Before/After				
Life Transition				
Other				
WHERE?				
Home				
Work				
Activity 1				
Activity 2				
Activity 3				
Other				
Other				
WHAT?				
Entertainment				
Entertainment				
Entertainment				
Entertainment				
Albatross				
Albatross				
Albatross				
Other				

Chapter 8

“Embracing Sobriety as ‘The Good Life’”

PERSEVERE in the new life and identity to which God has called me.

**“I can see God’s faithfulness over the last [time since beginning this material].
As I have experienced victory, my temptation has changed [describe]
and my ability to focus on God in non-crisis times has been stretched [examples].
I have come to realize that ‘healthy’ means more than the absence of addictive behaviors.
God has an entirely different agenda for my life [explain] than what I knew.
I am learning to enjoy it and be comfortable in it.”**

Memorize: James 1:12-13 (ESV), “Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am being tempted by God,’ for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.” As you memorize this passage reflect upon these key points:

- “Blessed” – The place where we experience the fullness of God’s blessing is *with God* more than *outside trials*.
- “Remains steadfast” – We do not have to “overcome” or “conquer.” We are merely called to remain faithful.
- “Under trial” – The temptations that call us back to our old addictive lifestyle would be among these trials.
- “Crown of life” – The “life” promised by our addiction is already ours in Christ.
- “Let no one say” – If addictive thinking convinces us to turn from God, it separates us from our source of hope.

Teaching Notes

“The new behavior becomes fully maintained only when there is little or no energy or effort needed to continue it and the individual can terminate the cycle of change (p. 29)... Successful approximations are the way we learn most new behaviors or change old ones. It is clearly the way that most addicted individuals find their way to recovery (p. 182).” Carlo DiClemente in *Addictions and Change*

“Don’t forget to share your victories, no matter how small, with others in your group. Your growth will give others hope (p. 194)!” John Baker in *Celebrate Recovery: Leader’s Guide*

“Successful action also provides a new perspective on problems in other areas of the individual’s life. Problems that seemed trivial in light of the serious problems caused by the addiction look different in the light of abstinence. Once change of the addiction has begun, change of other problems becomes more feasible, and often more necessary, in order to sustain the change (p. 185).” Carlo DiClemente in *Addictions and Change*

“Whatever wins our affections will control our lives (p. 175).” Ed Welch in *Addictions: A Banquet in the Grave*

“When you are in an addictive trance, all you see is your addiction. When you come out of it, you begin to see God more clearly; you see other people more clearly too (p. 46).” Ed Welch in *Crossroads: A Step-by-Step Guide Away from Addiction*

“Lonely people make good addicts (p. 118).” Kent Dunnington in *Addiction and Virtue: Beyond the Models of Disease and Choice*

Embedded Study

Are you enjoying where you are? Even if you are not “there yet,” can you identify aspects of this part of your journey that make it significantly better than where you’ve been? Unless you can answer “yes” to this question and take delight in that answer, perseverance will be grueling.

Striving without delighting is exhausting.

One of the keys to persevering, especially with a struggle as recurrent as an addiction, is the ability to enjoy an imperfect, in-process life. God does not just delight in you at the culmination of your sanctification. God delights in you right now. He invites you to agree with him; where he has you in this process is good. This provides the emotional stability and security to persevere in your journey of recovery.

With that as our starting point, let’s ask the question, “What does it look like to continue to follow God from here?” Chances are that you’ve put so much energy into getting “here” that it is not entirely clear how to prepare yourself for life after an intensive focus on change. What do you do when your life is not focused on overcoming addiction? That is the topic of this chapter and the next.

In this chapter we will look at post-temptation temptations—those temptations that uniquely arise when we’re doing “better.” In order to help you finish strong, we will look at three subjects for this stage in your journey.

1. Common Lies and Distractions
2. Victory Changes Temptation
3. Preparing for Transition

Common Lies and Distractions

Strangely “better” is not always easier than “worse.” You likely knew the terrain of addiction better than you know the terrain of recovery. That is the purpose of this section and the next—to prepare you for how challenges frequently mutate as you leave an old lifestyle for a new one.

One of the most effective ways that temptation mutates is by introducing new lies (or revised versions of old lies) and distractions. As you read through this section, you should be preparing to listen to yourself. When you hear yourself thinking these kinds of thoughts, you should consider that a warning sign indicating that you should talk with your support network. The discussion after each lie is intended to give you truth and perspective to counter these disruptive and unhealthy messages.

“I deserve a break. I have been good for a long time now.” When we talk about taking a “break” from our battle with sin it sounds very legitimate, but it leads to a return to sin. If you feel like you need a break, then it is important to make sure you are living a balanced, sustainable life. “Break” language indicates we feel like we’re “sprinting” rather than “walking out a journey.” We’ve tried to emphasize a sustainable-journey mindset from the beginning.

Often one of the causes of addiction is unrealistic expectations about what you should be doing. Too often this same mindset is applied to recovery; an individual puts as much excessive effort into “getting healthy” as they did into the goals that drove them to become unhealthy. At best, this approach creates short-term relief. Wanting a break from “being good” is an indicator this pattern may exist in your life.

We can set ourselves up for relapse by picturing a “godly life” we cannot maintain. When this happens we feel justified in taking a break from what we perceive to be God’s expectations and move towards sin as our relief. Unrealistic expectations are the kryptonite of perseverance.

