

Descent Into Addiction

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Preacher: Roger Cryan

[0:00] Well, we've been focusing on some consequences at the end of the road of addictions. And throughout the scriptures, we do see this theme mentioned over and over again, Cause and effect, cause and effect.

And we see that in Galatians 6, 7, and 8, Do not be deceived. God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction.

But there's the opposite, from which we can be thankful for and rejoice in. The one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. And not only in the book of Galatians, but we've also seen the same theme mentioned over and over again in the book of Proverbs, when we are contrasting the way of wisdom with the way of folly, the writer in Proverbs encouraging his sons and the readers.

Listen, wisdom is calling to you. It's calling to you to follow her path and promises you good things as you pursue that journey down this path of wisdom.

But if you choose to go down the path, the way of folly, you need to understand that there are also things there at the end, and really all along the way down that path, that will be part of the destination that you can experience from going in the way of folly.

[1:40] So, there is no middle road. So, each road has its destinations and different destinations along the way. If we head up Route 331 out of Bremen, we're going to come across Wyatt and Woodland and other places and come to Mishawaka and South Bend.

Not saying that South Bend is at the end of the journey and therefore the worst part of the journey, but just saying that there are destinations that we are going to reach if we choose to go down that roadway, that path, and there's destinations, other destinies, all along the way.

So, that's what we've been learning as we explore some of these consequences. What starts out very, we'll say, promising, as we heard from some of those testimonials last week, it wasn't real as far as what the end result was going to be.

Walking down a certain pathway, at least the road, the addictive pathway and roadway, there's a high price to pay. Last week, we took a look at some of the physical consequences, and this morning we want to pick up at looking at emotional and cognitive consequences, and we'll go on from there with some other consequences.

And I want to finish this up this morning. I may have to move quickly through this, but I do want to move to the next topic, and part of our study is something of the way back, because there is a way back.

[3:20] But I also, even though this might get somewhat listy as I list these things off, these consequences, it's really important for us to understand and enter into understanding some of these consequences.

Someone had encouraged me to learn a verse a number of years ago. Let's see. He who answers before listening, that is his folly and shame.

Pretty much, if you just enter into someone's conversation, and they're saying they have a difficulty in life, and all of a sudden you're spouting off all these answers and different things, and you're not hitting the target at all.

You haven't asked right questions. You haven't listened long enough. So the person who answers before listening, well, that's his folly and his shame. So we need to try and enter in to understanding some of these consequences, because we're going to have to work our way back and help others do the same.

So we want to enter that relationship as we draw near to people to help. We want to draw near with a bit more understanding of what they might be wrestling with and struggling with, and, well, how does God's word actually speak to this issue that they really need to deal with in order to enter and walk down the way of wisdom now?

[4 : 52] And when we think of it, that's really what Jesus did when he left heaven and came into our world. Hebrews says that we have a sympathizing high priest.

He understands, he knows, not that he actually participated in sin, but he was living in a world, he experienced the various temptations that a human being experiences, and yet was without sin.

And so we can go to him. And so we want others to understand that as well. As we move in the direction, as Jesus did, with true Christ-like compassion, we want to move in their direction to help them with some level of understanding.

And, of course, we'll have to ask more questions to understand even more specifically with certain individuals. So some of the consequences when it comes to emotions and a person's thinking.

First one we've got listed here is depression. And it really only makes sense that regularly consuming significant quantities of a depressant would increase a person's level of depression.

[6 : 06] And also from those who've worked with numerous people who have adopted an addictive lifestyle, they've indicated that it is an exhausting lifestyle.

And then that as a result, that fatigue brings further depression, not wanting to do this or that responsibilities that they have, and on and on it goes.

And as understanding that addiction is that lifestyle that steals time and energy, resources away from other responsibilities, it takes the person away from activities that they could be finding satisfaction in.

You know what it's like when you are doing a project or something and you can stand back and look at it. Hey, there's a real sense of satisfaction, of accomplishment.

And that's, I think, a God-designed emotion within us as he looked and stood back and saw everything was good.

