

## Descent Into Addiction (part 3)

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, this morning we continue our look at the descent into addiction. We're going to be looking at some of the consequences that come at the end of this journey that we've been looking at.

And as I was thinking of this lesson, I was thought of a couple of years ago, Carol and I went on vacation to Shenandoah National Park. And prior to going, we thought it would be nice to stay in a private cabin.

And Carol went online. I can't even remember what organization she was looking under. One of those private things. And people rent out their places, et cetera, et cetera.

And so we thought we would stay in a cabin for the first two or three days, actually three or four days, I think it was, prior to doing what we normally do, which is stay in the back of our pickup truck. And so we went and arrived at this place. And as soon as I saw this place, I realized this is not what we were expecting.

[ 1 : 04 ] And so I went and looked in the windows. And sure enough, it wasn't getting any better. And once we got in, it was even worse than that.

At least the dirt on the windows covered up some of what was inside. And, I mean, this was bad. I won't go into a full detailed description of it. But bad enough that that was the only night we spent there.

And I was up in the middle of the night packing anything that we had gotten out and ready for an early departure. And that's what we did. And we spent the rest of the time in the back of our pickup truck, which was much better than that cabin.

So the point is, our destination wasn't what we expected. And I think that's what we've been seeing when it comes to this journey of addictions.

What starts out promising great and beautiful things ends up being the very opposite. And that's, again, what we're taking a look at this morning. What starts out looking like something that the individual uses to serve his purposes.

[ 2 : 14 ] And we've seen that in the past. And you'll hear that hopefully this morning on some of the testimonials that we've got prepared. It ends up being the very opposite.

That which was being used to bring relief ends up mastering the individual. The individual comes under its control. And he or she worships it.

And even with all the tragic consequences that come. So what does this worship look like? That's how Ed Welch describes this last stage.

He describes it as worship. That's what's going on. At this point, the individual is an abject worshiper, totally devoted to the substance or activity that he's been using in replace of God as a God substitute.

That's the Romans 1, everything that's going on. That's what's going on.

[ 3 : 28 ] Well, the Christians in Rome that Paul wrote to understood this slavery or this bondage in Romans 6, 16 through 19.

I always don't remember. The verses aren't included, Carol, in this. They are? Oh, okay. Romans 6, 16 through 19, and I don't have all those verses that I'll read.

But Paul says, Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, understand and catch that, when you offer yourselves, so there's still that voluntary action on the person's behalf, even though they're being mastered.

At whatever stage, it's a voluntary choice, and that's the understanding of these words here. When you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey.

Whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness. And then down in verse 19, Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness.

[ 4 : 38 ] So we're seeing that progression here, even as Paul is writing to these believers here, in describing their past condition of when they were trying to live life apart from God, worshiping whatever it was that they were trying to find their satisfaction in.

And that progression is that they were yielding their members of their body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness.

And so he says, now offer them in slavery to righteousness, leading to holiness. So that's what we've been seeing lived out in this journey of addiction.

Even when Jesus spoke to his disciples and warned them about idolatry, he used that word master in Matthew 6.24. He says, no one can serve two masters.

And so he's helping them understand, even with the use of that word master, helping them understand, you may be thinking that you're the one that's in control here, and using this whatever as your servant, but you need to understand it biblically, it is your master.

[ 5 : 53 ] And no one can serve two masters. Either he'll hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money or put in there whatever else, whatever other idol it might be, in place of that word money.

And then another passage, it's how Peter describes the false teachers that he wrote about in 2 Peter 2.18-19. In describing them, he said, For they mouth empty boastful words, and by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature.

And that's where we were at in one of our first few lessons, understanding, well, where does all this start? And while we see that this is where these false teachers are making their appeal, to that which exists within the person that will draw them over to where they want them to be.

And it starts with those lustful desires of sinful human nature. They entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, and you'll hear that in some of these other descriptions.

