

Defining Addiction (Enslavement):

A Biblical Response to Counsel the Addict Involving Both Soul and Body

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## Abstract

Title: Defining Addiction (enslavement):  
A Biblical Response to the helping the Whole Person (Soul/body) of  
Addiction  
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Addiction is described as being given over to an undesirable habit to the point of dependence. It is a diagnosis of a substance use disorder which is based on a pathological pattern of behaviors related to use of substance or activity. The most popular theory of addiction is the medical model which views addiction as an illness with genetic or physical causes. However, some psychologists reject this theory and believe that addictions are psychological in origin.

Addiction also includes gambling, sex/pornography, overeating, Internet/TV/movies and disorders due to the activation reward system similar to drugs or alcohol. The substance related disorders are divided into two groups: substance use disorders and substance-induced disorders. The diagnostic criteria for abuse and dependence are distinct: anyone meeting one or more of the “abuse” criteria within a 12-month period would receive the “abuse” diagnosis. Anyone with three or more during the 12-month period would receive a “dependence” diagnosis. The tests conducted are purely subjective through observation, and there is still no hard evidence of objective testing to claim that addiction is a biological disease affecting the processes within the brain.

The human brain is the most complex part of the human body with researchers agreeing that they have only touched the surface. Imaging studies have provided new insights of the effects of dopamine (DA) in drug addiction of (or) activity abuse such as gambling or pornography. Dopamine is a type of neurotransmitter that your body makes. The nervous system uses dopamine to send messages between the nerve cells and that is why it is also called a chemical messenger. However, DA is not the pleasure chemical. The chemical responsible for pleasure is an opioid. DA is a chemical that is derived from amino acids which are the building block of proteins and is one of many neurotransmitters in the brain. When the information is sent it tells the brain to remember that experience and now wants it. This is the correlation between addiction and dopamine. DA cements the pleasure by remembering that experience.

A biblical counselor can effectively minister to an addict with God’s infallible Word (2Tim 3:16). The bible contains everything that we need for life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3). This research project is to serve as a guide to both the counselor and layperson to minister to those battling various addictions by establishing that we are made in the image of God, so we are primarily spiritual. This will also help those who are misdiagnosed with various disorders. It is my prayer that this would be helpful to both the counselor and layperson to minister to those God sends our way. The ultimate goal is their transformation to be more like Christ. Addiction in Scripture is call “bondage” or “enslavement,” which God calls sin.

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## I. Introduction

### A. Purpose Statement

1. One of my main motives in writing this thesis was after observing firsthand a young man named “Bill” who battled addiction for over a decade, especially with cocaine and other stimulants. In the 1980’s he went in several treatment centers, a six-month outpatient program, attended 12-step programs and received secular counseling/therapy including seeing a psychiatrist. During one of his 20-minute psychiatric evaluations, he was diagnosed with substance abuse disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, attention deficit disorder, depression, borderline bipolar and suicidal thoughts. The physician treating him wanted to put him on anti-depressants which he refused. Bill only experienced short-term victories with staying sober. He walked away more discouraged with no hope because of his long battle with addiction.
2. One thought on the word “addiction” carries the idea of involuntary dependence, but for the purpose of this thesis outline, it will be used since it is common in today’s culture. The biblical term is bondage, enslavement or idolatry. The purpose of this thesis is to help the field of biblical counselors to think biblically about addiction and understand the chemistry of addiction, especially dopamine. The Bible is sufficient to counsel the whole body (soul/body) for those who are sinfully addicted to a substance or activity (thesis statement). There is real biblical hope for lasting change through the transformation process.
3. We live in a world today that not only self-indulges but is absorbed with self. Sex, drugs, food and adrenaline highs are the common addictions in our culture today.

The list continues to grow but the common thread is to understand addiction and the chemistry of addiction such as dopamine and its role in addiction.

4. Addiction as well as other vices have been accepted as a disease model by the psychology field for decades. In fact, the psychology field have the support of the American Medical Association, which twenty-one years ago formally declared alcoholism as a disease.<sup>1</sup> The medical model dominates because all addictions including alcoholism feels like a disease. It feels like something else takes when the vice is available.<sup>2</sup>
5. The claim by the psychology field headed by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder Fifth Edition (DSM-5) may be of some use in helping to highlight symptoms and behaviors to be considered that need to be addressed but it does not address the main issue which is a heart issue. There has been no gene testing to prove such claim of the disease model in any of the substance-related disorders.<sup>3</sup>
6. While there are many approaches to addiction, at the heart level there are really two approaches: God's biblical approach and mankind's worldly approach. Nearly every modern writer or therapist on addiction uses the worldly model to deal with addictive thoughts and behaviors.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Edward T. Welch, *Blame it on the Brain? Distinguishing Chemical Imbalances, Brain Disorders, and Disobedience* (Phillipsburg, N.J., P&R Pub., 1998), 183-184.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 186.

<sup>3</sup> *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: Dsm-5*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Washington, D.D.: American Psychiatric Association, 2013), 481.

<sup>4</sup> Mark E. Shaw, *The Heart of Addiction: A Biblical Perspective* (Bemidji, MN, Focus Publishing 2018) 11.

7. Man-centered ideas focus on pleasing man while God-centered ideas focus on pleasing and living for God. When this occurs man will find pleasure in God. We are commanded by God to be God focused. Paul says, “See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elementary spirits of the world, and not according to Christ” (Col 2:8).
8. The Bible is clear that we live in a fallen world. Our physical bodies also suffer from the effects of sin (Rm 5:12; 2 Cor 4:16), so we must have compassion with those who are addicted and remember he or she is a sufferer and sinner like all of us. Only God has the power to change someone’s heart. Without life in Christ there is no hope. A person needs the Holy Spirit to take God’s truth and empower that person towards a new life of godliness which is the real hope (2 Pet 1:3).
9. The aim of this work is to enter the world of a person who is addicted to a substance or activity and help minister to the whole person (soul/body). Through this process he or she will not only be filled with real hope but God will be greatly glorified as this man or woman is biblically transformed into the image of Jesus Christ. He or she is a sinner and sufferer just like the rest of us.
10. The focus in counseling an addict is to counsel the whole person but we must always start at the heart. This is critical because without the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit to the transforming power of the Word of God there can be no life and transformation (2 Pet 1:3). Biblical counseling is the whole counsel of God delivered in a systematic, understandable, relevant, and loving manner.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> John Street, *Men Counseling Men: A Biblical Guide to the Major issues Men Face* (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 2013), 27.

## B. Intended Audience and Scope

1. The intended audience is counselors and laypersons of the church who desire to counsel those who are addicted regardless of the addiction. He or she will also gain a biblical perspective of the role of dopamine in addiction. The Word of God with the guidance by the Holy Spirit can minister to those who are addicted.
2. The intent of this research is to bring more awareness to the counselor and layperson on what secular psychologist who deem addiction a disease and how dopamine aids with addiction. The Bible teaches that we must be born again (Jn 3:3, 7) by the regeneration of the Holy Spirit and that the Word of God is totally sufficient for personal sanctification.<sup>6</sup> The bible is totally sufficient in everything pertaining to life and godliness (2 Pet 1:3; 2 Tim 3:16).

