

A large, glowing hand reaches down from the top of the frame, its fingers slightly curled. The hand is illuminated from within, creating a bright, ethereal light that filters through the dark, smoky atmosphere. Below the hand, a person is kneeling on the ground, their head buried in their hands in a gesture of prayer or despair. The person is wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt and blue jeans. The overall scene is dramatic and spiritual, with a strong contrast between light and shadow.

Deliverance From Addiction

Breaking the Yoke & Healing the Hurt

Thomas W. Pohl

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DEDICATION

This book is lovingly dedicated to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ without whom this book would not be possible. I pray that everyone who reads this book will be blessed by it, and those of you suffering from the yoke of drug addiction will be delivered from it by the power of Jesus Christ. God bless you all!

In Loving Memory

of

Jessica

“Until we meet again, Sunshine.”

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PREFACE

I never thought I would write this book. In fact, I was in the middle of writing another book when the Lord dropped this one on me. I thought I was done with the whole “drug world” after my dear friend Marie died of complications from an overdose. I struggled and procrastinated with writing this book because, in reality, I wasn’t interested in the subject matter nor did I want to be involved in the “drug world” anymore. Although her death pained me greatly, it also brought a sense of liberty and relieved me from having to deal with that stuff. However, every time I fought against writing this book, the Holy Spirit brought to my remembrance a quote by Terri Savelle Foy, a noted Christian minister, “Someone is waiting on the other side of your obedience.” If God has given me this assignment, He obviously knows it will help and be a blessing to someone.

Two years later, when this book was nearly finished, I was at Bible Study one evening when the Holy Spirit reminded me that shortly after Marie had passed away, and in the midst of my pain, I had pleaded with God and said, “Don’t let her death be in vain! Turn this around for good!” He then said, “That book was the answer to your plea.” This gave me a new conviction to get it finished and published.

I hope this book will be both educational and a blessing to you, whether you are struggling with drug addiction or you are someone who loves a person who is.

INTRODUCTION

Addiction ensnares all kinds of individuals. It doesn't care about one's circumstances, title, position in life, or whether they are a good person or not. I've known individuals who fit in all these categories and became addicts. Most of the addicts I've known did not choose to use drugs initially. I don't know of a single person who woke up one morning and said, "Hmm, I think I'll try heroin today."

I was never the type of person who would be interested in using illegal drugs. When I was a teenager, I joked that I wouldn't know where to get them, even if I wanted them. I was pretty much oblivious to that world until December 2014, when God introduced me to my best friend, Ashley, who was a hardcore drug addict. She also had two sisters who struggled with drug addiction, but Ashley's addiction was the worst of the three by far. In the ensuing years, I would learn that several other members of her family were drug addicts as well. My experiences with her and her family have helped to shape a great deal of the content contained in this book.

The main purpose of *Deliverance From Addiction* is to dispel the prevailing narrative that drug addiction is an incurable brain disease, which can only be managed. I have seen firsthand that this is simply not true. Drug addiction is more like being in bondage.

Throughout this book, I will demonstrate how to separate the person from their addiction because the addiction does not define who the person really is. The stories are about real people. We should recognize that 'real people' have 'real challenges.' Do not feel sorry for the individuals but develop 'empathy' for them as they struggle with bondage.

Thomas W. Pobl

Deliverance From Addiction encompasses what I've learned about drug addiction, drug addicts, conquering addiction, and the revelation God has given me. I use the overarching term "drugs" to indicate both the illegal variety and prescription medication that is often abused.

PART I: AN INTRODUCTION TO DRUG ADDICTION

CHAPTER ONE

SHUNNING THE DRUG ADDICT

Initially, when I started hanging out with Ashley, my family thought I was crazy. My cousin Liz admonished me like I was one of her children and said, “Stay the fuck away from Ashley. She’s a drug addict and a known prostitute.” I responded, “Don’t worry. I know what I’m doing.” I don’t blame Liz for her concern. She was worried Ashley would drag me down to her level. Instead, over the next four years, I pulled Ashley up out of the gutter again and again until the black hole of drug addiction finally lost its grip on her. Family members and co-workers constantly told me things like “Get rid of her,” “She’s sucking you dry,” “She’s going to crash your car,” and a myriad of other derogatory comments. In the end, I proved them all wrong, and so did Ashley.

One day, I said to Liz, “Remember when I first started hanging out with Ashley and you told me to stay away from her?”

Liz replied, “Yeah.”

I then stated, “Aren’t you glad I didn’t listen to you?”

Liz emphatically said, “Yeah.” She had witnessed Ashley’s transformation over those four years and acknowledged the positive change in her and in her life.

I said, “See, I told you I knew what I was doing.”