They promise them freedom while they themselves are slaves to depravity. For a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him. And so that's what's going on in the lives of these false teachers, and they're trying to draw others to join them, promising them freedom, promising them good things, and in reality denying what's taking place within their own lives, that they've been mastered by something else.

[ 7 : 36 ] And so that's what Peter is trying to warn the people about. And all these warnings that come to individuals who are starting on this road to addiction is what's taking place.

We're trying to warn them about what the end is going to be, even though they can't see the end at this time. And so Peter is doing that with these people.

This is the reality of what's going on in the lives of these false teachers, and you need to understand that and see it for what it really is. So the individual is really obeying the substance or whatever it is. He's yielding his members to it in a variety of different ways. So such a man is neither free in any way, nor can he really promise or give liberty to anybody else that he's trying to draw to him.

A quote from Ed Welch's book, this is the stage of almost every, at this point in this point of worship, Ed Welch is saying, this is the stage of almost daily use or dependence.

[ 8 : 49 ] Drugs or obsessive thoughts of drugs are a constant companion. It doesn't mean that people are always high or drunk. No, the natural course of this stage is that there are binges with periods of moderation or abstinence.

But addicts always think about their substances, and they're often physically dependent during their binges, meaning if they stop using the drugs, there are physical withdrawal symptoms.

And we clarified some of those terms last week, where during the early stages, their bodies many times are building up this tolerance where it's going to take more and more and more of the substance to accomplish what they accomplished early on with a smaller amount or whatever it was.

And once that substance is removed, then the withdrawal, which many times is very opposite of what the substance is producing, is starting to take place and what they're experiencing.

So at this stage of life, nothing comes before the drug or the activity. He's experiencing certainly some shame and guilt at times for the actions and what it's costing in his life and the lives of others,

relationships and other things.

[10:11] Some of the things we'll look at a little bit later. But the way he deals with that is to, again, return to the substance, that which has mastered him.

And so he keeps going back, looking for the promise, the false promise of the substance. Denial still is existing here, still thinking that they're in control, maybe even still at this stage, not admitting that there's a problem.

Even though there's guilt, as they pursue the activity, the substance, their conscience have been seared, they're silencing, pushing off the conscience and what it's drawing them to do.

And certainly the addiction is obvious to others. So the person has developed a habit that's brought him or her in bondage to it.

What started out being described as something great and wonderful, something bringing freedom, I've never experienced anything like this before. This is what I'm going to pursue the rest of my life, has brought them into this kind of bondage where the consequences are just terrible.

[11:28] Now, are those videos going to work this morning? We're hoping to. So I think there's about four or five minutes here. It's going to take a little bit of time, but I thought it would be profitable for you to hear from a variety of individuals in this clip.

And you'll see this progression. And so listen to how they described their introduction to, in this case, it was either drugs or alcohol, and look for some of those signs of how it progressed from how they described it first and then how they described it in the end.

So let's give it a try. I was about 16, hanging out with 26-year-olds, 27-year-olds, and they've been to prison a few times, and they started with the lower tabs and the parking sets and Oxycontin, and that was the first time I did it, hanging out with those guys.

I first became involved with prescription drugs when I was 16. I was working, and I fell and got hurt, and I got referred to a pain management doctor. I was introduced to prescription drugs when I was 15.

I got them from a friend and just kind of tried them. I got them a mask on because I had a total shoulder replacement, you know, so the doctors were just prescribing me masks for mouths. I first started using prescription drugs when a friend gave me a couple, and they made me feel awesome.

[12:55] The way it made me feel was I didn't have a worry in the world. You know, if something was going on, something bad was going on in my life, it made that disappear. I was real relaxed.

I was real calm. Nothing bothered me. It's like imagining every happy thing that you've ever had in your life all at once, but when it's over, you plummet. I think for me, it was all fun and games at first. It was something innocent. The doctor gave it to me, so it has to be okay, and for me, it wasn't. It just, it kept getting worse, and it kept getting worse, and eventually, you know, one pill wasn't enough.