## C. Definition of Terminology

1. The medical community defines addiction as a disorder involving complex interactions between biological and environmental variables.<sup>7</sup> Addiction is commonly identified with habitual nonmedical self-administration of drugs. Addiction is also characterized by intoxication and/or withdrawal symptoms.<sup>8</sup> Merriam Webster's Dictionary defines addiction as follows: "Addiction is the quality or state of being addicted. A compulsive need for and use of a habit-forming substance."<sup>9</sup> It is being given to an undesirable habit to the point of

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<sup>6</sup> Ed Hindson & Howard Eyrich. *Totally Sufficient: The Bible & Christian Counseling* (Ross-shire, Great Britain.: Christian Focus Pub., 2004), 238-239.

<sup>7</sup> Nora D. Volkow, "The Addicted Human Brain: Insights from Imaging Studies," *The Addicted Human Brain: Insights from Imaging Studies* 111, no. 10 (May 2003): pp. 1444-1451.

<sup>8</sup> Roy A. Wise and Mykel A. Robble, "Dopamine and Addiction," *Annual Review of Psychology* 71, no. 1 (April 2020): pp. 79-106, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-010418-103337>, 79,81.

dependence. Psychologists make a distinction between psychological and physical addiction.<sup>10</sup>

2. According to the DSM-5, substance-related disorders encompass ten separate classes of drugs: Alcohol; caffeine; cannabis; hallucinogens; inhalants; opioids; sedatives; stimulants; tobacco; and other unknown substances. All drugs that are taken in excess have in common direct activation of brain reward system, which is involved in the reinforcement of behaviors and the production of memories.<sup>11</sup> The world broadly defines “addiction” as the persistent compulsive use of a substance known to be used by the user to be harmful.<sup>12</sup> We are living in a culture today where the language of addictions being controlled and manipulative by secular categories: Words like diseases, treatment, and even the word addiction conveys the idea that these problems are ultimately the cause of the body rather than the soul, which is in complete contradiction of the Bible and its teaching.<sup>13</sup>
3. Definition of Dopamine. The chemistry of addiction involves dopamine which is associated with the pleasure centers of the brain. It is released particularly in areas

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<sup>9</sup> “Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary: Eleventh Edition,” in *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary: Eleventh Edition*, 11th ed. (Springfield: Merriam-Webster, 2007), 14.

<sup>10</sup> Marshall Asher and Mary Asher, “The Christian's Guide to Psychological Terms,” in *The Christian's Guide to Psychological Terms*, second (Bemidji, MN: Focus Pub., 2014), pp. 4-4, 4.

<sup>11</sup> Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: Dsm-5, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Association, 2013), 481.

<sup>12</sup> Mark E. Shaw, *The Heart of Addiction: A Biblical Perspective* (Bemidji, MN., Focus Publishing, 2018), 23.

<sup>13</sup> Edward T. Welch, *Addictions: A banquet in the Grave, Finding Hope in the Power of the Gospel* (Phillipsburg, NJ., P & R Publishing, 2001), xvi.

such as the nucleus accumbens and striatum.<sup>14</sup> Dopamine is a chemical that is derived from the amino acids which are the building blocks of proteins. Dr. Kopelowicz said, “Dopamine is one of many neurotransmitters. It is how one brain cell communicates with another brain cell. The pleasure sensation is a different chemical called an ‘opioid.’ What dopamine does is strengthen the memory of the pleasurable experience and wants to pursue it.”<sup>15</sup>

#### D. Research Methodology

1. Majority of my research will be done through library resources, internet searches, and professional journal articles. Also, an interview with Dr. Alex L. Kopelowicz, M.D. Professor and Vice-Chair in the Department of Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences, David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA Medical Director of the San Fernando Mental Health Center (SFMHC) Chief of Psychiatry at Olive View-UCLA Medical Center.
2. Additional interview: Mark Shaw on Addiction. He has his D.Min., is Founder of Truth in Love Ministries. He is author, speaker, ordained minister, and certified Biblical counselor – ACBC, IABC as well as CADAC. He is head of “The Addiction Connection” (TAC).
3. Dr. John Street – I was present in his lecture of Addiction and understanding the chemistry of addiction. He has his MDiv, DMin, is Chair of MABC at TMU and President of ACBC Board of Trustees. Also, author, speaker and pastor.

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<sup>14</sup> John D. Street, “Counseling Drug Abuse and Addiction,” *Counseling Drug Abuse and Addiction* (2021), 15.

<sup>15</sup> Kopelowicz, M.D., Alex. Understanding Addiction and Dopamine. Personal, June 24, 2021.

## II. Defining the Problem

This section will address the issue of addiction within the church as a spiritual issue and not a disease and the importance of having a biblical perspective when addressing this topic.

### A. Lack of Understanding Addiction

1. Unfortunately, many within the church view addiction as a disease. This is due to the influence of secular psychology. Because of this view, the church often feels unequipped, thinking that the person can only be treated by trained professionals or secular treatment centers. The immediate reaction is that the church is not equipped or sufficient to help, so many Christians overlook the spiritual essence to addiction.
2. Having a biblical worldview on addiction and understanding man's heart is necessary and there is no objective test to prove that a disease model is the source of addiction. As Christians, we must approach all addictions as a spiritual issue and not a disease.
3. Addiction can be very challenging and complex for many reasons. Addiction is a spiritual issue; however, the body is impacted as well. The soul and body work together and when the soul is not operating properly it affects the body. When the body is not functioning properly it affects the soul. This is recognized as the outer man and the inner man (Deut. 4:15-18; Mat 10:28). Christians hold on the view of "dichotomy" which means that the brain (body) and the mind (soul) are separate but operate together. The bible offers answers to those who are addicted and offers relief through the gospel (Mat 11:28-30).

4. The bible is clear in that the main problems of addiction are mainly spiritual (Mk 7:21-23). This is important to remember as we minister the Word of God to our fellow sinners and suffers (2 Tim 3:16; Heb 4:12).