Liz and others had automatically shunned Ashley because she was a drug addict. Unfortunately, shunning is the prevailing attitude of society towards individuals who are addicted to drugs. There is a negative stigma attached to those who use drugs on a regular basis. It doesn't matter whether they want to be free from their addiction but can't get free, or if they like doing drugs and aren't interested in getting clean, or if they see nothing wrong with using a particular drug (like Millennials who use marijuana, for example). Generally, drug addicts are treated like lepers were in biblical times—as unclean and societal outcasts. They are seen as low lives and losers who are often classified as morally corrupt individuals. People assume they have mental issues. Their relatives usually do not acknowledge them because of the shame they would bring on the family. They are frequently treated as the black sheep that no one wants around or to be around.

Drug addicts are usually shunned by society because of the negative behaviors drug addicts tend to display toward others. Are all drug addicts scumbags? Not necessarily. Do they engage in scumbag-type behavior? Absolutely! However, their negative behavior is generally a by-product of their addiction, which was manifested in the addict's quest to acquire the resources needed to feed their addiction. Such actions often cause conflict between the addict and those around them, especially if they are the victims of the addict's bad conduct. In addition, it also creates a great deal of stress for those who are forced to deal with the addict.

Drug addiction is stigmatized worse than mental illness by many individuals. Some even view it as incurable. In later chapters, we will see that drug addiction is indeed conquerable.

PART II: HOW AND WHY PEOPLE GET ADDICTED

CHAPTER TWO

HOW PEOPLE GET ADDICTED

To understand how people succumb to the yoke of drug addiction, it is necessary to examine the many factors that ensnare individuals into drug addiction. Some factors that can lead to drug addiction include a person's current or past living environment, family history of addiction, the people they hang out with, the places they frequent, dependence on medication that was prescribed for legitimate needs, and unresolved trauma in the individual's past. Let us examine these factors in more detail.

Living Environment

An individual's living environment, either past or current, can have a big impact on whether they may get trapped by drug addiction. If a person grew up in a household where other family members were drug users, the chances that they themselves will try drugs is greatly increased, especially if the use of drugs within the household is seen as "normal" to them. At times, the individual allows themselves to be influenced and/or peer pressured by their family members. I have known people who grew up in or lived in toxic

households who later experimented with drugs and/or became addicts.

Family History

Family history of drug addiction can play a huge part in the likelihood of a person becoming addicted. From my observations, addiction tends to run in families. I know three sisters who suffered from drug addiction. Their mother became addicted to drugs after getting hooked on pain medication and died of an overdose. Their father was a compulsive gambling addict. I also know another mother and daughter and a mother and son who all suffered from drug addiction. They were members of the same extended family.

People

The people one hangs out with can have a big influence on a person's decision to try drugs and ultimately become addicted. I have learned from my own personal experience that people have a tendency to act like those they spend recreational time with. This can be both positive and negative. Jim Rohn, a noted motivational speaker, famously said, "You are the average of the five people you spend the most time with."

We should pay close attention to who we are spending time with the most and never underestimate the influence of our peers. An example of this includes a friend who got addicted because she often socialized with her mother who was a drug addict and actually gave her daughter crack at the age of 15. The two of them would often hang out with other drugs users as well. Because of the tendency for drug addicts to be shunned by others, the only people willing to be around them are usually other addicts.

Another example is when a friend who was a drug addict dated another drug addict for a year and a half and he dragged her deeper into addiction than she had been previously. The good news is that once he was out of her life and she continued to be around people who were a positive influence on her, she got clean two months later and accepted Jesus Christ as her Lord and Savior.

I can also testify to being influenced by others. Early in my Christian walk, I began to notice that when I hung out with my non-Christian friends, I tended to act like them. Conversely, when I was around my Christian friends, I mimicked their behavior.

Who is in our circle matters and there is nothing wrong with having a small circle.

Places

The places where people gather can have an influence on their behavior. If an individual frequently hangs out in places where drug use is common, the likelihood of them trying drugs is increased, especially if they are the type of person who is easily influenced. This goes hand in hand with the people one surrounds themselves with. This is why drug rehabilitation centers emphasize to those in their care to stay away from people, places and things that are triggers for their addiction.

Prescription Medication

Being addicted to prescription medication has become more common in recent years. Doctors tend to overprescribe medication. It is their first go-to, usually because drug companies pay doctors to push their pills. The two most common types of prescription medication that individuals get addicted to are opiate pain medication and benzodiazepines.

Examples of opiate pain medication include Oxycodone, Roxicodone, Hydrocodone, Morphine, Codeine, Methadone, Percocet, and others. Examples of benzodiazepines include Xanax, Klonopin, Valium, Ativan, and others. While many individuals start taking these medications for legitimate health and/or mental health needs, all too often they wind up getting addicted. This is especially true if the individual has any of the above risk factors present in their life.

I have a friend with a family history of drug addiction who was prescribed opiate pain medication for a back injury she suffered from a car accident. She soon became addicted and kept getting refill prescriptions. When her doctor would no longer prescribe them, she went “doctor shopping” to find one who would. When that option finally ran out and she was desperate, a so-called “friend” suggested she try heroin. This resulted in her being consumed by drug addiction for many years. She proceeded to use other hardcore drugs, like cocaine and crack. She abused other prescription medications as well, particularly Xanax. Fortunately, she conquered her addiction through her faith in Jesus.