I needed two or three, and then I needed ten, and then it just kept getting, it built on itself, and I never imagined that that would happen. It was easy, at first, to get them from doctors and hospitals and the dentist, but after a while, it became harder, and so I would buy them off the streets, and they're everywhere on the streets.

There are a lot of people that I have met that have doctor shopped, or they'll play on injuries that they've had in the past, and it's just, it's a real insidious type of addiction, I think, because they are so easy to get a hold of.

[14:07] Eventually, that's what it turned into, was I was going to the hospital, saying I hurt my back, saying whatever I had to say, wait and hug, along the way, to talk to a doctor to get the pills.

I would try to convince doctors with back pain, or that my knee was hurting, or I would convince them of just any little minor thing that I could possibly think of.

Within a couple months after the post-surgery, the doctors, you know, were, I was still calling the doctors. By this time, I was, you know, fully addicted to the pills.

And, you know, the doctors pretty much caught me off cold turkey, you know, going from like, you know, five or six, you know, lower tabs a day to, down to nothing.

When they were giving me monthly supplies, and I was running out within a week, two weeks, and I would have to call my doctor and tell them, somebody stole my medicine, lost it, I don't know what happened to it.

[15:13] I would go out on the streets and I would know people I worked with that have them, and I'd get them from them, or I'd go get them, take my mother's, who was very ill, and I would take from

her just because I needed it, and that's all I knew.

Actually, I discovered that my grandfather was prescribed the same medication I was, and he didn't take it all, and so gradually, over a period of time, I began stealing more and more from him. I stole them from a friend, somebody that actually needed them, somebody that was on that medication for a reason, and I took it. Eventually, however much money I had in my pocket was what I was going to spend on it.

If I had \$1,000 in my pocket, that's what I would spend on it. If I had \$10,000, in my pocket, that's what I would spend on it. Everything in my life became what was revolved around the drug, the opiate.

It just had control of my life, and I did what it wanted. I started using heroin because it was cheaper actually to buy heroin than it was actually to purchase 15 to 20 pills a day.

[16:19] I needed more and more and more because my body told me I was in more pain and I just needed to mask that up and I didn't know how to stop. And it's very scary to be in that place.

And I died on the table three times. And so, it's a scary place to be because when you lose control, you don't know how to regain it. I started doing heroin.

and I realized all the harm I was doing to everybody just to get that.

And I didn't want the pain. I didn't want to harm anybody anymore. I don't really like the term drug of choice because it's not a choice. It's a beast inside of you that you must feed.

It will take you bit by bit. And you will eventually leave everything that you love and leave everything that you own just to fulfill something that you can't fulfill.

[17:19] There's no way to fulfill it. Interesting, isn't it? I mean, certainly beyond interesting as you would had we had the video to see them describing it.

And you could certainly hear in their words even some of the struggle and the downward effect as they initially described it down here as a wonderful thing.

And then as they began to describing began to describe it more as something that was taking more and more control of them. And then eventually the ripple effects of moving beyond themselves to other people and relationships and what it was doing to them to their bodies on and on.

And so that's the journey that we've been taking a look at. That's what we need to understand about what's going on. and in order to be like the man in Proverbs who's trying to help his sons, his children to understand some of what's down here when they've not experienced that before.

And so that they will not go down that path. And so the value of listening to these individuals as well.

[18:49] well, they were at the point of living with the consequences of that worship. And so that's where we wanted to shift this morning and taking a look at some of those consequences.

And initially we can take a look in the scriptures and see how the scriptures, how God in his compassion and love for people reveals to people, to us, what's the end result when somebody worships something other than him.

And so in Proverbs 5 verses 7 through 14, I thought it was a good passage that really brings this out. And the writer here is again writing to his sons, encouraging them, almost pleading with them, listen to me.

Again, because he knows what's down here. And he doesn't want his children to go down that path. And he says, now then, my sons, listen to me. Do not turn aside from what I say.