[7 : 15] It was very good. And so we can do that same thing. But when the person who is caught in that enslavement of addiction, that bondage, he doesn't have that sense of real reward and accomplishment, and that just helps them spiral down and down even further.

So depression is a real problem. And the opposite of that would be anxiety. So stimulants are to anxiety what the depressants are to depression and just causes that person more and more to be anxious in that high level of anxiety.

And that same idea that the more time that they give to their addiction, whatever it is, it's taking them away from other responsibilities that they have.

And so their focus might be on, well, I'm not getting this done, not getting that done, and things are building up more and more that aren't being cared for. And that's the way I get at times.

If I'm not careful, things are mounting up and I'm getting a little bit more anxious about, how am I going to get all this done? Well, the same thing is true. But as we've been learning, that the answer isn't to forsake that which is keeping them from accomplishing responsibilities.

[8:36] No, the immediate fix is to go back to the thing that can promise them some temporary relief, and it might be their drug or alcohol or whatever activity.

And as we even go through some of these consequences, we have to understand that we're not just talking again about alcohol and drugs. We're talking about other things that people have put in place of God in their lives as a substitute for God and what the Spirit can produce in our hearts and lives.

We're turning to something else to give us what we should be getting from God, and God makes available to us. So as we go through some of these, do some self-application here, an examination of, well, is that true of me?

Paranoia would be another consequence. There's at least two factors related to addiction that can foster paranoia. First, addiction involves regularly violating our conscience, and we talked about that progression that eventually comes through searing your conscience.

But there's still some activity there within the individual. And so as they go down this pathway of addiction and are ignoring relationships, responsibilities, and on and on, then there's this sense of something's wrong, and something is wrong.

[10:08] But then we heard in some of the testimonies last week in order to finance their addiction, some of those individuals were taking things from friends or family members, money, whatever they could to purchase their drug that they needed.

So now, and not only against family members, but the laws of the land. And so any time we're doing those things, we're familiar with that.

You're going down the road 80 miles per hour. What are you doing? You're looking over your shoulder. You're looking around the bend. Whatever, for the officer that might be there in his car with the radar.

And so it is with the conscience of this individual, the sense of paranoia, because they are doing something wrong. And so they're looking over their shoulder for what is ahead.

Another thought that I found interesting was another reason for the sense of paranoia. Alcohol and drugs can deteriorate the reality testing area of the brain.

[11:16] Now, that's the part of the brain, from what I read, that goes to sleep or rest when you are sleeping. So that's why you have such weird dreams at times. But for the person, the addict, who is awake, that part of the brain is not functioning properly.

So they're experiencing some of these things in their thinking. And it's not real. And probably some hallucinations as well. Things that aren't there.

And so there's that sense of paranoia. I can remember once I was in my office, and someone came into the building, walked into my office. And obviously, I wasn't as experienced with addictions or alcoholism, as I understand now.

But the person just came in and stood in my office and was there grasping at things and saying things that really were making no sense. Well, I understood afterward that hallucinating, seeing things that weren't really there and trying to grab them and things were trying to get him.

So this sense of paranoia that really exists and is a consequence as one goes down that pathway, that roadway.

[12:38] Now, there's the sense of shame. The emotion of shame is a strong indicator that our addiction is seeping into identity. So we see there's a bit of a difference between guilt and shame.

They both certainly are related and go together. But one common way to differentiate between guilt and shame is that guilt is a negative emotional response to what we're doing.

It's that, you know, I'm guilty. I feel guilty. I have this sense, these feelings of guilt because I am guilty for something that I've done that is wrong, either against my conscience or the word of God or the laws of the land.

And so there's that guilt and feelings of guilt that go along with it, whereas the shame is that negative emotional response to who we are.

We're going to be talking about that a little bit more, well, this morning, as we work on the way back out of addictions and toward Jesus Christ.

[13:42] Negative emotional intolerance. The goal of addiction is to feel good, or at least not to feel bad. The more we build our life around this value of not feeling bad but feeling good, the less we're able or willing to tolerate unpleasant emotions.