If, however, you assess your expectations and determine they are realistic but hard, then gaining the strength to endure and enjoy this lifestyle is what perseverance is all about (Rom. 5:3-5; James 1:2-4). Be sure to ask your support network to verify your assessment and for prayer or encouragement in this process of growth.

“Now I can get back to focusing on what is important to me.” This distraction buys into the notion that overcoming sin is merely about exchanging an unhealthy form of self-focus to a more functional form of self-focus. Hopefully you have already learned that legitimate pleasures are an essential part of resisting sin of any kind, but have also learned that the “focus” of our lives (i.e., what we worship and gives us meaning) cannot be self-serving.

Sin, even in the form of over-prioritized legitimate pleasures, will never remain self-serving. That is the way sin always likes to introduce itself, as your servant. But once it is allowed to move into your life, it mutates from servant to master. As you finish

this study several hours per week may be added to your schedule; the time you’re no longer spending reading this notebook and reflecting. Be sure to use that time for God-centered, joyful living.

Chapter nine will help you think through that new (or renewed) life-orientation. The life God designed you to live will be incredibly satisfying; it will fit you perfectly because it emerges from how God designed you. So do not be concerned that “not focusing on what was important to you” will result in a drab life. God may give you back the same interests, but with a very different purpose and motivation (Matt. 6:33-34, Luke 9:23-24).

“This is not working, because temptation is still present. No one else has to work this hard.” Temptation only becomes easy (i.e., the sense of active-resisting dissipates) when you stop fighting. But as soon as the weight of temptation is removed by succumbing, the greater weights of guilt and consequence are placed on you.

“No man knows how bad he is till he has tried very hard to be good. A silly idea is current that good people do not know what temptation means. This is an obvious lie. Only those who try to resist temptation know how strong it is. After all, you find out the strength of the German army by fighting against it, not by giving in. You find out the strength of a wind by trying to walk against it, not by lying down... That is why bad people, in one sense, know very little about badness. They have lived a sheltered life by always giving in. We never find out the strength of the evil impulse inside us until we try to fight it: and Christ, because He was the only man who never yielded to temptation, is also the only man who knows to the full what temptation means—the only complete realist (p. 142).” Mere Christianity by C.S. Lewis

Remind yourself that temptation is a sign of spiritual life. Only the dulling of one’s conscience can remove the sense of temptation in a sin-saturated culture. In a culture of excess we will perpetually be tempted to want “more” than a given moment, relationship, or salary can provide.

Resisting temptation can make us tired. But you can now view this fatigue as a sign of growth; like the person whose muscles are tired after lifting weights. That is a very different experience than the exhaustion of an addictive lifestyle. Before you were experiencing the consequences of an imbalanced life (i.e., expectations, activities, values, etc...). What you are experiencing now is the fatigue of maintaining balance in a world that resists balance. The latter can be seen as a mark of God’s grace rather than evidence of being at odds with God’s design.

“This is not worth it, because [insert desired outcome] is not happening.” It is easy to want to be healthy so that... But, how we motivate ourselves is as important as what we accomplish with that motivation. Too often we want free from addiction for selfish reasons.

Removing the distraction of addiction can add to productivity. Alleviating the self-consciousness of addiction-based guilt can free us to engage in relationships more authentically. But when these variables become the measure of whether our efforts to honor God are “worth it,” we have again mistaken the cause of our addiction for the cure.

If you are asking, “When will I get what I wanted?” remember what it was like to be in bondage to addiction. You now have a better life and the opportunity for your productivity and relational quality to grow; before you had neither (quality of life nor opportunity to grow).

Counter this form of distraction with gratitude for the many ways God has proven faithful in your life. Use the increased confidence in God’s faithfulness to generate a desire that God would produce whatever fruit in your life he deems as most beneficial for you.

“[Blank] situation is now more important than my need to be healthy.” Rarely would we say this out loud, or even allow ourselves to think it in these words. But this is the lie we believe when we place ourselves back in unwise or compromising situations for “practical” reasons. “Practical” becomes a user-friendly synonym for “more important.”

- “I need to work more hours (get less sleep and spend less time with friends) because I really need to get ahead.”
- “I know this person is not emotionally healthy for me, but I miss them and think I’m strong enough to handle it.”
- “I know events like weddings and New Year’s parties were triggers for me, but I think I can enjoy it without slipping.”

When you find yourself trying to justify altering or relaxing the changes you made in chapters six and seven, recall this lie as a red flag in your mind. This is why it was important for you to document the changes you made throughout this study. It needs to be clear to you when you are “un-changing” the changes that provided emotional freedom.

Those changes were *not* made to help you become “strong enough” to walk on enemy turf. Those changes were made because our enemy is stronger than any of us and can only be resisted on the home turf of God’s wisdom. Do not fall prey to thinking

that victory won under the protection of God’s wisdom can persist when we fall back into the arena of worldly wisdom commonly called “common sense.”

Victory Changes Temptation

Galatians 6:1-5 speaks to both the temptation of those who are “caught in any transgression” and the temptation of those “who are spiritual.” Anyone who is in the latter category has spent time in the former; there are no saints who have not and do not struggle with sin. As you have progressed through this study, you have begun to move from one category (bondage) to the other (freedom). Below are four new temptations that emerge as we experience victory over sin.

Disappointment from New Heights: Poverty hurts differently when you’ve known wealth. As you live in recovery, recurrences of addictive behaviors may create a stronger response of guilt than you knew before.