#### B. The Complexity of Addiction

1. Some would argue that biblical counseling is not only too simplistic in its approach to addiction but is narrow minded because of the advancement of science due to the various imaging studies that can be done on the brain. The opposite is true. Biblical counseling offers a multi-faceted approach where both spiritual and physical issues are consideration, whereas secular views assume the nature of addiction is physical. Understanding the role of dopamine in addiction will help the counselor better understand why addiction to a substance or activity is difficult to overcome.
2. Typically, an addiction diagnosis is an evaluation of the person's behavior based on certain questions and criteria. Despite many studies on alcoholism and drug abuse, none of them show that addictive behavior is clearly biological. There has been no gene or a chemical imbalance found. Most researchers are quick to point out that genes can influences people, which is of course true. But there is a huge difference between being influenced by genetics and being determined by it.<sup>16</sup> Several behavioral addictions have been hypothesized as having similarities to

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<sup>16</sup> Edward T. Welch, *Blame It on the Brain?: Distinguishing Chemical Imbalances, Brain Disorders, and Disobedience* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1998), 196.

substance addictions, which behaviors to include as behavior addictions is still open for debate.<sup>17</sup>

3. The whole of a person is made up of soul and body, or also known as the inner and outer man, and each one will have an effect on the other (2 Cor 4:16); as both the inner and outer man connect it will reveal what is happening in the heart as it is manifested in the addiction process in the outer man (Lk 6:45).
4. The brain cannot make a person sin or keep a person from following Jesus Christ in faith and obedience. Each person's abilities—brain strengths and weaknesses are unique and worthy of careful study. Brain problems can expose heart problems. Sinful hearts can lead to physical illness, while upright hearts can lead to health.<sup>18</sup>
5. In the bible, God makes it very clear that addiction is a sin nature problem and everyone since Adam and Eve is born with sin nature, so he or she has the potential to become physical addicted to a substance or activity.<sup>19</sup> It is a heart issue and cannot be limited to the physical nature of a person (Mat 15:18-19). It is a worship disorder that God has labeled sin because the person is worshiping a vice instead of God (1 Cor 10:31).

### C. Addiction in the Church

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<sup>17</sup> Jon E. Grant et al., "Introduction to Behavioral Addictions," *The American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse* 36, no. 5 (2010): pp. 233-241, <https://doi.org/10.3109/00952990.2010.491884>.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 49.

<sup>19</sup> Mark E. Shaw, *The Heart of Addiction: A Biblical Perspective* (Bemidji, MN., Focus Publishing, 2018), viii.

1. How do we as a church respond to a person who is addicted to a substance or sinful activity? Do we send them to a psychiatrist or psychologist, or a treatment center? I believe the cure for any addiction is God, His Word and His church starting with the gospel of Jesus Christ.
2. Just as any other sinner needs a care and love of the church, so does an addicted person (Gal 6:1-2). Unlike a physical disease such as cancer or diabetes, addiction in its nature is a spiritual worship disorder that needs the hope of the gospel. No matter the physical side effects that can come with some addictions due to heavy and long use, the cure cannot not be complete without the gospel.
3. The very first step in helping an addicted person is to present the gospel of Jesus Christ and be as certain as possible of their salvation in Christ. God promises with the help of the Spirit there will be change in the person's life and godly fruit will be seen (Gal 5:23-24).

#### D. Chemistry of Addiction

1. The human brain is the most complex part in the human body and is considered the “crown jewel of the human body.”<sup>20</sup>
2. Long term drug abuse or engaging in illicit activity will result in decreased dopamine production. The motivation to use is still there but the pleasure one gets is reduced. Therefore, long-term abuse results in the person increasing the abuse because the dopamine is “worn out” and does not work as effective as it used to if

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<sup>20</sup> “Brain Basics: Know Your Brain,” National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, May 31, 2021), <https://www.ninds.nih.gov/Disorders/Patient-Caregiver-Education/Know-Your-Brain>.

at all. This is noted in individuals who seem “dead pan” and less interested in most things.<sup>21</sup>

3. Habitual intake of addictive drugs results in decreased dopamine receptors expressed in the brain and therefore resulting in reduced interest in activities.<sup>22</sup>
4. Can DA levels be restored? “Unfortunately, increased drug use continues to wear down the dopamine system which explains why it takes increasingly more drug to obtain that same pleasure feeling. However, it is possible to restore and rebuild the dopamine level in the brain but it is challenging, will take time and is not an easy road to follow. DA can be restored by pursuing pleasurable activities. Concrete examples noted by Dr. Kopelowicz including getting out with relatives or friends and participating in activities such as going for a walk, engaging in good conversation, and fellowship (church). It will take months, sometimes even years depending on how damaged the dopamine system is.”<sup>23</sup> Dr. John Street of The Master’s University and Seminary said, “Just calling addiction sin doesn’t necessary help one to counsel the addict. It will be a long process.”<sup>24</sup>
5. Further, neuroimaging studies report that changes in brain dopamine neurotransmission in people was correlated more with their subjective ratings of

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<sup>21</sup> Kopelowicz, M.D., Alex. Understanding Addiction and Dopamine. Personal, June 24, 2021.

<sup>22</sup> Roy A. Wise and Mykel A. Robble, “Dopamine and Addiction,” *Annual Review of Psychology* 71, no. 1 (April 2020): pp. 79-106, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-010418-103337>, 79,81.

<sup>23</sup> Kopelowicz, M.D., Alex. Understanding Addiction and Dopamine. Personal, June 24, 2021.

<sup>24</sup> John D. Street, “Counseling Drug Abuse and Addiction,” *Counseling Drug Abuse and Addiction* (2021

wanting drug and food rewards, than with their liking ratings. Many now support the original conclusion that dopamine mediates *desire* rather than pleasure.<sup>25</sup>

6. The physical side effect of addiction can bring much pain and misery. Long term usage can affect the whole body. It is true a person can become physical dependent upon certain drugs. Therefore, it is critical for the person to be under the care of a physician for any substance he or she has been using and become dependent upon.

### III. The Secular View of Addiction

This section will focus on how the secular field of psychology views addiction, what the diagnosis process is, and what forms of treatment are used.

#### A. The Secular Definition.

1. In the DSM-5, the word addiction is not applied as a diagnostic term. Instead, the term “substance use disorder” is used to describe the wide range of disorders, from a mild form to a severe state of chronically relapsing, compulsive drug taking.<sup>26</sup>
2. For decades, addiction has been viewed as a disorder of the dopamine neurotransmitter system.<sup>27</sup> Neurotransmitters are often referred to as the body’s chemical messengers and are molecules used by the nervous system to transmit

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<sup>25</sup> Kent C. Berridge and Terry E. Robinson, “Liking, Wanting, and the Incentive-Sensitization Theory of Addiction.,” *American Psychologist* 71, no. 8 (2016): pp. 670-679, <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000059>, 2.

<sup>26</sup> Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: Dsm-5, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Association, 2013), 485.

<sup>27</sup> David J. Nutt et al., “The Dopamine Theory of Addiction: 40 Years of Highs and Lows,” *Nature Reviews Neuroscience* 16, no. 5 (2015): pp. 305-312, <https://doi.org/10.1038/nrn3939>.

messages.<sup>28</sup> Dopamine is the neurotransmitter that has been classically associated with the reinforcing effects of drugs of abuse and may have a key role in triggering the neurobiological change associated with addiction.<sup>29</sup> Studies have shown that certain drugs trigger an increase in dopamine production which in turn produces the “high and euphoria”.<sup>30</sup>

3. Imaging studies have shown a correlation between use of certain drugs and an increase in dopamine which in turn reinforces the individuals to pursue more. Long term drug use results in the body adapting and therefore requiring more of the drug to obtain the original high. The body adapts by decreasing dopamine production. However, the authors’ also note that addiction (a compulsive drive to continue drug taking) is not always triggered in an individual. In fact, they suggest that in vulnerable individuals (because of genetic, development, or environmental factors), addiction is related to the repeated alteration of the function of dopamine.<sup>31</sup>
4. Research has shown that there is no direct cause to the onset of addiction, but there are many hypotheses for potential causes.