Empathy, uncertainty, grief, boredom, insecurity, doubt, and similar emotions become reasons to use, where those are, you know, emotions that God has built within us for a particular reason, and to avoid those, even God has given us instruction in his word how to respond and how to handle emotions like this.

But when a person is not following the counsel and wisdom of God, it's not like they're, again, they're on the fence and not doing anything. They're looking for something, some way, to handle these emotions that they don't like.

And, of course, is the quick fix with either their substance of choice or activity. In all-or-nothing thinking, in this mode of thinking, things are either great or awful, easy, impossible, perfect, or ruined.

And this is why it's so difficult for many to see the way back. The way back is a process, maybe a long-term process. We'll know maybe about it. And they just can't project that long-term solution and really set their mind on accomplishing something like that.

[15:15] So it's easier to just stay with the temporary. It's too much. It's impossible. A distorted sense of time. Addictions work fast.

And we talked about this last week. And just to say a little bit more about it this morning. Delayed onset addictive substance is an oxymoron.

And explaining that, if there was a cheap drug that had a long high but had a 24-hour delay between consumption and its effects, it wouldn't be popular.

The low cost and the pleasurable high would not offset its delayed effect. This accounts for how addiction begins to dominate life. Most things worth doing take time.

So when addiction, or really the person, creates a life built around immediacy, well, he or she loses tolerance for these long-term investments.

[16:16] They're building up a tolerance for immediacy. Right now, I want it right now, and I have to have it right now, and I'm not willing to wait and see that the benefits really will come long-term if you're willing to pursue these steps in order to get there.

And that's really the deceptive thinking of our enemy, you know, right now. Don't believe God. You know, it won't happen. Right now you can do this, and you do it sometimes, and nothing happens, and you think, well, it's okay.

It must not be that God's word is true, so I'll just keep on going this way. So, this distorted sense of time.

Distorted sense of what really is normal after the prolonged exposure to the artificial reality created by alcohol or drugs. Normal feels dull or painful, muted or subdued.

So, it's comparable to an experience we have just after jumping on a trampoline. Afterwards, when we're off the trampoline, our normal jumping feels stunted. And maybe you've been on a boat out in a big lake for a period of time.

[17:29] Me and boats in big lakes don't get along well at all. And a canoe will be fine, but you get me on a big boat that rolls and rolls, that won't work.

And so was the situation a number of years ago on a big, long boat. And it was rolling, and that happened to me. But we were out there a while, and I got on shore, stable ground, and it still felt like I was rolling around back and forth.

And so there was that distorted sense of what really is normal. And so it is with that individual who's been addicted to alcohol and drugs.

Then this identity change. This is where I wanted to get to a little bit more. We can't do anything for an extended period of time without it affecting our identity, really who I think I am.

And 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.

[18:39] And these dynamics only further increase the degree to which our addiction becomes part of our identity. A quote from Paul Tripp's book, *An Instrument in a Redeemer's Hands*.

In fact, the longer we struggle with a problem, the more likely we're to define ourselves by that problem, such as I'm divorced, I'm an addict, I'm depressed, or codependent, or ADD, ADHD, and on and on we could go.

What I'm struggling with becomes who I am. We come to believe that our problem is who we are. But while these labels may describe particular ways we struggle as sinners, and that's how we need to see these things, as ways that we struggle as sinners in a fallen world, they're not who we are.

It's not our identity. If we allow them to define us, we will live trapped within their boundaries. Then this is no way for a child of God to live. We see that...

Let me just take a look at my notes here. Let me continue reading. Once a struggle has become who we are, we feel even more powerless to change it. And this is why it's vital for you to remember there is a you who struggles with addiction.

[20:00] Addiction is the parasite. You are the host. It's 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's not a word of condemnation, but really 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's you who will make that choice every time. So remembering that addiction is not your identity is an important part of not surrendering this power of choice.

We are the ones who are ultimately the ones who make the choices to go down a certain path. So take a break with me here and me reading my notes.

As you think of this matter of identity, what do you see in the scriptures? I mean, it's God deals with this topic of identity in many different ways.

