

Approaching Others to Help (part 2)

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[0 : 00] We continue our study this morning on addictions. We've taken a look at what the journey of addictions looks like along the way, some of its beginnings, some of what it looks like in the middle, and some of the consequences at the end.

And we want to be people, even as a verse said this morning, people who are declaring God's truth to those who are entangled and caught in addictions.

Even Paul encouraged the believers there in Galatia to help each other when you see a brother who is entangled and caught in a transgression or a sin.

And the idea of the verse there is to be entangled, entangled to such a degree that you can't get yourself out. And so you go and you help one another to become disentangled, or if a bone is broken, you reset the bone until it's healed again and able to function properly on their own.

But prior to that, we're helping each other. And part of that looks like recognizing when one is caught in addictions and entangled and in slavery and knowing then how to help them escape or come out of that entanglement.

[1 : 32] And our verse, the quote that was on the screen prior to the class, speaks to this as well from Ed Welch's book on addictions, *A Banquet in the Grave*.

Our ability to detect addiction cannot come from our own abilities to detect lies and addictions. Rather, it comes from the fact that God loves us and often exposes our sins so others can see the danger we are in and help us move toward safety.

So that's a good thing. And we can see examples of that in the scriptures when God has actually done that. An example that came to my mind is David, in his sin with Bathsheba, he went to great lengths to hide his sin with Bathsheba.

And during that time, he was experiencing some great despair, anguish, really guilt over his sin with Bathsheba and his afterward covering it up.

But God would not let him continue to go in that direction. God was all about exposing his sin and that it might be able to be dealt with.

[2 : 52] And how did he do that? Well, he did that through another individual with Nathan. And so God commissioned Nathan to go and to confront David.

Now, it had to be an extremely challenging thing for Nathan. We see that when Ananias was to go to Saul and he was concerned for his safety.

Well, to go to the king and to confront the king about his sin, that had to be pretty difficult for Nathan to do that. But he was committed to be a servant of God in reaching into the life of David.

And so he had to go to David. And to help David down this path of repentance, that he would know forgiveness of his sins once again, and be restored and experiencing and enjoying the joy and gladness that could be his in his relationship with God.

And God still reaches out to people today who are entangled in sin. He's reached out to all of us at some point, whether in salvation, certainly the need that we had of recognizing the fact that we were in bondage to sin.

[4 : 15] And he used that in bringing other people to us and declaring his name to us and praising his name before us.

He does that through people, through his people who are ready servants. We looked at a little bit, we looked at that last week when we were studying how to be prepared before we go to people. We need to know something and we ready ourselves with the love of Christ. We took a look at the love of Christ and how that was displayed toward us, how he was a ready servant to go and to manifest the love of God to those of us who at that time were entangled in sin, not caring at all about what our situation was.

So, looking at Christ, seeing the love of Christ, looking at Christ, seeing the humility of Christ, being ready and willing to go as a servant, not as one who necessarily needed to be served, but to serve and serve in the ultimate way of giving his life on the cross for us.

But then also being ready in knowing the word of Christ and being ready to take the words of Christ to those who are in need, traveling down this road of addictions.

[5 : 44] And part of the problem in being ready or being willing to go, we can deal with that in our hearts, but then we started to introduce this idea of, well, how do you know when to go?

People who are started down this road of addictions are good at hiding their sin as we all are at times. As I mentioned to you how I talked to Kate and Gage at lunchtime once about how important it is not to go with our initial feelings of wanting to hide our sin and to them from mom and dad and how really that is not reasonable when you think about what is going on and the eventual harm it does toward them and the habits that that is establishing in them.

And how to deal with problems and their own sin, but rather it's more important to see the benefits of confessing sin and not hiding sin.

And so it is in a situation like this. We want to be people who are ready to reach out to people, but many times in the lives of those people, sin is staying hidden, but again, it won't stay hidden for long.

It will be revealed at some point. I shared an example with someone last Sunday, I think it was, when we were living in Indianapolis.

[7 : 16] A friend of mine came to me and said that he was struggling with the addiction of chewing tobacco and something that he had gotten started with in high school and playing on the football team, etc.

and it just got caught and addicted to it. Well, he had stopped for a while, got married and then started up again. He was hiding it from his wife and he knew what he was doing was wrong. Well, it eventually came out and was revealed and causing trouble in his relationship with his wife. And he was wrestling with it as well.

And so he was glad at that point that it was revealed. And as it was revealed, he was able to open up and share that with me.

So we worked through that issue over a period of time and helped him establish some new habits in regard to this addiction and really his walk with God and his relationship with his wife, etc., etc.