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<sup>28</sup> Roy A. Wise and Mykel A. Robble, “Dopamine and Addiction,” *Annual Review of Psychology* 71, no. 1 (April 2020): pp. 79-106, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-010418-103337>, 79-81.

<sup>29</sup> N D Volkow et al., “Dopamine in Drug Abuse and Addiction: Results from Imaging Studies and Treatment Implications,” *Molecular Psychiatry* 9, no. 6 (June 2004): pp. 557-569, <https://doi.org/10.1038/sj.mp.4001507>.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

- a) Hypothesis of potential causes rang from genetic variations, to the environment that one lives in, to brain chemistry, all the way to substance use.<sup>32</sup>

## B. A Secular Diagnosis

“As psychiatrist have become enthralled with diagnosis and medication, we have given up the essence of our profession—understanding the mind.”<sup>33</sup>

1. Because this disorder (addiction) cannot be objectively tested through a simple blood test, or x-ray exam, doctors must make a thorough psychiatric evaluation when he or she will observe the addiction symptoms as manifested within a 12-month period.
2. Researchers have found evidence of abnormalities in serotonin, norepinephrine, dopamine (DA), cortisol, growth hormones, and brain-derived neurotrophic factor and etc., yet no specific defect has been identified.<sup>34</sup>
3. Drug, Alcohol and Stimulant-Related Disorders are the most common disorders.
  - a) Symptoms common with addiction patients are also common in other mental disorders, making it difficult to diagnose.
  - b) The following conditions may be classified as substance-induced: intoxication, withdrawal, other substance/medication-induced mental disorders (psychotic disorders, bipolar and related disorders, depressive

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<sup>32</sup> “Schizophrenia.” NAMI: National Alliance on Mental Illness. Accessed July 5, 2019. <https://www.nami.org/Learn-More/Mental-Health-Conditions/Schizophrenia>.

<sup>33</sup> Daniel J. Carlat, *Unhinged: the Trouble with Psychiatry--a Doctor's Revelations about a Profession in Crisis* (New York: Free Press, 2010), 5.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, 6.

disorders, anxiety disorders, obsessive-compulsive and related disorders and neurocognitive disorders.<sup>35</sup>

4. Data gathering is required before an addiction diagnosis can be made.<sup>36</sup>
  - a) A thorough psychiatric evaluation includes a medical evaluation, physical examine, mental status exam, and various laboratory test.
  - b) Although the findings are extensive, they are not comparable and cannot be aggregated into reliable national statistics.<sup>37</sup>
  - c) Other psychotic disorders are ruled out, since the symptoms of addiction are commonly shared with other disorders.

### C. The World's Solution

The majority of modern writers on addiction uses the worldly mindset to deal with addictive thoughts and behaviors.

- A person who is addictive has a “persistent compulsive disorder” of a substance or vice such as pornography known by the user to be harmful affect more than one-quarter of those who seek “obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD).<sup>38</sup>
  - a) To label an addictive behavior as purely compulsive is wrong because the individual is not responsible for his or her choices.

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<sup>35</sup> Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: Dsm-5, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Association, 2013), 481.

<sup>36</sup> “An Assessment of Data Collection for Alcohol, Drug Abuse ...,” accessed July 5, 2021, <https://www.oig.hhs.gov/oei/reports/oai-02-88-00120.pdf>, 5.

<sup>37</sup> “An Assessment of Data Collection for Alcohol, Drug Abuse ...,” accessed July 5, 2021, <https://www.oig.hhs.gov/oei/reports/oai-02-88-00120.pdf>, 5.

<sup>38</sup> Jeffrey Juergens, “Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and Addiction,” Addiction Center, June 16, 2021, <https://www.addictioncenter.com/addiction/obsessive-compulsive-disorder/>.

- b) Something that is planned cannot be labeled as compulsive because compulsive behavior is defined as “an irresistible” impulse to perform an irrational act.<sup>39</sup> This implies you cannot control the behavior at all. There is no cure for addiction, but rather, medication is often prescribed to manage the addiction, or self-help groups, and (or) experts in various fields.
- a) While there are many approaches to addiction most of mankind’s approaches are a mixture of Christian truth with worldly lies.
- b) Treatment is widely varied. The world’s approach has three foundational ways: (1) Man-centered ideas focus upon pleasing man and leaning on man’s wisdom which such as “self-help groups,” and the idea of recovery process. (2) Referral “experts.” (3) The Disease Model.
- c) Advancement in imaging studies, specifically Positron Emission Tomography (PET) scans have provided new insights on the role of dopamine in drug abuse and addiction in the human brain.<sup>40</sup> A typical brain contains on hundred billion neutrons, each of which make electrical connections, or synapses, with up to ten thousand other neutrons.<sup>41</sup>
- d) The “disease concept” gives worldly approach more credibility as people often considered the idea to be “real science” and a “medical problem.” It

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<sup>39</sup> Merriam Webster, op.cit.

<sup>40</sup> N D Volkow et al., “Dopamine in Drug Abuse and Addiction: Results from Imaging Studies and Treatment Implications,” *Molecular Psychiatry* 9, no. 6 (June 2004): pp. 557-569, <https://doi.org/10.1038/sj.mp.4001507>, 1.

<sup>41</sup> Daniel J. Carlat, *Unhinged: the Trouble with Psychiatry--a Doctor's Revelations about a Profession in Crisis* (New York: Free Press, 2010), 6.

may help someone overcome the action short-term but does not offer long-term sustaining help. It is a flawed humanistic theory on addiction.<sup>42</sup>

- e) Dr. Daniel J. Carlet, M.D., said, “The science of psychiatry is riveting, and I have confidence that someday we will understand the neurobiology of emotions. But we are much further away from the understanding than most of my patients think.”<sup>43</sup>

#### IV. A Biblical Perspective of Addiction

It is important to have an appropriate biblical anthropology of man and from this we can also examine reasons for the addiction. This section will set the foundation of biblical view of man, and from there examine the heart issues of addiction.

##### A. A Biblical View of Man

###### 1. Man is created in the Image of God (Gen 1:26).

- a) Wayne Grudem said, “The fact that man is in the image of God means that man is like God and represents God.” We are similar but not identical to the thing it represents.<sup>44</sup> When God had created both Adam and Eve all that He made was “very good” (Gen 1:31).

