

I. What is “addiction” according to Scripture?

- A. The Bible refers directly to drunkenness and clearly teaches that drunkenness is sin (Prov. 20:1, Rom. 13:13, Gal. 5:21, Eph. 5:18, 1 Pet. 4:3). Drunkenness is the prototype biblical example of “addiction” which informs all others (cf. Welch, *Addictions*, 22).
- B. The most common way the Bible describes the experience of “addiction” is by comparing it to “bondage,” “slavery,” being “enslaved” or “ruled” (John 8:33-34, Rom. 6:6ff, 7:14, 23-24, 16:18, Gal. 4:8-9, 1 Cor. 6:12, Titus 2:3, 3:3)
- C. A comprehensive, biblical view of sin reveals that sin is both an inescapable inner principle, as well as an overt, calculated rebellion. Scripture teaches that people are fully responsible for both.
1. Sin is a “law” (Rom. 7:23) – inescapable, inner principle
 2. Sin is like a taskmaster, and people are slaves to it (John 8:34, Rom. 6:6)
 3. Sin is an internal power that desires to control people (Gen. 4:7)
 4. Sin is also overt lawlessness (1 John 3:4)
- D. This explains in part the culture’s view: Sin sometimes *feels* like a disease, like something *in us* rather than something that we choose to do (Rom. 7:15, 17, cf. Is. 1:5-6)
1. “If we think of sin only as overt, calculated disobedience, we will not find what we are looking for in Scripture. But sin is more than self-conscious rebellion against God. It is also a blinding power that wants to control and enslave us.” – Ed Welch, *Addictions*, 32.
 2. The main difference between the cultural view of addiction and the biblical view is that the culture calls it a “compulsion,” an “irresistible impulse,” which implies that the person is not in control or responsible for his actions. In contrast, the Bible teaches that sin is indeed slavery, but that people are completely responsible for it.
 3. Martin Luther’s comments on “responsible bondage” are unmatched: “a man without the Spirit of God does not do evil against his will, under pressure, as though he were taken by the scruff of the neck and dragged into it... but he does it spontaneously and voluntarily. And this willingness or volition is something which he cannot in his own strength eliminate, restrain or alter.” – Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, 102.
 4. Ed Welch concludes, “This enlarged perspective indicates that in sin, we are both hopelessly out of control and shrewdly calculating; victimized yet responsible.

Addicts genuinely feel out of control, but they are also making choices rooted in their own self-centeredness and pride.” – Welch, *Addictions*, 34, 36.

E. “Addiction” needs to be understood through the lens of worship:

1. Ruling desires (James 1:13-15, 4:1-3)
2. Idolatry (Ex. 20:3-5, Ezek. 14:1-6, Jer. 10, Psalm 115)
3. Replacement (Rom. 1:18-25, Eph. 4:22-24)
4. Training and habits (1 Tim. 4:7, Eph. 4:22-24)
5. Other texts to explore: Ex. 32, Jer. 10, Ps. 115:8, Is. 44
6. “...Scripture permits us to broaden our definition of idolatry so that it includes anything on which we set our affections and indulge as an excessive and sinful attachment. Therefore, the idols that we can see... are certainly not the whole problem. Idolatry includes anything we worship: the lust for pleasure, respect, love, power, control, or freedom from pain. Furthermore, the problem is not outside of us, located in liquor store or on the Internet; the problem is within us. Alcohol and drugs are essentially satisfiers of deeper idols. The problem is not the idolatrous substance; it is the false worship of the heart.” - Ed Welch, *Addictions*, 49.

F. The components of “addiction”

1. Worship
2. Desires
3. Deception
4. Pleasure (something attractive)
5. Substance (foreign, introduced into the body from outside, or natural, already present in the body)
6. Habit (training, ritual, etc.)
7. Body component (the physiological aspect)

G. Addiction and identity

1. Addiction both expresses identity and influences identity
 - a. Expresses – Addiction reveals your heart and thus your identity (1 Cor. 6:9-10) – I view myself through the lens of who or what I worship
 - b. Influences – Addiction shapes your identity through particular idolatry (Ps. 115) – e.g., “I am a cocaine addict” vs. “I am a football player, I am a mother, I am _____”
2. There are only two choices for identity: old Adam or the new Adam
 - a. Old Adam – characterized by sin, fallenness, idolatry and wickedness (Rom. 5:12-21)
 - b. New Adam – characterized by life, transformation and worship (Rom. 5:12-21)