“The more time I spend in recovery, the worst each relapse gets (p. 136).” Jenni Schaeffer in *Life Without Ed*

When addiction was “normal,” it was less startling. It can be tempting to allow this intensified guilt to fuel a major sense of failure and begin berating yourself. You must recognize (intellectually and emotionally) that God’s grace is sufficient and necessary for falls from any “height” (in quotation because this is our category more than God’s).

A protection from this temptation is to remember that spiritual maturity does not mean independence from God’s grace (see next point), but a greater reliance upon it. **Read I Timothy 1:12-20.** Notice that towards the end of Paul’s ministry he saw himself as more of a sinner than at the beginning (Acts 9). Paul uses this realization as an encouragement to young Timothy (v. 18-20) because he realizes it is the reliance upon grace that is the essence of his message—the gospel (v. 16).

Maturity and Independence: We often are deceived into thinking that spiritual maturity should cause us to be less reliant upon God. “So God can focus on the people who are where we used to be,” we might think. This is a most dangerous mutation in our temptation. It is like a great oak tree thinking its height means it no longer requires the soil. As soon as it detaches from the soil, its height only serves to quicken its fall and increase the damage that is done.

Spiritual maturity can only be expressed as greater dependence upon God. Maturity requires this humility like trains require tracks. **Read Galatians 2:18-21.** Notice that Paul warns against rebuilding what was torn down (v. 18). This is exactly what a false view of maturity does. It is from this warning that Paul lays down the principle that maturity is less of me and more of Christ (v. 20). Like a caterpillar matures into a butterfly, we are called to mature into something different from what we started. We started “grounded and crawling” in our independence from God (the essence of sin). We mature into those who embrace dependence upon God as the wings God intended to provide us with freedom. The caterpillar must die so the butterfly can soar.

Pressure of New Opportunities: With growth comes opportunity, and not necessarily because we are seeking it. Managing your life well almost inevitably brings more “opportunities.” We may get confused about whether a particular opportunity is God “opening a door” or Satan “setting a trap.” But we can be sure with maturity will come opportunities to offer others the hope we have received (II Cor. 1:3-5).

To help yourself see this change as a blessing, begin keeping a list of new responsibilities and opportunities God brings into your life. Give thanks for them regularly. Remember they are tokens of God’s grace; not burdens. Remember that gaining freedom from addiction is not the end of your journey.

Your addiction was sapping your energy to do things God called you to do, stealing the time in which you would do them, and undermining the confidence that God would bless your efforts. Be discerning about not overloading on these opportunities that you lose the balance you’ve created. But don’t allow this discernment to make you passive towards changing the world around you (more on this in chapter nine).

Having “Answers” Instead of Questions: As you mature and receive new opportunities, you will likely be looked to for more answers. Your responses to the challenges of life are becoming serene and hopeful, so people will want to know how you would approach their challenges. You begin to get the privilege of joining people at earlier stages in their journey of gaining freedom from addiction.

This is a time when pride can return in more subtle and socially-acceptable ways. We must never think that because a question is brought to us that we are the source of its answer. We must never mistake the glory of the answer for the glory of the vessel (2 Cor. 4:7-18) that has been entrusted with carrying that answer.

Read James 3:1-12. Notice that James is writing to Christians coming out of a struggle (dispersion by religious persecution; see James 1:1) who are now rising to the position of teacher (v. 1). He warns them about the temptation and power of their words in this new role. The message is that the awesome power of influence (bridle and fire images) should keep humble those who are coming into new positions of influence.

Preparing for Transition

This third section of chapter eight may feel like a change of pace. That is because it no longer has addiction as its focal point. This section asks the question, “What should my life begin to look like now that it’s becoming increasingly less focused on overcoming addiction?”

Make sure you are in a small group. Trust takes time. If you have been going through this material in a support group or with a counselor or mentor, the baton of trust will soon be passed from those more formal-private relationships to more natural-authentic relationships. One-way helping relationships are not long-term healthy as your primary source of support and encouragement; which need to be experienced in two-way friendships.

The primary location in which this occurs is small groups. The lessons (cognitive and emotional) that God has taught you in the course of this study have been enhanced, protected, and applied largely because of the relationships in which you learned them. This is why it is wise for you to begin getting plugged into a general small group if you are not already. If you need help identifying which small group would be a good fit for you, talk with your counselor, mentor, or a church pastor.

Many of our small group leaders at The Summit Church have attended this training on “Overcoming Addiction.” They care about the subject and are familiar with the content. It would be completely at your discretion whether to share with the leader why you chose their group.

Learn accountability and encouragement on a broader scale. Walking through this material with someone else may be the first time you have experienced ongoing, Christian accountability and encouragement. Accountability is not just for life-dominating struggles. It is part of God’s definition of “healthy.” People who do not have relationships in which they are honest about their struggles, seeking accountability and encouragement are people who are becoming “unhealthy.”

As you move from a counseling or mentoring relationship focused primarily upon overcoming addiction to a general small group, you may wonder what accountability and encouragement will look like now. The seven points below are meant to guide you in the kind of relationships you are looking to form with your small group.