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<sup>42</sup> Mark E. Shaw, *The Heart of Addiction: A Biblical Perspective* (Bemidji, MN., Focus Publishing, 2018), 23.

<sup>43</sup> Daniel J. Carlat, *Unhinged: the Trouble with Psychiatry--a Doctor's Revelations about a Profession in Crisis* (New York: Free Press, 2010), 6.

<sup>44</sup> Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Zondervan, 2009), 442-443.

- b) Man is like God in the following ways: intellectual ability; moral purity; spiritual nature; dominion over the earth; creativity; ability to make ethical choice; and immortality [or some similar statement].<sup>45</sup>
  - c) The Fall: God's Image is distorted but not lost (Gen 9:6; Ja 3:9).
  - d) Redemption in Christ: a progressive transformation of His image (Col 3:10).
  - e) Christ's Return is our hope: Complete Restoration of God's image (Rm 8:29; 1 Cor 15:14; 1 Jn 3:2).<sup>46</sup>
2. Man is dependent by nature (Mat 4:3; 6:31-32). Man was created to live dependent on God in order to find life and blessings (Deut 8:3; Ps 36:9). Dr. John Street said, "People become dependent because he or she is dependent."<sup>47</sup>
3. Man is made up of both soul/body or the inner and outer man. The biblical view of man is also known as a "dichotomist" view of man.
- a) Paul says that while the outer man is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day (2 Cor 4:16).
  - b) Jesus says to not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both the soul and body in hell (Mat 10:28).
4. The inner man and outer man are interconnected, one directly affects the other.
- a) What is residing in the inner man is manifested in the outer man, come evil thoughts and evil deeds (Mk 7:20-21; Prv 4:23).

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 443.

<sup>46</sup> Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Zondervan, 2009), 445.

<sup>47</sup> John D. Street, "Counseling Drug Abuse and Addiction," *Counseling Drug Abuse and Addiction* (2021).

- b) “Addiction” is a difficult problem that involves a complexity of spiritual and physiological dimensions. The medical model dominates because the urge to use or drink feels like a disease. Yet the Bible always speaks of drunkenness (any substance) where the person gets impaired is sin (Prv 23:29-35; 1 Cor 5:11; 6:9-10).<sup>48</sup>
- c) Dr. John Street describes addiction as “an idol relationship with a mood-changing experience.”<sup>49</sup> Dr. Mark Shaw describes addiction as “a persistent habitual use of a substance or vice known by the user to be harmful.”<sup>50</sup> Dr. Edward Welch says “addictions are ultimately a disorder of worship.”<sup>51</sup>
5. The implications for the Christian means that although he or she is sinful and suffer from the effects of sin in the world, he or she has the Holy Spirit that not only indwells in them but also empowers them to live a life in obedience to God’s word (Tit 3:5; 1 Cor 2:12; Gal 5:16).
- a) A person who is addicted, just as the rest of us humans, have inherited a fallen sinful nature, that wills to think, speak, and act selfishly and independently from God (Gen 5:1-3).<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Edward T. Welch, *Blame it on the Brain? Distinguishing Chemical Imbalances, Brain Disorders, and Disobedience* (Phillipsburg, N.J., P&R Pub., 1998), 186-187.

<sup>49</sup> John D. Street, “Counseling Drug Abuse and Addiction,” *Counseling Drug Abuse and Addiction* (2021).

<sup>50</sup> Mark E. Shaw, *The Heart of Addiction: A Biblical Perspective* (Bemidji, MN., Focus Publishing, 2018), 28.

<sup>51</sup> Edward T. Welch, *Addictions: a Banquet in the Grave: Finding Hope in the Power of the Gospel* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Pub., 2001), xvi.

<sup>52</sup> Mark E. Shaw, *The Heart of Addiction: A Biblical Perspective* (Bemidji, MN., Focus Publishing, 2018), 32-33.

- b) The effects of sin are so deep within us that it has affected the way we worship. We were created to worship God and only God but now we seek and worship the creation (Gen 2:4-17; Rm 1:25). Adam’s body at creation was sinless and deathless, but sin brought dramatic change to the human body.<sup>53</sup>
- c) The only cure for any person addicted is the gospel, and with the help of the Holy Spirit, he or she can learn to live a life that responds to God in a way that pleases Him (Gal 5:22-23).<sup>54</sup>

## B. The Heart of Addiction

1. The meaning of “heart” in Scripture is not the actual physical organ that pumps your blood. Heart refers to the inner person—soul or mind. The Greek word the Bible uses for “heart” is “kardia.” The spiritual heart/soul will live forever. The heart is your control center of your life (Prv 16:2).
  - a) It is your spiritual heart that matters most to God. David was a man after God’s own heart. “The Lord God sought out a man after his own heart” (1 Sam 13:14).
2. God created all men and women to be worshipers. As we know, our thoughts, words and behaviors reveal what is in the heart, and the same can be said with addiction (Rm 11:36; 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:16).

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<sup>53</sup> John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine: a Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 417.

<sup>54</sup> John D. Street, *Passions of the Heart: Biblical Counsel for Stubborn Sexual Sins* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2019), 4.

- a) All destructive addictions are a heart issue and not a disease. The person who is addicted seeks to please self with his “god of choice” which is idolatry. It is lovers of self rather than lovers of God (2 Tim 3:4). The heart can deceive us.
  - b) An idol is anything or anyone that captures our hearts, soul, mind and affections more than God (Rm 1:21-25; 1 Pet 2:11-12).
  - c) Addiction reveals what is in the heart of that person (Jer 17:9; Mk 7:21-23). Whoever he or she serves is their God or god. Who or what you worship is your God or god.
  - d) Contentment connects with idolatry (Ja 1:13-18). Contentment is the settled disposition of the heart in every situation.
3. The Scriptures give many windows to the heart (Prv 20:5). The human heart is deep, hidden and clever. The heart purposes and plans.<sup>55</sup>
- a) The inner person in contrast with the outer.
  - b) Your heart has thoughts, intentions and desires (Heb 4:12).
  - c) Keep your heart with all vigilance (Prv 4:23). The heart has three main functions: (1) Emotions—our heart is the source of what we feel and desire (Ps 37:4-5). (2) Thoughts—our thoughts influence everything we think and do (Mat 9:4). (3) Behavior—our heart guides our actions we take (Mat 15:19).
4. A person who is addicted worships their “idol” or “vice” as their master. A slave always heeds to his master (Rm 6:16).

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<sup>55</sup> John D. Street, *Passions of the Heart: Biblical Counsel for Stubborn Sexual Sins* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2019), 3.

- a) Substance abuse or vice makes us subservient, so that impulses of the body begin to demand fulfillment and it be obeyed no matter the cost.<sup>56</sup>
  - b) The person must die to self in order to be freed (Rm 6:17-22).
5. A fearful heart leads an addict to be severely distressed and paranoid.
- a) A heart that fears and is full of anxiety can lead to paranoia from the substance.
  - b) A heart that fears also experiences a loss of control.
6. The cure for any addiction is a holy fear that is seen in a repented heart (2 Cor 7:11).