[8 : 23] So how do we detect when an individual is headed down this road of addiction? Dr. Ed Welch provides in his book some good information and we've already shared some information on this and how it's revealed when I shared with you the different consequences that come as a result of addictions.

But I thought Ed Welch provided some interesting questions that we could be asking ourselves when we're trying to detect whether an individual actually is caught or headed down this road of addiction.

So I thought I would take a little bit of time and just share some of those questions with you.

Certainly not all the questions and all the ways that you could be using to determine if someone needs help, but I thought good enough to offer some insights that would be helpful to us.

And as I said, this all comes from his book, Addictions, A Banquet in the Grave, that really is a book I think worth getting if you have further desire to look into this a little bit more.

One of the areas certainly that is affected and where some of these, where this enslavement will show up will be in the area of our work.

[9 : 44] And so some questions to ask, Have the person's work habits changed? In the past, have they been really a good worker, very responsible, but now you're beginning to see areas where responsibilities are beginning to let go and not be taken care of?

Is the individual late getting to work? Is the individual taking extended lunch hours? Is the individual bringing home less money?

If it's related to a person, a young person in school, is their school attendance being affected in some way? And attendance being affected in their missing more days of school and not showing up at school or missing classes, cutting classes?

Are the individual's grades significantly changed? Usually lower, of course. What about relationships? Has the individual's peer group changed?

Those individuals, that group of people that you normally would have thought would have been a good influence, now the individual is not necessarily spending time there, but has changed peer groups with a group that's more accepting and encouraging of this addictive behavior that you're trying to steer the person away from.

[11 : 12] Are they more secretive? There's not as much communication taking place, whether it's with a spouse or between parents. Are they spending more time alone and maybe not even coming home or spending more time alone in their room?

If underage is the person spending more time, this relates to the peer group as well. If underage is the person spending more time with others who encourage underage smoking and drinking of alcohol?

And Ed Welch spent some time here indicating many times underage use of cigarettes and alcohol can be the gateway to illegal drugs, not just because of the chemical inherent in each one, but also the reasons for which the person uses them.

And we recognize that as we listened to some of the testimonials a few weeks ago and as I read through some of this information of why, in this case, young people get started down this path of addictions and some of the things that they're using and some of the reasons why they're using these substances, whether it's acceptance in a group or just dealing with problems that they're having difficulty dealing with, using them as an escape, whatever the reason might be.

The other point here is that when the individual uses what's technically a legal substance while he or she is underage, they develop the mindset of acting against authority.

[12 : 55] They're training themselves to have a lower regard for authority, whether it's parental authority or societal laws. And as a result, they're more likely to go against the boundaries set by, again, parents or societal laws that prohibit the use of certain illegal substances later on.

So it's almost like they're at this point when they're underage using legal substances, but using them against authority, they're training themselves to go down this path of acting against authority. So when it comes to the point when they are older and there's the opportunity to use illegal substances, well, they've already trained themselves to act against authority and are more likely to use the illegal substances as well.

So the whole area of relationships we're looking at and examining closely and see how those relationships have changed. Spiritual life, do they seem more hardened to God's Word?

Is there less reading of God's Word or is there a reaction against counsel based on God's Word?

As you begin sharing with that individual and bringing God's Word into the relationship and into the discussion, is there that push against God's Word and that relationship with God?

[14 : 23] Do they avoid being with Christians and attending church services? Have they been caught telling lies? Do they break commitments? Have they had recent problems with the law?

Physical health, emotional changes, cognitive changes, have they been losing weight? Are they more prone to colds than sinus problems? Are they unusually tired at times?

More depressed? We looked more specifically at some of these emotional changes and consequences that might be showing up in a person's life who is down here at this end of the spectrum when it comes to addictions.

Are they unusually restless at times? Anxious and fidgeting? Uncharacteristically so. They didn't used to be that way, but now you're seeing that more and more in their lives and throughout their day.

Do their pupils seem unusually large or small? Some of the effects of the drugs that they might be using or substances. And are their eyes bloodshot either after school, after seeing friends, or just any time that they come home and have been absent for a period of time?

[15 : 40] And then the more obvious ones, certainly drugs and drug paraphernalia. Have you found drugs or drug paraphernalia on the individual or in his or her room or in the car?

I know a lot of people would object. Maybe teams object. What were you doing in my room?

Looking around my room, snooping around. Don't I have any privacy at all?

Well, prayer parents do have that right to go in and observe what's going on in their child's life and in their room.

We need to be careful that we're not applying, let's say, constitutional law to what's going on in the home and in the family. And while they may object, we're going to answer that objection biblically, certainly, in what we're sharing with them and why we are doing what we're doing.