- II. “Addictions” and believers: How the gospel transforms
- A. “Suppose a man to be a true believer, and yet finds in himself a powerful indwelling sin, leading him captive to the law of it, consuming his heart with trouble, perplexing his thoughts, weakening his soul as to duties of communion with God, disquieting him as to peace, and perhaps defiling his conscience and exposing him to hardening through the deceitfulness of sin, - what shall he do? What course shall he take and insist on for the mortification of this sin, lust, distemper or corruption?” – John Owen, *The Mortification of Sin* (Christian Heritage), 12.
- B. What happens at conversion?
1. New heart (Ezek. 36:26)
 2. Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9)
 3. Made “alive” spiritually (Eph. 2:5, Col. 2:13)
 4. The “old self” is crucified (Rom. 6:6)
 5. Identified “in Christ” (Rom. 6:4-5)
 6. No longer a “slave to sin” (Rom. 6:6)
- C. Union with Christ (Romans 6)
1. A new identity – Believers are “in Christ” (vv. 3-4)
 2. A new ability – Believers don’t have to sin (vv. 5-10)
 3. A new practice – Believers should use their capacities for righteousness, not sin (vv. 11-13)
 4. A new position – Believers are not under law, but under grace (v. 14)
 5. A new growth – Believers will progressively grow in holiness (vv. 15-19)
 6. A new future – Believers will inherit eternal life (vv. 20-23)
- D. What is “addiction” in a true believer?
1. Flesh – the remaining presence of sin, power of sin and the desire to sin (Gal. 5:16-26)
 - a. “The choicest believers, who are assuredly freed from the condemning power of sin, ought yet to make it their business, all their days, to mortify the indwelling power of sin.” – Owen, 20.
 - b. “Sin doth not only still abide in us, but is still acting, still labouring to bring forth the deeds of the flesh” (28)
 2. Allowing sin to “reign” and behavior to become one’s “master” (Rom. 6:12, 1 Cor. 6:12)
 3. Living to please self, not God (2 Cor. 5:9, 15). A struggle with idolatry that replaces God (Rom. 1:18ff).
 4. Continuation of living in established, sinful habits. Believers continue to live in what “feels” like slavery, not so much because they have not acknowledged their redemption, but because they are not daily mortifying old habits and replacing them with new, godly ones (Rom. 6:12-13, 19, 1 Tim. 4:7, Heb. 5:14)

- a. “As a sinful human being bent toward sin, you have practiced sinful practices so that they have become part of you, just as they have become part of all of us. There is no question that the habit capacity is there. The problem is that it has been used for the wrong purposes. The capacity of habit works both ways. It operates in either direction. You can’t avoid habitual living, because this is the way God made you.” – Jay Adams, *Godliness Through Discipline*, 11.
- b. Replacing deception with truth (2 Cor. 10:5, Phil. 4:8)
- c. Learning self-control over one’s body and desires (1 Cor. 9:27)
- d. Impulse and eye control (Job 31:7)

E. Living new identity

1. Rom. 6 – “Therefore...”
2. Identity amnesia (2 Pet. 1:8) – “When you forget that you belong to Christ, you quit pursuing things that are your in Christ” – Paul Tripp
3. Abide in the vine (John 15)

III. Resources

Identity and Union with Christ

SPIRITUAL TRUTH:	MEANING:	DESIGNED TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEM OF:	SCRIPTURE REFERENCES:
I AM IN CHRIST	Union with Jesus, connected to Him	Personhood,	John 15, 1 Cor. 1:30
I AM ACCEPTED	God considers me with favor. He brings me into His family as I am	Rejection	Rom. 15:7
I AM ADOPTED	I am part of God's family	Belonging, relationship	Rom. 8:15, 23
I AM FORGIVEN	God treats me as if I had not sinned	Guilt, memories	Eph. 1:7
I AM JUSTIFIED	God declares me "not guilty, but righteous"	Legal culpability	Rom. 3:24
I AM REDEEMED	Freed from the power of sin	Bondage	Rom. 3:24
I AM RESCUED	I am saved from sin and its consequences	Danger, darkness	Col. 1:13
I AM RECONCILED	My relationship with God has been restored	Separation, alienation	2 Cor. 5:18-20
I AM DEAD TO SIN	My old, sinful self has died with Christ	Old, sinful self/identity	Rom. 6:5-11
I AM RAISED UNTO NEW LIFE	I have been raised with Christ with new spiritual life	Spiritual death, lack of spiritual life	Rom. 6:5-11
I AM A MEMBER OF CHRIST'S BODY	I belong to Christ, I am a member of His body	Belonging, relationship	Eph. 5:30, Rom. 12:4-5
I AM NO LONGER UNDER JUDGMENT	Propitiation (God's wrath for my sin satisfied in Christ's death)	Deserved judgment, punishment	Rom. 3:25, 1 John 2:2
I AM KNOWN BY GOD	God knows me personally	Relationship, belief that God doesn't know or care	Rom.8:29, Ps. 139
I AM CHOSEN	Out of His own wisdom, God picked me to know Him	Rejection	Eph. 1
I AM LOVED	God loves me	Love	Eph. 2:4
I AM A NEW CREATURE	I am new in Christ. I am not who I once was	Brokenness, desire for new beginning	2 Cor. 5:17
I AM HOLY (SANCTIFIED)	God has set me apart for His special purpose	Impurity, purposelessness	1 Cor. 1:2, 6:11
I AM SECURE	I will never lose my relationship with God	Insecurity	Rom. 8:35-39
I AM GOD'S WORKMANSHIP	I am made by God for a purpose to do His good works	Purposelessness	Eph. 2:10