[21:07] What are the words or phrases in scripture that you can think of as you're sitting there that would show us the importance of identity when it comes to God?

What terms or phrases does he use to help us understand who we are, our identity? Because many times when he's writing to people or having the authors write to people, he's saying something to them about who they are.

And he's doing that because they're wrestling and struggling with something in their relationships with each other or as individuals. So it's an important point that we remember that God brings this into this dynamic of helping them learn to live as ambassadors of Christ.

He's telling them something about who they are. So what are some of those words or phrases that you can think of that God uses in his word to help people remember who they are? Yeah.

Yeah. I don't think so often. It talks about how God made us together in our mother's womb and that we're people and wonderfully made. Yeah. All right. We're fearfully and wonderfully made.

[22:14] We are designed by God. We are his creation. And so that's important to understand. Listen, I'm not scum or dirt, you know.

I am someone made by God himself. What else? All right. I'm accepted into beloved. Yeah.

I'm a temple of God. This is all identity stuff. What else? You must consider yourself dead to sin and alive to God and praise Jesus. Yeah.

That whole section of verses there. I'm a person that is alive to God. I'm not a person that is dead and held in bondage to sin. I'm not living as one with this as my master.

I'm over here. What else? I live with a transformed mind. Yeah. I'm a person that does have a transformed mind. Co-heirs with Christ.

[23:13] Co-heirs with Christ. I mean, that lifts us up there pretty high. Chosen in him before the creation of the world. Chosen. Whiteness. Yeah. Chosen in him with a purpose. So we're combining who we are, identity with purpose.

Those things go together many times. Saints. Beloved. New creature in Christ. And on and on we go. You've done a good job in helping us understand that.

And so those are the things that when we think of the way back that help us put off these habits, these practices of life that don't go with who we are.

And that's some of the downfall of other programs who say, this is who you are and this is who you'll always be. You know, 1 Corinthians 6, Paul was writing to the Corinthians there and say, this is who you were.

This is not who you are. This is who you were. After listing all of the list of sins, lifestyles, whatever you want to call it, that they had become involved in.

[24:19] And so he's making that connection. Now this is what you were in the past. This is not who you are now. Therefore, you're living a brand new way. You can live a brand new way. So that's hopeful.

It's hopeful when we tell people that you can have a new identity. And that's not who you have to be. And so the importance of that identity.

So that's something of emotional, cognitive consequences. But let's move on to some other things that we've got to run through. Functional effects.

Addictions don't exist in a vacuum. They exist in space and time. So they're going to affect certainly our thinking. Our behavior. But our actions. How we're functioning day by day.

It's not just an activity. Really, it's an investment that we're making. An investment of time. We talked about that in the past. There are two types of time investment in addiction.

[25:18] Direct time and indirect time. Direct time would be that time that you're spending. In your involvement with a drug or whatever it is.

It's that you personally. You as an individual. Indirect time is the time you spend planning to interact or cover up your interaction with a substance or activity.

So there's all kinds of investment of time that we're making in this activity. But also money. We've talked about that in the past as well. Addiction comes with a direct and indirect financial cost.

Direct costs would be the money that the individual is spending on the substance or activity. And indirectly, the money lost due to missing work, etc., etc.

So the cost is tremendous. The consequences when it comes to time and money are great when we're at this destination at the end of our journey of addiction.

[26 : 16] Priorities would be another area. And I've listed some questions that would help you understand at what point you're at in this spending of priorities in life.

What dreams have died or have you stopped pursuing because of addiction? There are going to be things they give up. What relationships have been lost? We'll be taking a look at some of the consequences of relationships later on here.

What opportunities have you not pursued because of addiction? What difficulties do you willingly live with instead of abandoning your addiction? And other questions that are there as well.

So how a person functions on a daily basis is really going to have some consequences in that person's life when it comes to their time and money and priorities of life.

But let's move on to the area of relationships. It seems to be a great cost, a consequence, certainly. A quote from Brad Hambrick's lesson material.