So, we do have that opportunity to go in in love and concern for them and to explore what's going on. Or, have you found papers for rolling cigarettes, unknown substances, an aluminum foil pipe, straw-like objects for snorting cocaine, et cetera, et cetera?

[17 : 02] Many things that you're looking for, and I hope just some of these questions might be helpful in just trying to detect a little bit more clearly of what might be going on.

We're just not going on with life assuming, oh, everything's okay, and certainly, that would never happen to my friend, my husband, my wife, my child, so on and so forth.

But, we're recognized in the real potential that exists there within the heart of every person to go down this path of seeking God's substitutes and falling in bondage to those substances or activities. We recognize the reality of that and we're ready to act and proceed in love for that person's welfare in God's glory.

Well, if you ask these questions and the answers you come up with indicate reasons to be concerned, well, you're going to need to take that next step which is to speak to the person.

[18 : 08] So, when is the best time to speak to someone about what you think you have detected? The broad answer is, it's better sooner than later.

If you have suspicions, don't wait until the person hits bottom. You may have to observe more closely and gather more information, but don't wait until the person is totally enslaved to the substance or whatever it is, the activity they're using as a God substitute.

You're bringing up a concern for the person's welfare and you're doing that early on. A quote from Paul Tripp's book, Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands.

Problems are addressed while still in their infancy before they mature into tragic consequences. And here's the importance as I read that quote and as I thought about this matter of going sooner than later.

That's all more effective if you've been in the habit of establishing that relationship with that individual.

[19 : 26] If what you're trying to do at this point in the person's life as you've detected there's some concern here that they might be headed down this path of addictions, it's not something new that you're trying to do with the individual.

What you've done in the past or you've done things in the past that have really laid the foundation for what you're trying to do here now as well. And that means as a parent you've been talking to this child throughout his whole life about the dimensions and the elements of sin and how they work the warfare that's really going on in all of our lives that they might be unaware of.

And certainly as children they will be unaware of many of these things that are going on. But you're not as an individual who has walked this path and have experienced some of the ways of how sin works and how you have made wrong choices and others have come to you and spoken to you and helped you down this path of repentance and now you're doing the same and that's the kind of thing you've been doing throughout your relationship with this child.

And of course not just talking about things he needs to be repenting of. Pastor John on our Wednesday nights has been talking about work and work as it's related to working in the lives of our children and how you cultivate that opportunity that ability to speak into the lives of your children and as you speak to them encouraging things praiseworthy things but then also those times when you need to offer them correction.

So what we're trying to do here at this point really is built upon that foundation of cultivating relationships and so that's the way we do it even as adults in our congregation.

[21 : 29] It's very difficult to go up to someone and confront them when they're really a stranger and not that you're going to have a close relationship with every person in the congregation but you're going to be doing that with a certain number of people and as we do that well the basis should be covered because we're all doing that.

We're cultivating relationships with each other. We're talking about the name of the Lord with our brothers. We're talking about the praise of God the wonders of God with each other.

We're asking each other how are things going? How are you doing as a husband? How are you filling your role as a husband? What do you find as a challenge in your role? This is what I'm finding that I'm challenged with and what would your counsel to me be?

We're talking about these kind of things so that when we are at this place here where whoa boy I'm seeing some things in my brother's life there that might be areas of concern and I'm not sure what's

going on there oh well I'll just turn around and go away.

No we're going to move in that direction sooner rather than later and to help that person avoid the greater consequences if he was to continue on down this path of disobedience or addictions whatever it might be.

[22 : 57] So addressing them while they're still in their infancy is another example. The older you get you have more examples to share with people I guess it is. Carol and I worked at a children's agency once a Christian agency and it was an agency that had group homes where children could no longer live with their parents either due to the parents abuse of the children or the children's abuse of the parents or both and so during part of our responsibilities in this ministry we were the group home house parents.

We were called in to be somewhat the permanent parents although that's not what we had signed up for but the original group home parents had had enough and they were out and so we were called in had to go right in and be in that group home at that time I think there were six teenagers in that home and so we were called upon to parent these children and so I was out mowing the lawn one day and it was kind of a point in the yard that was away from the road and I looked down there was a cigarette about laying in the yard wonder how that got here and I looked at it and it wasn't near the road didn't flow in there and we hadn't had any roof work done in the house recently by anybody that may have been smoking and interestingly it wasn't too far from one of the windows of the house where the boys were staying in the house and so I was putting two to two together and figured okay the boys are smoking in the house