Keep to the path or keep to a path far from her. He's referring to the adulterous woman, but we could put whatever it is in there that the person could be using as a God substitute.

[20:10] It's not a matter of get his clothes as close as you can without, and think that you'll be okay, but keep your path far from her. Don't even go near it.

Don't go near the door of her house. Why? Verse 9, lest you give your best strength to others and your years to the cruel ones. So now he's revealing to them what the cost will be, what some of those consequences will be.

Lest strangers feast on your wealth and your toil enrich another man's house. At the end of your life you will groan when your flesh and your body are spent.

You'll say, how I hated discipline, how my heart spurned correction, and you could almost hear that in the words of those people as they describe the regrets that they had and yet still going back to it.

Doing things that they knew at the time were wrong. Taking it from a friend, taking it from a grandfather, taking it from a mother, and yet still pursuing that.

[ 21 : 24 ] How my heart spurned correction. I would not obey my teachers or listen to my instructors. I've come to the brink of utter ruin in the midst of the whole assembly.

And then Proverbs 22.3 says something similar. A prudent man sees danger and takes refuge, but the simple keep going and suffer for it.

So the prudent man, the wise man, that son will, even though he's not experienced the consequences, hasn't been down that path, but is hearing the counsel, is hearing the warnings from someone else, a loved one, a parent, a pastor, whoever else, anybody else, and then, as a result, turns from it and doesn't suffer it.

When you surrender control to a substance or activity that only cares for its own self-preservation, your life will fall apart. Another quote.

Sin, the predatory evil present in and around all our lives is seeking our demise. That's that. As Peter, again, wrote to his listeners.

[ 22 : 36 ] It's like a roaring lion out there looking for someone to devour. And as God was telling Cain as well, the same situation.

You know, sin is there. It's ready to capture you, but you've got this choice. Don't go there. It begins by making promises, which, looking back, we realize it could never keep, but it's 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.

Of course, we're speaking to the Christian here at this time. And we see that in Galatians 5. We see that conflict. The flesh lusts against the spirit. The spirit against the flesh. That conflict is taking place.

We still do have within us those sinful desires. When we were saved, they weren't all removed. They were there. We carried some of that over into our new lives in Christ.

[ 23 : 40 ] Certainly, we have new life and don't have to yield to those desires. But the conflict is there. 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.

as he again describes in Galatians chapter 5. The fruit of the spirit. The one who yields to the fruit of the spirit. This is what you can expect. The one who yields to the loss of the flesh in that chapter.

You can see this is what you can expect and what that will result in. Sobriety is not about absence of a particular behavior as much as it is the presence of a new allegiance in your life.

So we're looking out. What's really calling for my allegiance? And what is it that my heart is having a tendency to lean toward? And that's what we need to be careful of.

What we're trying to do is identify some of those red flags like in your vehicles. Maybe not red flags but warning lights. Or if you have gauges, which is even better, you can see when it's starting earlier on.

[ 24 : 50 ] But they're there for a purpose to help us know there's something wrong. My vehicle's going down this path that something eventually could be seriously wrong and I need to take care of that.

And so we start trying to identify, even in our own lives, what are some of those early warning signals that I have learned to recognize even in my own life where I have this tendency to lean toward something other than God.

And so you learn to deal with that early on and not yield to it and then have to deal with it down here further along. But many are down here and so that's why we're learning what some of these consequences are because we've got to help them back.

If we don't understand what some of the consequences are and what they're going through, we might just present it as, well, here's a quick fix. Memorize this verse and you'll be okay. It's not just memorize a verse and you'll be okay.

There's other factors that we need to deal with in bringing them back to or bringing them to this relationship with God and how that's lived out.

[ 26 : 01 ] So how are some of those consequences described? Well, we see it in the scriptures and we see it through others who've worked with individuals caught in this bondage.

And so this is what we want to take a look at now. And again, we're looking at these so that we can identify what they are like and be ready to deal with them earlier on, but then also so that we can help others deal with it as well.