### C. The Physical Components of Addiction

God has created our bodies with incredible adaptability to even of the most harmful of substances. The person may become physically addicted to a certain substance. Dr. Ed Welch, “Because theology is the lens through which Christians interpret all research, and it is essential that our lens be clear and accurate.”<sup>57</sup>

- 1. One who is dependent upon a certain substance will experience withdrawal when he or she stops using the substance.
- 2. God given appetites.
  - a) Appetites are designed to be satisfied at regular intervals and in moderation to help sustain your life.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> John D. Street, “Counseling Drug Abuse and Addiction,” *Counseling Drug Abuse and Addiction* (2021).

<sup>57</sup> Edward Welch, *Blame It on the Brain?: Distinguishing Chemical Imbalances, Brain Disorders, and Disobedience* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1998), 15.

<sup>58</sup> Mark E. Shaw, *The Heart of Addiction: A Biblical Perspective* (Bemidji, MN., Focus Publishing, 2018), 71-72.

- b) Appetites should remind us that we are finite, limited and fully dependent on God.
  - c) All have appetites, so the appetite is not the problem because not everyone is an addict.
  - d) A person who is addicted learns this behavior to fulfill their appetite by doing it excessively.
3. Instincts are God-given impulses.
- a) Instincts are God-given impulses that are automatic and are not learned.<sup>59</sup>
  - b) Hunger is a natural instinct, so a person can learn to eat any type of food to satisfy the appetite. What you feed your appetite will become a learned or inherent desire.<sup>60</sup>
  - c) Addictions to drugs, alcohol, or any sexual vice are “inherent” not “instinctive.” For example, the distinction is the abuser of alcohol chooses to satisfy his or her “instinctive” appetite of thirst with a beverage that has alcohol. He or she is willfully satisfying his thirst with alcohol instead of water. His thirst could have been easily satiated by drinking water.<sup>61</sup>
4. Cravings are a physiological experience.
- a) Cravings are real physiological experience of a desire for a substance or vice that has been used excessively. The body adapts to the condition which it was

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<sup>59</sup> Mark E. Shaw, *The Heart of Addiction: A Biblical Perspective* (Bemidji, MN., Focus Publishing, 2018), 73.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 73.

<sup>61</sup> Mark E. Shaw, *The Heart of Addiction: A Biblical Perspective* (Bemidji, MN., Focus Publishing, 2018), 74.

exposed. “Tolerance to alcohol and drug increase as the substance or vice is used. This means it take more to get the effect.”<sup>62</sup>

- b) For example, an “opiate” addict cravings manifest soon after the effects of drug ceases. Before long, the opiate addict is physically craving the drug again as his or her body has become dependent upon it.

#### D. Hope Through the Gospel

1. The only hope there is for a person who is addicted (and anyone) is that this label or “disorder” does not define them.
  - a) Jesus Christ has made a way for them not to be enslaved to sin, but now slaves of righteousness (Rm 6:16-18).
  - b) In Christ you are a new creation and the old has passed (2 Cor 5:17). He or she is identified in Christ not the addiction that had ruled them.
  - c) Through this new creation he or she is now forgiven of his or her sins and there is no condemnation to those in Christ (Rm 8:1-2).
2. Permanent change must begin with a changed heart through salvation.
  - a) As a person who is addicted grows in their sanctification by the empowering of the Holy Spirit that person can live and respond in a way that pleases God (Phil 2:12-13).
  - b) God’s grace and our effort is the biblical process that God uses for change (1 Cor 15:10; 1 Tim 4:7-8).
  - c) Addiction is not a “disease” or “disorder” (No concrete evidence what’s so ever), a person who is born again in Christ has the power to change (2 Pet

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 74.

1:3). The term psychology literally means “the study of the soul.”<sup>63</sup> God fearfully and wonderfully made us (Ps 139:14).

3. God has given us in our Union with Christ His Word that is sufficient for life/godliness. (2 Pet 1:3). It can transform the whole person but mainly the inner man.

#### E. Man’s Wisdom vs. God’s Truth

Man-centered ideas focus and elevate man while God-centered ideas focus upon knowing and pleasing God. Biblical truths do not mix well with man’s wisdom concepts and theories.

##### 1. Self-help groups vs. Christ’s Church

- a) Man’s dependence—12-step programs, secular counseling, referral experts (Therapist).
- b) Church—Jesus Christ as Lord/Savior, Indwelling of the Holy Spirit, God’s Word, evangelical church, prayer, and fellowship with other believers.

##### 2. Disease Concept vs. Sin Nature

- a) Disease concept—“once and addict always an addict” – no hope!
- b) Sin Nature—Regenerated, Repentance and Sanctification (Jn 14:16-17; 1 Jn 4:4).

##### 3. Recovery vs. Transformation

- a) The verb “recovery” is defined as “to bring back to normal position or condition:” as though you have stumbled and recovered yourself.

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<sup>63</sup> Edward E. Hindson and Howard Eyrich, *Totally Sufficient: The Bible & Christian Counseling* (Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications, 2004), 15.

- b) Transformation is knowing you are a sinner and is being made in Christ on a daily basis by the renewing of your mind (Rm 12:2). The H.S. is your Helper (Jn 14:16-17).<sup>64</sup> Die to self “put off” and live for Christ “Put on” (Eph 4:22-24).

## V. A Biblical Perspective on Dopamine and Addiction

The involvement of dopamine (DA) in drug reinforcement is well recognized but its role in drug addiction is much less clear. DA is a Neurotransmitter of the brain. Many neurotransmitters are involved. DA, commonly associated with the pleasure center of the brain.<sup>65</sup>

### A. DA levels can be restored and renewed

The DA system can be rebuilt and renewed by pursuing pleasurable activities.

1. Concrete examples noted by Dr. Kopelowicz including getting out with relatives or friends and participating in activities such as going for a walk, engaging in good conversation, and fellowship (church). It will take months, sometimes even years depending on how damaged the dopamine system is.<sup>66</sup>
2. God and His Word can help heal the DA system as the person is being transformed on a daily basis through God’s Word. The mind works with the brain.
  - a) When the mind is being renewed, so can the body as well (Rm 12:2). The mind controls our Brain (body) (Col 1:21-22; Heb 4:12; 10:16).

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<sup>64</sup> Mark E. Shaw, *The Heart of Addiction: A Biblical Perspective* (Bemidji, MN., Focus Publishing, 2018), 12-16.

<sup>65</sup> John D. Street, “Counseling Drug Abuse and Addiction,” *Counseling Drug Abuse and Addiction* (2021).