I didn't have any other proof beyond that and so I chose not to do anything about it at that point but rather thinking that if they're doing that it's going to be revealed at some point in the future a little bit further down the road here I wasn't going to let it go too long because it certainly was something that was putting the rest of the household in danger as they were smoking secretly in the house and sure enough it wasn't long after that that it was revealed more and so I did have the opportunity to speak with them and deal with that situation and help them through what the path of repentance looked like for them but all that was based on that relationship that I had had with them prior to that opportunities that we had to talk over issues in their own lives and help them understand and communicate to them that listen I'm here to help you and to share with you things that I've learned along the way that will help you deal with issues like this so better sooner than later now the individual may not listen to you but let's not assume that and therefore not go in

Proverbs 24 11 through 12 it says rescue those being led away to death hold back those staggering towards slaughter if you say but we knew nothing about this does not he who weighs the heart perceive it does not he who guards your life know it will he not repay each person according to what he has done so the idea here is when you see someone headed toward danger destruction death will do something to intervene do something that will contribute to that person's deliverance out of their situation and don't give the excuse you didn't know anything about it when you actually did as I looked at this verse and sought further understanding the ideas consider God who guards your soul is that how you want him to deal with you well no he can give thanks that he didn't deal with us that way but he did draw near to us and in my reading in

Ezekiel this past week or past weeks it's kind of like the idea of the watchman in Ezekiel it's his responsibility to sound the warning when he sees the danger out there the watchman sees it and he sounds the warning to those people who don't know the dangers there and if the people if he does sound that warning and the people disregard it well he's not accountable for their response in that case he's responsible for sounding the warning now if he sees the danger and doesn't sound the warning he is accountable for his unfaithfulness to God and what the people suffer as a result of that I mean they're still accountable as we're talking in this situation with choices that they make but we want to be sure that we are being faithful ambassadors of God people who are manifesting displaying the love of

[28 : 26] Christ to those that we see are in need and are in danger of destruction death whatever it is the consequences that we've been talking about so we're not just going to stand back and say I don't know anything about that and put the blinders on like I don't want to deal with that that's too big for me on and on whatever excuses we might want to give and I'll be honest with you it's not a fun thing to do when we think back to the group home it was not the most enjoyable thing to confront the teens or whoever it was at the time about things we had been seen in their lives because at times some of those responses weren't good and I think oh no here I go again another

day like this and the anguish and I shouldn't have said anything I would have had peace throughout the day but peace can't be my goal and my goal is to be a faithful watchman out of love for God and love for the other person seeking that other person's welfare so the need for us to move in that direction when we see some of the things that would be a concern and a harm to that individual so again how do we move forward in helping these people well there's some more preparations that we can make before we go we can prepare our hearts to go with the right motive and the right motive certainly is for

God's glory in the person's life going back to that reference point it's out of this reference point that I operate what's at stake here in this person's life well the glory of God is at stake in this person's life a person was created for God's glory the person was created to be a worshiper of the one true God that he would know that the Lord our God is one and God in Jesus Christ is that one so I need to move in that person's direction so that that person would be manifesting the majesty of God in and through their life God is worthy to be worshipped by that person and that's not what's happening in that person's life so I must go with a message that will help that individual know God and worship him again where that's that's our point of reference we're not just looking for some sort of behavioral change here in the person without an acknowledgement of God for the glory of God and again that person's eternal well-being

God is our reference point the gospel and grace of God and that person's relationship with God and knowing God and worshiping God so I'm going with that message that will help that person move in that direction the other motive for the other person's welfare the person is headed down a path that leads to his or her present and eternal destruction I have the truth that will set him or her free and I need to speak that truth in love to that person it's for his welfare again not for my benefit and comfort back here that very well could be if I'm in relationship with this person say it's my spouse or my children there will be some benefits to me as a result of that I'll enjoy some great riches with my spouse now or my children etc but I'm not going with that as my sole goal it's again as the glory of God loving God with all my heart soul mind and strength loving my neighbor as myself that kind of attention I would be giving to myself I'm giving it to that individual and taking the truth to that person our goal is not to pressure people into behavioral changes but to encourage heart change that impacts the life and as we've said in the past we're looking for behavioral changes but behavioral changes that come out of a heart that's now devoted to God to loving

God above self out of a heart that's really worshiping God so go with the right motive in approaching the individual prepare to go humbly as one who also struggles with sin while I might not be struggling with say drugs or alcohol addiction I'm still familiar with the various elements of sin and how they work in temptation in my own heart so this is going to influence how I go to that person I'm not going in with a condemning heart and I'm going as a fellow struggler and Paul recognized this and wrote to Timothy in the same way as he Titus I mean as he wrote to Titus about how the people should be walking in their daily lives he tells Timothy at one time we too were foolish disobedient deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures

I mean that's that's the way I was we lived in malice and envy being hated and hating one another I mean that's going to create some real humility in my heart and it's going to affect my tone the words I use as I approach someone who is at this time stuck in this enslavement and bondage and who is acting this way I was there too and so I can understand what they're experiencing but then he goes on but when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared he saved us not because of righteous things we had done but because of his mercy so we still see that humility he didn't say that well this is the way I was but I pulled myself up by my own bootstraps and you can do that too no reference point we're taking this person back to what the real need is and that is that right relationship with God he saved us not because of righteous things we had done but because of his mercy he saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the

[35 : 06] Holy Spirit so go as one who is very familiar with what the struggle of sin really looks like but also be prepared to hear the truth we hope the person tells the truth so we must be ready to hear it even if it's something we hoped we would never hear from a loved one a spouse a friend a child we've got to be ready to hear that truth and so be thankful for the truth because again that opens the door for you to begin sharing the truth that they need in that situation they need within their own heart and they need within their own lives outwardly in the way they're responding to life listen for comments that indicate what's going on in the person's heart that's where we're trying to reach into the depths of that person's heart out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks the

person acts so all we're seeing is very closely connected with what's going on inside what do they want so badly that they're willing to pursue this path in order to get it or to keep it and how does that not correspond with true worship of

God and living as one who's made in the image of God for the glory of God that's what we're trying to evaluate and see and help that person see listen for conclusions that that person's making about himself or God or life that are distorted certainly from the counsel that God provides so being a good listener I keep going back to this verse that has been helpful for me throughout the years he who answers before listening that's his folly and his shame so we're going to be asking good questions we're going to be listening carefully so that we're providing truth from God's word counsel that really fits the issue at hand and then be prepared to speak the truth speak the truth related to the person's behavior or conversation again you're going to speak to the individual about words specific words specific behaviors that you've detected in his or her life that indicate the possibility of a life dominating sin or addiction so you've got specific examples that you have observed over a period of time and you're going to share those with the individual to help them see some things that again that they have not seen or maybe that they're blind to because of their devotion to whatever it is that they want they're not seeing it the question you can ask yourself before you go is what does this person need to see about himself

God and others life truth or change that he does not see and how can I help him see it our goal is not to communicate a list of offenses we've got that information but we're there to help people see themselves our goal is to encourage people to look at their behavior and examine their hearts with biblical eyes that's what we're bringing into this situation where we've been able to stand back and observe with truth the counsel of God and see some things that this individual is blind to at this time that they're not seeing so I'm seeing it so now how can I go and help them see what they're not seeing God had done this numerous times in the scriptures he sent his prophets to Israel over and over again to confront them about idolatry rebellion against him and they spoke specifically they had identified specific ways in which they had rebelled against God whether it was unjust dealings suppressing aliens fatherless and the widows oppressing them shedding innocent blood and on and on it went we see it in Paul and James too when they wrote to the churches at times they identified specific sinful activities that were present that the people needed to deal with and repent of probably quite possibly things they weren't seeing themselves but God in his grace and mercy moving in the lives of say the apostle

Paul writing to the Corinthians I hear there's divisions among you you know these things should not be or James writing to the people he was writing to indicating I understand that you're showing favoritism in the congregation here so that kind of identification because they were living in a way that was not glorifying God and not for their benefit and welfare as a congregation as a people who knew God so be prepared to speak the truth specifically in helping the person see things that they might be missing but be prepared also to speak truth from God's word that's appropriate to what you hear that specific truth related to the heart issue or the behavior God has provided all the counsel that we need for life and a life of godliness while we're in this world and so we are the messengers where we are taking the truth and as his ambassadors declaring to our brothers the name of the

Lord or any other counsel that they need to hear so when to go some beginning ideas of how we go next week we may continue this theme of what does it look like an intervention with a person maybe a private personal confrontation or a more public confrontation or as the world would call it interventions group interventions but then also starting to take a look at what is the response that we make and that we have toward those who have come to us as we said earlier in our classes we all wrestle with something that we have a tendency to use as a god substitute and we're hoping that others are coming to us and helping us ministering to us well what is my response to look like and what we're talking about is what does repentance look like and so that that individual moves from this place where they're addicted to a god substitute and now coming back down this path of repentance to being a true worshiper of god our time is up let's close in prayer father this morning we thank you again for the way you've intervened in our lives father that's a great act of mercy and grace toward us who are undeserving we want to be those people father where we can also show forth that grace and mercy and compassion to one another certainly but even beyond one another to those who are yet in bondage to sin so give us and build within us those kind of hearts of love and compassion and father knowing and then to really know how to live that out in our relationships

in jesus name amen