But let's consider the effects on one's physical body. Another quote from Brad Hambrick's lessons. While our bodies are incredibly adaptive, and we saw that when we learned something about that, the definition of the word tolerance and how the body adapts to what we're putting into it, this adaptation does not avert damaging health effects.

The changes in our body are neural chemistry created by addiction leave a living state that is increasingly distant from God's design for a healthy human body.

So as it's trying to adapt, it's not the way it's meant to actually exist, but the individual keeps pouring these things into the body and moving it further and further away from the place it was really designed to be.

[ 27 : 26 ] the sooner you're willing to acknowledge these changes, the more they impact, the more their impact can be averted or countered. Now, some other information that I came on that was interesting as I was looking at these consequences, and this information that follows speaks something to what's working against these warnings of bad consequences.

that are ahead, like that we give to our children or to anybody else. Listen, don't go there. And what we heard the writer in Proverbs trying to do with his sons, don't go there, you've not experienced this, and this is what's going to happen down the road.

Most of us had some of these warnings. In this case, we've been talking about alcohol and drugs as children. And these warnings included education about the dangers if we would continue to give ourselves to them.

When experimentation began, but these dangers didn't occur, we assumed the warnings were false. The exaggerations were intended to scare, but when they participated in them initially, nothing happened, you know, except for how they described it early on.

Wonderful things there. So the things that my parents were warning me about, well, they didn't happen. And so, they began doubting the counsel that was given. Listen, don't go there.

[ 28 : 59 ] This is where it leads to. The pleasures of alcohol and drugs were quick, episodic, and intense. The dangers of alcohol and drugs are delayed, cumulative, and lasting.

So this is a combination of factors that allow for a high degree of self-deception and growing mistrust of the voices that would speak wisdom into our lives.

So we're talking about dangers that are down the road here and warning them about these dangers that are down here when the effects that they're looking for are happening right here.

So they experience what they are interpreting as wonderful, beautiful things and aren't down here yet, and so are severely judging, questioning what we're saying is going to happen down here.

And a good example of this in the scriptures is in Genesis 3. And again, we're not going to read all through those verses, but how Satan worked with Eve in that temptation.

[ 30 : 10 ] 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.

He said, you will not surely die. So imagine Satan or deceitful desires the flesh within a person saying to a 17-year-old or whoever, you will not surely wind up with a broken marriage, jobless, or unable to think straight without your substance.

In both cases, Satan, the flesh, deceitful desires was short-term accurate and long-term wrong. Short-term accurate, long-term wrong.

Short-term accurate in the sense of, yep, what you said was true. You know, there are great, beautiful things here. But long-term wrong, the consequences did come.

and they couldn't be avoided apart from God and his ways. Satan used this strategy on Eve and Eve doubted God.

[ 31 : 24 ] And so he still uses this strategy to get people to doubt, whether it's their parents, teachers, coaches, friends, bosses, or any other voice that would lead the person to a way of life, instead lead a person away from the way of life, and instead to the ways of death.

So we need to become aware more and more of these deceptive thoughts and ideas, whether they actually are just coming from within or coming from so many other voices that we're exposed to on a daily basis.

So what are some of those physical consequences? Well, here there's, I'm not a medical doctor, so I didn't come up with these, you know, but so many consequences listed with the physical body, but I still thought they were worth you hearing.

In regard to your kidneys, the 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. I know I'm a person that lives with one kidney as a result of a kidney tumor that I had and had to have my kidney removed and so the doctors are constantly telling me you need to protect that kidney, drink lots of water and don't do stupid stuff.

[ 32 : 59 ] And so the importance of that part of my body, the liver, the liver plays a filtering function similar to the kidneys. Drugs' negative effect on the liver can range from general symptoms, fatigue, generic feeling of unwell, nausea, itching, loss of appetite, to more severe symptoms, jauntice, enlarged liver, pain in the upper right abdomen, confusion, disorientation, reduced alertness.