1. Voluntary – Accountability is not something you have; it is something you do. You must disclose in order to benefit from the relationship. Hopefully, the positive experience you have had going through this material will encourage you to remain transparent and vulnerable.
2. Trusted – The other person(s) is someone you trust, admire their character, and believe has good judgment. You are encouraged to join a small group now so that you can build this trust before graduating from your formal counseling or mentoring relationship.
3. Mutual – Relationships that are one-sided tend to be short-lived. In the small group you will hear the weaknesses and struggles of others as you share your own. You will help carry their burdens as they help carry yours (Gal. 6:1-2).
4. Scheduled – Accountability that is not scheduled tends to fade. This is why small groups that meet on a weekly basis are an ideal place for accountability to occur. Everyone knows when to meet and has a shared expectation for how the accountability conversations will begin.
5. Relational – We want spiritual growth to become a lifestyle, not an event. This means that we invite accountability to be a part of our regular conversations, not just something that we do at a weekly meeting. It should mean that there are times when we are doing accountability and don’t realize it.
6. Comprehensive – Accountability that exclusively fixates on one subject tends to become repetitive and fade. It also tends to reduce “success” to trusting God in a single area of life.
7. Encouraging – Too often the word “accountability” carries the connotation of “sin hunt.” When that is the case, accountability is only perceived to be “working” when it is negative. However, accountability that lasts should celebrate growth in character as fervently as it works on slips in character. This means asking each other questions about discouragement in addition to questions about temptations.

Have a plan for future study. We walk forward. We drift backwards. For some time now you have been a part of an intentional, structured process. If you leave that structure without a continued plan for deepening your understanding and application of Scripture to the struggles of life, you will regress. Ephesians 5:15-16 calls us to intentionality; recognizing time minus direction equals decay, not growth.

Step seven of this study referenced many resources that would be beneficial for you. Doubtless several of them sounded interesting to you. Go back and identify the one you believe you would most benefit from reading. If you cannot identify one that stands out, then it is recommended you study “Finding Your Identity, Security, and Confidence in Christ” (bradhambrick.com/identity) as a resource to help you solidify your progress.

This entire study has been filled with devotional Bible studies. If you have not been taking the time to read the passages and reflect on the devotional thoughts / questions that accompany them, consider using those as a guide for daily Bible reading. This will be a way to reinforce what you’ve learned in this study and further solidify the biblical basis for what you’ve learned.

Make a formal transition plan. Write out your transition plan.

- List the things that need to be in place before you “graduate” from your formal counseling or mentoring relationship.
- List the important practices you have begun in this study that you will need to maintain. Write out what the “yellow flags” (don’t wait for the red ones) would be that you should address seriously if they appear.

Review your plan with your counselor or mentor. Get their input on what needs to be added to the plan. In consultation with them, decide what aspects from that list need to be brought into the accountability conversation with your new small group before you graduate.

Accountability Focus (PERSEVERE):

With each step, we will provide questions you should invite another person to ask you openly and to confront any contradiction between your words and life.

- Have I assessed and understand the new forms that temptation may take as I experience victory?
- Have I made and begun to implement a transition plan that is wise and comprehensive?

Chapter 9

“Living Free to Enjoy the Life God Intended”

STEWARD all of my life for God’s glory.

**“God has shown me great grace; grace greater than my addiction.
I am learning what it means to live out of my new identity in Christ.
That has pushed me to ask the question,
‘How can I be a conduit of God’s grace to others?’
As I have sought God, examined my life, and consulted with fellow believers,
I believe this [describe] is what it looks like for me to steward God’s grace now.”**

Memorize: I Corinthians 6:12, 19-20 (ESV), “All things are lawful for me,’ but not all things are helpful. ‘All things are lawful for me,’ but I will not be dominated by anything... Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.” As you memorize this passage reflect upon these key points:

- “All things are lawful” – You shouldn’t need a “rule” that says don’t drink any longer.
- “I will not be dominated” – Those things that dominate you should be voluntarily avoided.
- “Your body is a temple” – Your motivation is not shame, because God has given you the highest honor, his presence.
- “You are not your own” – When you declare Christ “Lord” you surrender the right to make destructive choices.
- “Glorify God in your body” – Bringing glory to God is now the ultimate replacement for the pleasure or escape of AoD.

Teaching Notes

“The absence of the addictive behavior is not sufficient to successfully maintain the change and become andex-addict. In order to sustain recovery, new behaviors and reinforcing experiences must become part of a new way of living in the world (p. 190)... Taking away an addiction leaves a void that must be filled by alternative satisfying reinforcers for the economics of recovery to work (p. 193).” Carlo DiClemente in *Addictions and Change*

“The world is full of two kinds of people – givers and takers. The takers eat well and the givers sleep well (p. 211).” John Baker in *Celebrate Recovery: Leader’s Guide*

“We are not set free to serve ourselves (p. 238).” Ed Welch in *Addictions: A Banquet in the Grave*

“At the outset, most of us tackle an addiction simply because it is giving us trouble, and our only conscious desire is to be rid of it...If my primary desire, as best I know it, is simply to change a troublesome addictive behavior, I will hardly be interested in giving my life to God in order to do so (p. 146).” Gerald May in *Addiction & Grace*

“The exodus is the end of captivity, but it is only the beginning of freedom (p. 117).” Graeme Goldsworthy in *According to Plan*

Embedded Study

If the law of God can be summarized in a positive command, then we must end this study talking about how to "run to" God rather than merely how to "run from" sin. Life is not about what we avoid, but what we pursue. How we run to God's design for our life finds a unique expression in each person's life. For this reason, you will do most of the writing in this chapter. It is your life that is being stewarded for God's glory.