<sup>66</sup> Kopelowicz, M.D., Alex. Understanding Addiction and Dopamine. Personal, June 24, 2021

- b) Scripture is the lens through which we can see everything, including the brain sciences. The body is not the moral helmsman; rather, the body carries out the moral intents of the soul.<sup>67</sup> The body can never make us sin.
- c) When the brain sciences sit under the categories of Scripture, it can be a blessing to us. The brain sciences are part of God's world.<sup>68</sup>
- d) Counseling that is merged with psychological theory does not believe that Christ is sufficient to heal a troubled heart like addiction.<sup>69</sup> God and His Word is totally sufficient to counsel the whole person who is addicted to anything.
- e) While brain chemicals can greatly influence your decisions such as DA, it cannot determine them.<sup>70</sup>

#### B. Getting to the Root (Heart) of Addiction

There is a basic approach that can be applied to counseling someone who is addicted and that is by addressing the heart. The heart is the control center of your life.<sup>71</sup>

1. Covetousness is at the root of all sin that produces idols (Gal 5:16-17).
2. Only God can truly see one's heart and all of its motives (1 Sam 16:7; Jer 20:12).
  - a) Man cannot be trusted to assess their own heart (Mat 5:27-28).
  - b) Scripture reveals the heart of man. What does the natural heart look like?

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<sup>67</sup> Edward E. Hindson and Howard Eyrich, *Totally Sufficient: The Bible & Christian Counseling* (Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications, 2004), 131, 134.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 144-145.

<sup>69</sup> Ed Bulkley, *Why Christians Can't Trust Psychology* (Eugene, Or.: Harvest House, 1993), 275.

<sup>70</sup> John D. Street, *Passions of the Heart: Biblical Counsel for Stubborn Sexual Sins* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2019), 88.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, 4-6.

- 1) Deep, hidden, and clever (Prv 20:5).
  - 2) Dishonest and untrustworthy (Prv 6:12-14).
  - 3) Self-Favoring and deceitful (Prv 16:2; 28:26; Jer 49:16).
  - 4) The heart is seen by God (1 Sam 16:7; Jer 20:12).<sup>72</sup>
3. Addiction is Idolatry “each person has a sin of preference” that clings closely.<sup>73</sup>
- Idolatrous desires seek to please self above pleasing God and others. Who are you serving? (God or self?) Who or what do your worship? (God or gods?)
- a) Inner person God’s sees (1 Sam 16:7)—thinking, desires, intentions, and plans. Your mind gives your body permission to act on its desires.
  - b) The outer person others see (Mat 7:20-23). External behavior is always indicative of the heart’s condition (2 Tim 3:4).<sup>74</sup>
  - c) Anyone can become an addict and anything can become an addictive substance. The ultimate source of addiction is not in the substance, but in the person.<sup>75</sup>

### C. The Heart Exposed

“If God would not give me a heart to love Him, I would never have a heart.”<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 7-8.

<sup>73</sup> Mark E. Shaw, *The Heart of Addiction: A Biblical Perspective* (Bemidji, MN., Focus Publishing, 2018), 80.

<sup>74</sup> John D. Street, *Passions of the Heart: Biblical Counsel for Stubborn Sexual Sins* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2019), 73.

<sup>75</sup> John D. Street, “Counseling Drug Abuse and Addiction,” *Counseling Drug Abuse and Addiction* (2021).

<sup>76</sup> Elyse Fitzpatrick, *Idols of the Heart: Learning to Long for God Alone* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2016), 67.

1. People who battle the “worship of addiction” or “worship disorder” have several hearts problems: bitterness, guilt, shame, emotional pain, discontentment longing for a “quick rush;” loneliness, depression and despair, and fear of man.<sup>77</sup>
  - a) A perishing person is bitter (Prv 31:6). Forgiveness is the cure to bitterness (Lk 17:3-4).
  - b) Guilt leads a person to use in order to escape emotional pain (Prv 28:13). True repentance is the cure (Ja 4:6-10; 2 Cor 7:9-11).
  - c) Discontentment is seeking a quick fix instead of trusting in God.
  - d) Loneliness opposes God’s design for relationships (Gen 2:18).
  - e) The perishing mentality is the cause of depression/despair. Help the person grow and draw near to God (Rm 8:28).
  - f) The person addicted fears man over God. The fear of man is such a part of our human fabric. The cure is God must be bigger than people are (Prv 29:25).<sup>78</sup>
1. The addict who chooses to feed self through various devices, in the end, is choosing to place their faith in the idol, rather than the sovereign God of the bible.
  - a) God, through His Word, reveals His trustworthiness to us (Ps 119:160; 2 Tim 3:16;17; 2 Pet 1:20,21).

## VI. A Plan of Action

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<sup>77</sup> Mark E. Shaw, *The Heart of Addiction: A Biblical Perspective* (Bemidji, MN., Focus Publishing, 2018), 101-109.

<sup>78</sup> Edward T. Welch, *When People Are Big and God Is Small: Overcoming Peer Pressure, Codependency, and the Fear of Man* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Pub., 1997), 19,23.

This section will be a practical walk-through systematic guide for the counselor and lay person, who is counseling an addicted person that is suffering both spiritual and physical. This plan will be an overview of the topics to discuss with the counselee, along with homework assignments. Note, this counseling could continue as long as a year. From the onset the counselor and others should be prepared to be gracious and patient in seeing the Lord do a work in the heart of the believer as the counselor or layperson faithfully ministers the Word of God to them each week.

#### A. Detoxification Process (if needed)

First, seek a medical doctor's advice. Depending on how much addiction (bondage) the person is in, you have to get them into a controlled, safe and drug free environment in order to start your counseling. Some drugs will take a careful detox process with the medical experts. Detox is one option but not always necessary.

1. Create a safe structured environment for the Christian addict and do not allow him/her to be alone if all possible.

#### B. Pre-counseling

1. Especially with certain addictions, change will not occur overnight, and there are a couple prerequisites before moving forward which we will label as "pre-counseling."
  2. Before we begin the counseling process, we must first begin with the preliminary question that asks, "does this person possess saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ?"
    - a) If the person who is addicted does not have saving faith in Jesus Christ, then the proceeding areas of counseling will not be effective. Faith is a confident

trust in the character of God to believe what He says. Repentance requires a change in behavior, from sin to righteousness. This faith and repentance in the context of conversion is essential but it also is elements throughout the Christian life.<sup>79</sup>

- b) This is critical issue, so take your time. The counselor can begin by asking questions about their beliefs (Prv 20:5).
  - i. “Tell me about your relationship with God: how it began, how it has developed, how important it is, where God fits into the total picture of your life or current situations, what are you doing to strengthen your relationship with God?”
  - ii. “Who do you say Christ is? What is the significance of the cross?”
  - iii. “Who is the Holy Spirit?” What role does He play in your life?
  - iv. “Do you believe that God spoke through the Scriptures? How important is Scripture to you?”
- 3. After coming to an understanding of what the counselee believes about God—the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and the bible, it would be good to review the gospel. Focusing in areas where the counselee has little knowledge.
  - a) Walk through the gospel using Scripture. This may be overwhelming in the counseling session flipping through the Scriptures that speak of the gospel, but this is critical to help him or her know where to go. You will need to be patient and discerning. Have this be a homework assignment.