The hearts, of course most illegal drugs can have adverse cardiovascular effects ranging from abnormal heart rate to heart attacks.

And I won't read all this but just highlighting some of the things there. Collapsed veins, bacterial infections of the blood vessels and the heart valves, change in the person's energy level in your body will affect the activity level of your heart.

Moving on to the lungs, 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.

And so there's damage to the delicate lung tissue. Even the immune system, the body's under stress of any kind, one of the first places it pulls energy from is the immune system.

[ 34 : 32 ] As your body uses energy to return to the equilibrium disrupted by the alcohol or drugs that pulls from the immune system, irregular sleep patterns, imbalance, nutrition, and other body stressors created by alcohol or drugs abuse further decrease the amount of energy the body can devote to the immune system.

Of course, exposure to diseases. alcohol or drug 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.

In a number of the testimonials I listen to, individuals would frequently describe that aspect of some of the consequences on their lives.

as compromises in judgment result in more risky health behaviors, unprotected sex, sharing needles, et cetera. So the toll on body organs and systems combined with this increased disease exposure accounts for the escalating physical effects of addiction.

For men in particular, testosterone, the body has biological priorities. Testosterone is not at the top of the list when a body is under a degree of stress that it cannot achieve all of its normal functions.

[ 35 : 54 ] It neglects its non-survival functions. With the brain, addictions interfere with neurotransmitters. Damaged 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. The person's stomach, anything you put in your mouth that burns like hard liquor, burns all the way down.

Your digestive system was made to process nutritious food. When you frequently introduced 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 your body adapts to unhealthy circumstances, we force upon it. The result is pain and suffering. The last one I have listed here is just tooth deterioration.

[ 37 : 01 ] Many drugs have the side effects of dry mouth or teeth grinding due to elevated energy level. Body tension produced. Both of these side effects result in significant tooth decay.

Usually when you go online looking for information on consequences, somewhere along the line they'll show you pictures of people who started out prior to on this end of the journey and pictures of that same individual on the other end of the journey.

It is drastic in a stark contrast of the effects of their addiction. The more parts of our body that become uncomfortable, the more prone we become to abuse alcohol and drugs.

That's that cycle that they're on. The worse they feel, the thing that they've learned to give them some relief is that substance and they still keep going back to that.

The mind or mood altering effects of alcohol and drugs begin to be used to offset the very symptoms that they created. So there are other physical effects but that certainly was enough to give us a little bit better understanding of what really is going on.

[ 38 : 11 ] and some of those consequences. Well, our time is pretty much up here. We'll have to finish the rest of this information next week as we take a look at some of the consequences emotionally on the person, in relationships, functionally, what's going on in the person's life.

just to get, again, a clear picture of what is the end of the journey look like and what are we going to have to deal with in our own lives but then also in helping someone back.

Because there is a way back. That's what Paul wrote to the Corinthians after he described some of what they were in the past.

In verse 11, he says, and that is what some of you were. But you were washed. You were sanctified. You were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. So there is a way back. There is a new identity that they can have in Jesus Christ that truly affects their daily function.

[ 39 : 20 ] Let's close in prayer. Father, this morning, difficult at times seeing the consequences of sinful choices in the lives of people, even in our own lives, Father.

We pray and give thanks for the working of your grace and mercy toward us and pray that we would not take that lightly, Father. That with more and more discernment we get from your word and from each other, we would be able to identify those heart issues that even still exist within us where we have that tendency to lean towards something else that cannot truly be and should not be a substitute for you.

But even as we're here this morning, ready to hear a morning message as your word is presented, help us to take it as a treasure from you. As truth we need for life as we go from here, and may that truth really work within our minds and find a resting place there so that as we move through the day and have responsibility for ourselves and others, it would be your word that really acts as that foundation for things that we have to evaluate and we would walk in a way that honors you and is good for us.

In Jesus' name, amen. Thank you. Man. Man.