The goal is that you would find things that you could give yourself to more passionately than you once gave yourself to your addiction. But not just temporal, slightly healthier things that would quickly become the next edition of ruling desires; and not things that you give yourself to in private so that they foster selfishness and excess. Rather, eternally significant things that you give yourself to in a community of faith to maintain endurance, temper desire-excess, and become an example to others.

Read Luke 11:24-26. This is a terrifying warning about removing sin without also replacing it with God's purposes for your life. When we replace sin with a "god-ignoring healthy life" (contradiction acknowledged) we become very proud, and defensive about further change. Our idols (chapter three) become temporarily functional so the warning system of life consequences is muted. Then, when our idols cease to satisfy, and become disruptive again, we are less likely to return to God, the Bible, and the gospel because "they didn't really work the first time." We go looking for "deeper and more meaningful" solutions. Indeed, "the last state of that person is worse than the first (v. 26)."

Read Ephesians 2:8-10. In this study we have traveled through the Gospel (v. 8-9) to good works (v. 10). The nine steps are merely the gospel in slow motion. We are not now exiting the gospel in order to do good works, but cultivating the fruit of the gospel. Paul says that there are "good works" that "God prepared" for every believer and that these should define our daily lives ("that we should walk in them") (v. 10). This should give you hope that there are answers to the questions you will be asked in this chapter. You have the confidence that comes from the promises of Scripture that God has a design for your life and wants you to know what it is.

As you read through and answer these nine questions, remember God's patience and timing. There will be some aspects of God's design that you can engage in immediately. But there will also be ways you want to serve God that will require you to mature more or be equipped before you are prepared to fulfill them. The main thing is to begin to have a vision for life that involves being God's servant and actively engaging that vision where you are currently equipped.

I. Am I willing to commit my life to whatever God asks of me? This is a "do not pass go" question. If your answer is "no," it will bias the answers you give to each subsequent question. Do not get lost in guilt or pretend that your answer is "yes" (both responses would lead you back into an addictive lifestyle). Rather, identify the obstacle. What is the cost you are unwilling to pay? It may be that this subject becomes a key element in your "plan for future study" (chapter eight).

Are there specific things you believe God is asking of you? Be sure to record your thoughts on this question before reflecting on the subsequent questions.

2. What roles have I neglected that God has placed me in? The first part of being a good steward of one's life is to fulfill one's primary roles with excellence. When Paul says in Ephesians 5:17 that we are to "understand what the will of the Lord is," he goes on to describe God's design for major life roles (spouse, parent, child, and worker in 5:22-6:9).

3. What are my spiritual gifts? Stewarding your life for the glory of God involves utilizing the spiritual gifts God has given you. God gives spiritual gifts that coincide with the calling He places on each individual's life. Read Romans 12:1-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:1-30. If you need further assistance discerning this, talk to a pastor about taking a spiritual gifts inventory.

4. For what group of people (age, struggle, career, ethnic, etc...) am I burdened? From God's earliest covenant with people, His intention was to bless us that we might be a blessing to others (Gen 12:2). By investing your life in those you have a burden for allows you to be other-minded and find joy in it.

5. What am I passionate about? At this point in the stewardship evaluation, you can begin to see Psalm 37:3-8 fulfilled in your life. What are the God-exalting “delights” in your life (v. 4)? What wholesome things can you give yourself to and you are more energized afterwards than before you started?

6. With what talents or abilities has God blessed me? These don’t have to be spiritual gifts. Read the amazing description of abilities God gave Bezalel and how he used those abilities to serve God (Exodus 31:1-11). Think through the skills and expertise you have accumulated in your life.

7. What are my unique life experiences? Both pleasant and unpleasant experiences should be listed. We are sometimes tempted to think that God can only use the good or spiritual experiences of our lives. God is glad to use our successes (Matt. 5:16), but God also delights in displaying His grace by transforming our low points for His glory (2 Cor. 1:3-5).

8. Where do my talents and passions match up with the needs in my church and community? We should seek to steward our lives in cooperation with our local church. God’s way of blessing and maturing those we serve is through the Body of Christ, the church. By identifying where your gifts, burdens, passions, and abilities fit within or expand your church’s ministries, you are maximizing the impact service can have on those you are seeking to bless.

9. How would God have me bring these things together to glorify Him? This is not a new question, but a summary question. Look back over what you have written. Talk about it with your Christian friends, family, mentor, or pastors. Dedicate a time to prayerfully ask God to give you a sense of direction. Then begin serving as a way to steward your life for God’s glory.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.” Matthew 5:6

Accountability Focus (STEWARDSHIP):

With each step, we will provide questions you should invite another person to ask you openly and to confront any contradiction between your words and life.

- Are there any necessary changes I have omitted that would prevent me from taking this step?
- Is there advice or counsel I should seek before completing this step?

Appendix A

How to Conduct an Effective Intervention

If you are reading this, you are hurting because someone you love is destroying their life with drugs and alcohol. You likely feel angry that they cannot see what they are doing to themselves and others. You feel frustrated that previous conversations have not been heard. Part of you wants to give up and part of you refuses to do so. Often we come to the idea of conducting an intervention as a “last ditch effort” to get through to someone that we love.

This appendix is meant to help you take this step strategically rather than desperately.

Sometimes we are prone to think that interventions are a modern invention, but intentional, tough love conversations in the context of people who know the spiraling individual best have always been part of God’s design.