Another friend of mine suffered between bouts of drug addiction and being clean. She did well staying clean until she was in a car accident and was prescribed opiate pain medication. Given her past history of opiate addiction, she quickly became addicted again. She went on to use harder illegal opiates, including Heroin and Fentanyl. She was desperate to be free from her addiction, which she admitted she allowed to get out of control by her own choices, but she did not know how.

A former co-worker became addicted to opiate pain medication that was prescribed because of back issues he suffered. This man was a deacon at his local church, yet he still got addicted! Addiction doesn't care about a person's status or title; it can ensnare anyone. Fortunately, he did not

have a history of drug addiction and was able to successfully kick the habit after going to a drug rehabilitation facility.

CHAPTER THREE

DRUGS AND TRAUMA

Trauma is one of the most common and damaging factors that can lead to drug addiction. It can be physical, mental, emotional, or sexual. Trauma can cause people to suffer from depression, anxiety, grief, poor relationships, risky behavior, and even suicidal tendencies. Often, these factors will cause a person to want to numb themselves to their pain by using drugs, which ultimately becomes a coping mechanism for many of these individuals. For one reason or another, they tend to avoid dealing with the root causes of their trauma. Most of the drug addicts I have met have some form of unresolved trauma in their past. Some have successfully dealt with it, but most have not.

One of the most outspoken proponents of the correlation between addiction and trauma is Dr. Gabor Maté. He is a renowned speaker and bestselling author who is highly sought after for his expertise on a range of topics including addiction and childhood development. According to his expertise, addiction is the result of trauma. He has publicly stated, “Addiction is not a choice. It’s not a moral failure. It’s not an ethical lapse. It’s not a weakness of character. It’s not a failure of will. It’s not how society depicts addiction, nor is it an inherited brain disease, which is the medical tendency to see it. But what it is, actually is, is a response to human suffering.”

He also said, “All these children I have worked with have been severely traumatized as children. All the women had been sexually abused. All the men had been traumatized.

Some of them sexually, physically, emotionally neglected.” Contrary to what medical professionals say, addiction is “actually an attempt to escape suffering, temporarily.”

Concerning the media’s depiction of addiction, Dr. Maté said, “The media, the television, cultural depiction of addiction is showing desperate people without showing why they are desperate. All they show is that desperation for the drug. There is no indication what is driving that desperation. And as you see them behaving in all kinds of dysfunctional ways, aggressive, manipulative, unpleasant, there is no three-dimensional sense of reality about these people.”

He also said, “What you have is traumatized children. When children are traumatized, it affects how they feel about themselves, which is deeply ashamed. If a child believes it is all about themselves, they must be a terrible person, or if I was sexually abused, ‘Why didn’t I fight back. I must be a very weak person.’ So, there’s a deep sense of shame. Then there’s tremendous emotional pain that accrues from abuse and neglect. Tremendous emotional pain that is hardly possible for people to bear. They have to soothe their pain with substances. Then the trauma, given that the human brain develops an interaction with the environment, shapes the brain’s circuitry in such a way that the person may be more likely to find relief from the drugs. The very physiology of the brain is affected by early trauma.”

In regards to society’s response to drug use, Dr. Maté stated, “Then you take these traumatized people, make their habit illegal. It’s not illegal to drink yourself to death. It’s not illegal to make yourself sick with emphysema or lung cancer by means of cigarettes, but it’s illegal to use other substances. So now you take these abused, traumatized people, and put them outside the law. You put them in jail, you hound them all their lives. You treat them like criminals and bad people and failures and rejects and wonder how come they don’t get

better. So, it's a self-perpetuating cycle of taking traumatized people and retraumatizing them, and then hoping at the same time why don't they listen, why don't they get better already, why don't they give it up. They don't give it up because the more they hurt, the more they need to escape. So, the addiction was really an attempt to solve the problem. If you ask, 'Why do people use substances or why do they engage in addiction in general?' It's because they have a problem they don't know what to do with."

Then the question needs to be asked, "What gave you such emotional pain and how come you didn't have the internal resources?" It's not a judgement, it's simply just an inquiry. How can you lack at some point the internal resources to deal with that pain in a more creative, forward-looking way that would help you resolve the pain than to perpetuate it? What really happened was the addiction came along to help you solve a problem you had no other solutions for at the time and that's the case for all addictions."¹

"Trauma creates change you don't choose. Healing is about creating change you do choose." – Michelle Rosenthal

Healing from trauma will help an individual overcome drug addiction. One of the most important things a person can do to progress towards their freedom from addiction is to address the issues and circumstances that led to addiction in the first place. Self-analysis can be a great thing and work for a lot of people. Some may need guidance in this area to help identify the root cause. A professional, a mentor or a friend or family member can provide the assistance. Once the

¹ Dr. Gabor Maté. "How Trauma Leads To Addiction." *YouTube*, uploaded by Better Chapter, April 4, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TUTqOr0w8Hc>.

source of the trauma is recognized, the person can begin the healing process.