[27 : 20] Sin is more relational than it is behavioral. Although I would say you certainly can't separate behavior from relationships. Because what happens in our relationships is a result of what we're doing in our behavior.

Behavior will affect relationships. It's about who and what we value most more than what we do. But I would also say what we do shows really what we value most in what we're pursuing.

For this reason, some of sin's most profound destruction will occur in our relationships, marriages, families, friendships, churches, workplaces.

The longer we remain willfully blind to this damage, the longer and harder the restoring of trust will be. That's why the best time to begin addressing an addiction is always now.

And again, whether it's alcohol or drugs or something else that we might be involved in. The more we pursue that activity as a replacement to God, loving God and loving others, we can see how it's going to affect relationships.

[28 : 35] Certainly relationship with God and fellowship with God, but the relationship with others who are close to us. And we're willing almost to spend the relationships in order to pursue the substance or the activity that we think is of more value.

But in the material I was looking at, the damage to relationships shows up in three areas where others usually are hurt.

In active offenses that we do, what a person has done that actually hurts someone, they're the things you did to cover up your addiction or to perpetuate your addiction that harmed your relationship with the other person or other people.

These are the things you did which made it clear that something, again, your substance or activity, was more important than someone, the person that you've sinned against.

So those active offenses, and those active offenses usually consist of, say, lies that we would tell. It usually said you cannot be a good addict without being a good liar.

[29 : 43] It usually says you cannot be a good addict without being a good addict without being a good addict without being a good addict.

It usually says you cannot be a good addict without being a good addict without being a good addict.

Addictions aren't cheap, especially when they become so dominant that they impair your ability to earn money. So stealing, whether it's taking money or property that's not yours, or receiving pay for work that you're not doing, on and on.

Or maybe it takes the form of character assassination. If you're not honest about your vices, then you'll have to invent vices for others to explain why life's not working.

It's a necessity because of the life of addiction. If you don't own your shortcomings, then you have to push them off on others. And that's what we normally would call blame-shifting.

[31 : 26] Adam and Eve did that as well. The children of Israel did that. When they went into the land, said that they couldn't go into the land. There were giants in the land.

You know, Moses, it's your fault you brought us here. And ultimately, God, it's your fault for bringing us here in a situation that really is bigger than what we can handle.

Therefore, it's best for us to go back a different way, take a different way. And they really are assassinating the character of Moses and ultimately God himself.

So those are active offenses, but there's also absent offenses. When a person has left undone, what a person has left undone that has hurt others.

Christians have long held to the distinction between sins of commission, things that we do which are wrong, and sins of omission, things that are wrong to leave undone.

[32 : 26] And we can harm relationships and hurt people as much by our non-actions as much as by our actions, responsibilities that I might have as a husband that I'm ignoring because there's other things that I want to pursue.

That's just as bad as the offenses that I would commit that are directly against the person. Some examples of absent offenses are withdrawal.

This refers to your absence from others. There are people who love you. They want to be with you, desire your flourishing, friends and parents, et cetera, et cetera.

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 that they don't care.

So that whole matter of withdrawal, very closely related to that is isolation, inability for people to access you.

[33 : 30] People need to be involved with you, say, as a husband and father, but you've isolated yourselves. It's hard for them to carry on with life in a normal way, responsibilities that they have to care for.

When you've isolated yourself, you just can't carry on. It affects, really, the whole family. So that whole matter of isolation, dependability. When you say yes to a responsibility, you know you have, but you, again, have no intention of keeping that responsibility.

So that puts difficulty within those relationships in that family setting. Then the atmosphere changes. The relational culture or atmosphere, we'll say, within the home or in the setting in which the person is involved with other people.

There's this emotional confusion there. People around the addict are confused by how the person's response doesn't match the situation. More likely to blow up quickly at the smaller thing or to withdraw or isolate themselves.

The people are trying to figure out what is going on here. And so they're confused with how you're responding or what the writer calls six degrees of separation.

[34 : 59] The person doesn't want to talk about his or her secrets, which means you don't want to talk about things related to the secrets, which means you don't want to talk about things related to things related to the secrets.