“Curiously, intervention is hailed as one of the most significant advances in drug treatment. Yet church discipline is the original and intervention the imitator (p. 96).” Ed Welch in *Addictions: A Banquet in the Grave*

If you read Matthew 18:15-20, the primary biblical passage for outlining the process of church discipline, you see an intentional order: personal conversation, small group conversation, and large group conversation. This raises an important question as you consider conducting an intervention: have you had a direct personal conversation that addresses your concerns?

A group intervention should not be the first attempt to address an addiction. We need to model the courage it will take to acknowledge an addiction in the way we address the addiction. We need to have the courage to say, “I am concerned about you and I can’t be your friend and be silent. I think you have a problem with [substance]. Can we talk about it?”

Nobody with a substance abuse problem ever wants to hear the phrase, “You have a problem.” In fact, most addicts don’t think they have a problem at all. Those who do are apt to deny it – strongly. But the reality is that hearing a friend or loved one utter those four simple words may save someone’s life.

A group intervention is most effective when it’s the culmination and echo of these loving, personal interventions. With that said, let’s look at how to conduct an effective group intervention in three phases.

Phase One: Before the Intervention

An effective intervention is not a spontaneous event. It requires planning and preparation. Each of the factors below is an important part of preparing for an effective intervention.

- **Pray:** What you desire as the outcome for the intervention is more than you are able to accomplish even if you do everything in your power as well as you possibly can. You can’t force your friend’s eyes open to the destructiveness of their choices. You want humility to replace defensiveness. You want acknowledgement to replace denial. Those are not things we can manufacture. Those are realities only God can create in the heart of your friend.

When we fail to recognize this we either become controlling or codependent; we either try to force change or blame ourselves if our friend doesn’t begin to pursue recovery. In this sense, we need to pray (protecting our own heart) as much as our friend needs to be prayed for (that God would soften their heart).

- **Decide Who:** Three questions should determine who participates in the intervention. An ideal number for an intervention is 5-10 people. Preferably these people would represent different spheres of the individual’s life (i.e., family, work, church, friends, etc...).
 - *Who has the quality of relationship to allow their voice will be heard?* It should be obvious why each person present has a vested interest in the individual acknowledging their addiction.
 - *Who has the concrete information that is most irrefutable?* More will be said on being concrete in a latter point.

- *Who has sufficient self-control so that their presence will not be a distraction?* These meetings are often emotionally intense; immature or short-tempered members of the intervention team can easily become a distraction from the intent of the meeting.
- **Decide When and Where:** There is no such thing as a perfect moment, however, giving thought to when and where an intervention takes place can increase the meeting’s opportunity to be successful. An intervention should not occur in a public place (i.e., restaurant, work office, etc...). Embarrassment would distract from the content of the meeting.

Most often interventions are staged events; meaning the individual being confronted is unaware the meeting will occur. Usually this involves having the intervention team present at the individual’s home or apartment at a time when he/she will be predictably arriving (i.e., after work or class).

- **Decide How:** An intervention should not be a long meeting; its effectiveness is not found in the abundance of words. The meeting needs to stay on message; unless you prepare and rehearse for the meeting, that is unlikely to occur. It is recommended that you have a written agenda for the meeting. It should be simple enough that those on the intervention team don’t need to have it in their hand. A sample meeting plan might look like this:

Note: Each person who speaks should begin by expressing their love for the individual and saying that their goal is to see them restored to health; not to punish or shame them. If needed, the leader may call on each person when it is that person’s turn to speak.

- **Leader:** Express love for the person, explain reason for meeting, ask for cooperation with the process of the meeting
 - Reason for the meeting: We believe you have a problem and cannot in good conscience remain silent.
 - Process for the meeting: We want you to hear us and, after that, we’re committed to hearing you.
- **Participant One:** Express love for the person and sites most concrete examples of risk taking behaviors (i.e., drinking and driving, having to pay back threatening drug dealer, etc...)
- **Participant Two:** Express love for the person and sites most concrete examples of health deterioration (i.e., see chapter two material)
- **Participant Three:** Express love for the person and sites most concrete examples of neglecting relationships that the individual is known to value (i.e., lack of time with children, neglecting friends, etc...)
- **Participant Four:** Express love for the person and sites most concrete examples of financial deterioration (i.e., borrowing money, being behind on bills, etc...)
- **Participant Five:** Express love for the person and sites most concrete examples of neglecting school or work (i.e., negative performance evaluations, examples of being fired, dropping grades, etc...)
 - [Each person present should speak to an aspect of how the individual’s addiction is destroying their quality of life. Only the most irrefutable areas of life and examples should be used.]
- **Leader:** In light of these concerns and our love for you, we believe you need to seek help for your addiction. We have several options we believe are viable and effective. We are asking that you consider these.
- **Listen:** We know what we’ve said cannot be easy to hear, but we want to know what you think and what you think would be wise for you to do in light of the concerns we’ve raised.
- [If the intervention is rejected, meaning the individual is unwilling to acknowledge the addiction and seek help, then the meeting would conclude with a list of consequences the group is willing to mutually enforce for the individual’s good.]
- [If the intervention is embraced, then the group becomes a support network for the individual as he/she begins to enact the steps agreed upon and work on a more comprehensive plan of recovery.]
- **Be Concrete:** Every example you use should be factual and irrefutable. Expect that the weakest example you verbalize in the intervention will be the focal point for the individual’s response. Do not provide a weak example that could be used to discredit the other concerns. Step two of this material will help you think through the most concrete examples.

“If you create a rule about something that you can’t monitor, you are creating opportunities for more lies and deception (p. 125).” Ed Welch in *Addictions: A Banquet in the Grave*

- **Repent Personally:** It is easy for the level of frustration and hurt amongst the intervention team to overpower their sense of empathy. When this happens, the intervention will feel harsh and unloving. Amongst each other, the intervention team should spend some time acknowledging their personal need for the same grace that they want their friend to embrace.

This exercise generates a better appreciation for the degree of vulnerability that the group is asking their friend to display. While this exercise is unlikely to change the content of what is shared or asked (nor should it), it is very likely to impact the tone of the meeting and increase the tangibility of the group's love for the person being confronted.

- **Rehearse:** If the time from initiating the meeting to listening is going to be less than 30 minutes (which is ideal), then each person will need to think through what they are going to say and practice saying it. Just like it takes longer to write a short e-mail than a long one, it takes a bit of work to concisely say important things.

As the intervention team rehearses the meeting, several questions need to be asked about each segment of the meeting:

- Is it clear that love for the individual is more important than the pain they've caused or damage they've done?
- Are any examples used that sound weak or could be easily debunked?
- Is language used that begins to make excuses for or explains away the addictive behavior?

At the end of rehearsing the meeting, it is wise to role play how the individual might respond, so that the group can think through how to end the meeting in each instance. Possible responses to prepare for would include:

- Active Resistance: "You're all wrong. I don't have a problem."
- Being Personally Offended: "I can't believe you would all team up and attack me this way."
- Debating Details: "I can explain why every example you've given isn't as bad as you say."
- Changing Whose on Trial: "How can you say this about me when you [blank]?"
- Passive Compliance: "You've given me some things I need to think about and I will."
- Getting Lost in Sorrow: "[Sobbing] I can't believe I've as bad as you say. I'm a horrible person/friend."
- Active Repentance: "I do have a problem. I need to address it. [Blank] option seems like the best start."
- Other: You know your friend. What other responses seem likely? _____

- **Research Options:** The ultimate goal of an intervention is not acknowledgement but action; acknowledgement is merely a means to an end. The team needs to have tangible, actionable follow up steps that begin the process of recovery available to engage immediately following the meeting.
 - If the substance abused and degree of abuse warrant detox, then the intervention team needs to know the local detox centers and entry process. This can be determined by calling the local hospitals.
 - Knowing the days and times of local recovery group meetings or ministries. Timing the intervention to occur just before one of these meetings would be ideal.
 - Knowing the intake process for viable residential programs if this is a potential good fit for your friend.
 - Having a list of local counselors who specialize in addiction assessment and counseling. If this seems like it is likely to be the most agreeable next step, ask the counselor if you can scholarship a session immediately following the intervention.
 - Note: The individual would have to make the appointment and complete the necessary paperwork. But having a scheduled, paid-for assessment session already in place can help remove barriers from taking immediate action.
 - Having a list of individuals who are willing to serve the role of accountability friends and a schedule for when these meetings could occur.

Remember, don't offer options that aren't a good fit. The type of resources in your community or the type of addiction your friend struggles with may make some of these recommendations a bad fit. Providing bad follow up options is a good way to undermine an otherwise well-run intervention.

You'll notice an effective intervention is preceded by many phone calls and, potentially, some financial investment. It is worth it. In an intervention, you are likely risking your last remaining social capital. The work leading into an intervention helps make sure this risk is a good investment.

From this research you will be able to use names when referencing options (i.e., “When we spoke to Dr. Smith at the detox center, she said... And counselor Davis indicated his initial assessment helps individuals determine...”). Being able to talk this concretely helps make everything you say seem more immediately actionable and reasonable.

Phase Two: During the Intervention

Once you get to the intervention, the only surprises should be whether your friend shows up and how he/she responds at the end. If you prepare well, everything in the middle should be well established. Here are some suggestions for the intervention.

- **Remember the Objective:** Your goal is to prompt your loved one to engage the recovery process. When you begin to think your goal is to “save your loved one” the dynamics of the meeting will become much more emotionally intense. Review the meeting objective with the intervention team prior to the meeting.
- **Never Meet Resistance Head On:** If the intervention becomes an argument or debate, you lose; the likelihood your friend will begin to engage recovery will diminish significantly. The following points are meant to help you “roll with resistance” that is likely in the intervention without delving into debate or conceding to your friend’s perspective.
 - *Stay emotionally even keeled.* When you display anger or exasperation you are becoming a distraction to your point. Your friend can focus on how your talking instead of what you’re saying. Being at peace with the idea that you can’t change anyone and that your responsibility is to speak the truth in love (i.e., the most receivable manner under the circumstances) will help you remain even keeled.
 - *Evidence good listening.* At the beginning of the meeting you said you would listen. So, listen. If your friend begins to talk for a long time and doesn’t want to be interrupted, ask if you can take notes because what they’re saying is important to you. Begin what you say, when it’s your turn to speak, with a summary of what they’ve said; not a rebuttal. Represent the tone and content of their words fairly when you summarize.
 - *Raise discrepancies as friendly questions.* After you summarize, there will doubtless be discrepancies in what they’ve said. It is okay to point these out. Be sure you begin with the most central and solid examples. Be sure you raise the discrepancy with respect.