So pretty soon, most of the addict's life feels off limits. There's nothing you can talk to about this person. And if you try and pursue it, the person is easily disturbed and upset and comes after you for reasons you think, what is wrong?

This makes no sense. And you're right, it doesn't. And then the atmosphere change of how addiction replaces the relationship.

When we struggle with addiction, those who love us get used to living with a mystery other in their lives, especially before they know what really is going on.

The addict is very good at hiding what's going on in his life or her life. Before they know about our addiction, they can't figure out who or what they keep coming in second to.

[36 : 06] And after they learn of our addiction, they begin to realize the rank of addiction is comparable to an adultery partner in the marriage. The sense of betrayal they have been feeling finally makes sense.

They can understand what's going on now. And then lastly, certainly the spiritual consequences that take place. Certainly for the non-Christian, the most severe consequence of addiction is the inability to enjoy close relationship with God in his life and in the afterlife.

That's why when we're drawing near to someone, first of all, they don't have a relationship that they can enjoy because they're still outside of Christ. And so we're drawing near to that person.

Certainly we want to help them to stop the things that they're choosing to do. But we're after more than that. We're after helping them become a true worshiper of God because God is worthy of their worship.

He's worthy of them to be living as one created in the image of God. And as we pursue that in their lives, well, then the behavior will change. The things that are destroying and destructive to them will become those habits and practices that are more blessings to them and can bring enjoyment to them in their lives.

[37 : 28] So I was talking about this, I think, with Jody and Dan last week after class at home around the table. So when we're talking about these kind of things with our children, we're trying to help our children certainly help them understand some of these consequences that are out here.

But we're trying to help them understand the bigger thing that's going on in their lives is that their heart is drawn to that.

Why is their heart drawn to those kind of things? And that is because of the sinful heart that they have. And so we're using these as redemptive opportunities to point them to Christ at a young age.

And we can tell them and help them learn how consequences work so that when we're teaching them that choices have consequences, and we talked earlier about how many times the consequences are way down the road.

And for a child to understand that, so say when they're older, we're talking to them about drugs, alcohol, and et cetera, et cetera, they're not experiencing the consequences now.

[38 : 45] So for them, it seems so far off and unreal. And so what you're doing as a parent is when they're young, they are learning this concept of consequences from choices, from things that happen quickly.

I told you not to go up those stairs or climb that tree. You climbed that tree and the limb broke.

And so all along you're helping them learn this principle of there's consequences to choices that we make. There's consequences to disobedience, on and on and on.

So that when you're having to teach them of things like this, consequences to alcohol, drugs, whatever, that have consequences further down the road, they're familiar with this principle of consequences from choices.

And they've learned from your counsel to them that, oh, I can trust mom and dad because I've learned that concept here from what they've taught me either before or after the fact.

[40 : 01] And so when we're over here teaching them these principles for longer-term things, they're at that point a little bit more of understanding. Now their heart still may choose to go that way, but at least they've been prepared to understand the biblical concept and principles of consequences from choices from your faithfulness in teaching them at a young age.

But not just that, but of their need of Jesus Christ in order to deal with these choices and consequences that they have in life. Our time is gone.

And so from here, we'll move on to where do we go from here? What is the way back? And we'll take the kind of path, and I'm still working this out in the lesson material, of how do I understand the way back for myself because there's things that I'm, I'll say, addicted to in my life.

Or how do I help someone else? So in both ways, we'll try and go in both those directions and accomplish how we can be effective ambassadors and disciples of Jesus Christ and really serve one another and others who are in need of Christ.

Well, let's close in prayer. Father, we do pray that with the interaction from this material, Father, you would really help us to develop even a greater awareness, a greater understanding, a greater compassion for those who are stuck and enslaved in bondage, even a greater awareness of what's going on in our own hearts, Father, so that we could really be quite busy, Father, about growing in godliness in our own lives, but also helping others, first of all, come to know Christ and be delivered out of this bondage of sin.

[41 : 57] But then, Father, just to help them grow more and more in enjoying what it means to worship Christ and to know Christ.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.