You might say, “You say you want to be a good husband and father, but your wife says you are usually home for less than an hour before you start drinking each evening. How does that fit with your desire to have a strong family?” or, “You say your career is important to you, but your last three performance reviews have marked you down for inability to focus at work because of sleepiness and excessive sick days when you’re hung over. We have a hard time understanding how your lifestyle is fitting with your life goals.” After a statement like this, listen again.

“If there is going to be a battle, you want it to be between the person and God, not between the person and yourself (p. 94)... If love rather than anger is clearly expressed during the intervention, addicts typically appreciate what was done after they are sober (p. 110).” Ed Welch in *Addictions: A Banquet in the Grave*

- *Ask how they would like the concern raised.* If raising discrepancies meets resistance, don’t meet that resistance head on either. You might say something like this, “We know these things are hard to hear. We love you too much to be silent. Can you tell us how to raise these concerns in a way that is more receivable? We have tried as individuals but we didn’t feel heard. We are open to anything that is truly for your good.” Then, listen.

- *Respect their right to choose.* The choice of your friend will be the end of the meeting; for better or worse. Either the meeting will end with your friend pursuing recovery, or the meeting will end with your friend rejecting the concerns raised. The team needs to be prepared for either outcomes and should resist looping the meeting back to the beginning when the desired outcome is not met. If your friend chooses to dismiss the concerns raised, then the next point becomes relevant.
- **Provide Consequences:** Consequences are not the same as punishments. Punishments seek to inflict unpleasant experiences to coerce or motivate change. Consequences, in this context, are a way for those near an addict to opt out of supporting or enabling the addictive lifestyle.

“Families often give enough financial and personal support for the Precontemplator to avoid the harshest of consequences of their addiction. In effect, these families neutralize the educational effects of negative consequences (p. 123).” Carlo DiClemente in *Addictions and Change*

Consequences might include:

- Cutting off or restricting access to the money necessary to support the addiction
- Reporting an instance of suspected DUI activity to law enforcement
- Having a set time at which doors will be locked and access to the home will be unavailable until the morning
- Limiting access to children to supervised times when sobriety can be verified
 - Note: this step would require some legal intervention to be enforceable if they are uncooperative
- Asking them to move out of the home and force them to bear the responsibilities of living independently
- Refusing to rescue the individual from the consequences (direct or indirect) related to their addictive lifestyle

Phase Three: After the Intervention

The most important post-intervention note is to follow through on whatever is decided at the intervention. If your friend is cooperative, follow through on the support roles you indicated you would play. If your friend is uncooperative, follow through on the consequences you indicated you would enforce.

In many ways this is the hardest part of the intervention. This difficulty is why the group intervention is good for each member of the intervention team. The group provides accountability for each member of the group; whether it is to fulfill supportive roles or to avoid lightening consequences. When there is cooperation, the group also allows the supportive roles to be divided amongst more people so that the level of support can be sustained over an extended period of time, because recovery is usually an extended process.

If you or one of the intervention team members struggle to consistently follow through on the outcomes arrived at in the intervention (support in recovery or consequences for resisting recovery), then it is recommended you utilize the resource at www.bradhambrick.com/codependency to enhance the aftercare aspect of the intervention.

Appendix B

What Do I Do Now?

A plumb line of the Summit counseling ministry is, “We don’t do events; we create resources.” That means you should be asking yourself, “What can or should I do with this information now?”

We have created a series of brief videos that answer that what-now question from several different perspectives. Each of these can be found at:

www.bradhambrick.com/addiction
www.bradhambrick.com/whatnow

Personal Study or Small Group

Question: I’ve been to several of the Summit counseling seminars and notice there appears to be a couple of different kinds. You frequently recommend studying them as a small group or with a friend. That seems like a great idea, but since I haven’t done that before I’m not quite sure how to start something like that. Do you mind giving me guidance?

Pursue Personal Counseling

Question: After attending this seminar I realized I would like to pursue counseling to help me grow in this area. It sounded like there are several different options available. Would you mind explaining to me what those are and how I could connect with the one that best serves me need?

Leveraging My Workplace

Question: I’ve heard rumors that I’m supposed to be able to use the Summit counseling seminars to leverage my workplace for gospel influence. My first impression is that it sounds awkward and intrusive; like I’m telling people they’ve “got issues” or “need help.” But I’m also worried about putting up Christian material that might be offensive to some people who visit my workplace. But I would at least like to hear what you’ve got to say. How would this work?

As a Professional Counselor

Question: I’m a licensed counselor (LPC) and came across the Summit counseling seminars. I’m excited to see the church addressing these kinds of subjects, and I’m curious how you might see someone in my position (or a LCSW or LMFT) using the materials. I can see recommending them to my clients who are open to an overtly Christian aspect to their counseling, but it seems like there could be more uses than just counseling homework. Could you share your thoughts on how those in private practice might use these resources?

Our goal in Summit counseling is to (1) equip the church to care for one another and our community with excellence; (2) provide quality counseling services that allow our people to get involved in the lives of others with confidence – knowing additional, experienced care is available to come alongside them if needed; and (3) create ways for our members and other Christians in our community to leverage their workplace and careers for greater gospel impact in their spheres of influence.

We hope this seminar and these videos give you a vision for how this can happen and stirs a passion in you to be a part of God’s work of redeeming and restoring hurting individuals and families.