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<sup>79</sup> Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling: the Doctrinal Foundations of Counseling Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 286-287.

- i. God's Word tells us that He is holy, perfect, and completely just (Ex 15:11; Deut 32:4; Ecc 3:14; Rev 15:4).
  - ii. Sin is missing God's mark. All men/women miss the mark of living to the perfect standard of God, and for that he knows nothing but sin (Isa 64:6; Rm 3:10-12, 23; 5:12).
  - iii. God in His perfect justice demands a judgment, which the penalty of sin is death and ternal punishment in Hell (Mat 13:49-50; 25:46; Rm 6:23a; 2 Pet 3:7).
  - iv. By God's great love, grace and mercy, He made a way that man can be right with Him through His Son Jesus Christ, who Is God in the flesh, and lived a perfect and sinless life. He died on the cross to conquer sin and death and for those who believe are forgiven and now have new life (Rm 5:8; 2 Cor 5:21; Eph 5:21; Eph 2:8-9; 1 Pet 2:22).
4. As a homework assignment for the first session, the counselee should write out his or her testimony of how he or she came to know the Lord.
5. Also, I use a template for him or her to write out their "Life Story." This serves several purposes.
  - a) It is a reminder (memorial) how faithful God is to you and your family (Josh 4:6-7).
    - i. Now use picture and symbols that best represent your life whether good or bad. The cross is when you came to faith in Jesus Christ.

- ii. Meditate and think back and let God’s Spirit show you who made great impacts in your life, who did not, and certain key times that made a huge impact.
  - iii. How do you see God at work in Protection, Provision and Paving the way?
- b) In addition, have the counselee keep an on-going journal for when he or she wanted to use or entertain themselves. Have him or her answer the following questions.
  - i. What is the situation? Describe the surrounding circumstances?
  - ii. What is the heart desiring? What idol are you thinking about?
  - iii. According to what you know is true of Scripture, are these desires seeking God or self? How should you respond to these desires (idols) in a way that pleases God?
- 6. Each person dealing with addiction will be different, and it should be noted that this guide will serve the basic approach to counseling the whole person with addiction. Yet it can be adapted according to specific needs or type of addiction (Drug abuse – Sexual addiction).

### C. The Truth of Scripture and Reality

1. A common reality for a person who is addicted is that he or she thinks it is a “disease” but you must first show them that God calls it a “sin nature” problem.
2. A person who is addicted also have established sinful habit patterns in the flesh, so you must replace the sinful patterns with godly habits that will also help with the DA system in time. This is no short process but a long-term process.

- a) A born-again person who is addicted not only has a new heart but also a new nature. As the inner person (mind/soul) create new godly habits the DA system in time will remember new things and hopefully overtime can be renewed and repaired.
  - b) Some of the habits he or she has learned are not just physical but are habitual patterns of thinking and responding to life's hardships. The key is renewing the mind daily.
3. The counselor of an addict must help guide him or her along to understand that feelings, emotions and experiences in addiction are not the final authority.
- a) Review the deceitfulness of his or her own heart.
    - i. The heart cannot be trusted because it is deceitful (Jer 19:9).
    - ii. We are wise in our own eyes (1 Cor 3:18).
    - iii. We can deceive ourselves into our own reality (Ja 1:26).
4. Help bring him or her to an understanding that God's Word is authoritative and trustworthy.
- a) Where truth is found
    - i. Through Jesus Christ truth is found (Jn 14:6).
  - b) The Word of God
    - i. Truth is found in God's Word (Ps 119:160; Jn 17:17).
    - ii. Every Word of God proves true (Prv 30:5-6).
    - iii. God cannot lie (Tit 1:2).
    - iv. The Sufficiency of Scripture (2 Pet 1:3; Ps 19:7-11).
    - v. Scripture is completely adequate (2 Tim 3:1-16).

5. In the counseling process, especially with homework have the counselee (depending on the shape he or she is in) begin to understand God and His Word are completely inerrant and infallible therefore totally trustworthy.
  - a) What do the following verses say about inerrancy and infallible?
    - i. Psalm 12:6; 119:140; John 10:35; 2 Tim3:16-17).
  - b) What do the following verses say about truth?
    - i. John 1:14; 17; Psalm 12:6; 19:8).
  - c) God's word is absolutely true, it is therefore totally trustworthy. In light of what you know now to believe that God is trustworthy?<sup>80</sup>

#### D. Addressing the Heart Issues

Christians who struggle with Idolatry of addiction have several heart problems.<sup>81</sup>

1. After reviewing the gospel in the first couple of sessions with the Sufficiency of Scripture that is trustworthy it is time to address the heart issues.
  - a) People addicted primarily communicate and think out of emotions. Often, their response to stimuli is emotional rather than logical. He or she wants to experience that stimulus to its fullest.
  - b) There may be other heart issues that are seen in the counselee that must be addressed by the counselor, but here common ones for people who battle addiction that must be addressed in counseling.

#### 2. A bitter heart

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<sup>80</sup> John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine: a Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 70.

<sup>81</sup> <sup>81</sup> Mark E. Shaw, *The Heart of Addiction: A Biblical Perspective* (Bemidji, MN., Focus Publishing, 2018), 101.

- a) Proverbs says that the perishing person becomes bitter (Prv 31:6).
  - b) People who deal with addiction are constantly being critical of themselves when he or she reflects upon their own behavior sober.
  - c) He or she is critical of others who may have hurt and or rejected him or her.
    - i. The remembrance turns into bitterness if not handled biblically (Heb 12:15). He or she keeps replaying the tape over and over.
    - ii. Forgiveness is the cure for bitterness. We are to forgive others as we been forgiven much (Lk 17:3-4). Forgiveness is an active choice. You must make an active choice to change your thoughts.
    - iii. For homework write down a list of specific Bible verses that deals with thankfulness to read/memorize to replace the negative sinful thoughts about the person and the act.<sup>82</sup>
3. A guilty heart
- a) The emotional pain is often rooted in guilt from a conflict and has not been resolved. God says that we will obtain mercy if we confess our transgression (Prv 28:13).
    - i. The first step is to heal a guilty heart is to confess your sin. Pray with him or her and ask God to forgive him or her.
    - ii. The second step is to make it right with the one you wronged.<sup>83</sup>
4. A discontent heart

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid, 101-103.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, 105-106.

a) This person is discontent in life. He or she is not satisfied where God has him or her. He or she believes God did not give him or her a fair shake in life, so he or she has a quick fix mentality. The “quick fix” mentality is for the person seeking a quick fix instead of trusting in God, which is a process.<sup>84</sup> The key is to learn contentment in Christ alone (Phil 4).

5. A lonely heart

We are relational beings and are not meant to be alone (Gen 2:18). Loneliness can overwhelm the person addicted because their emotions are extreme while he or she drifted away from the Lord and others. This loneliness shows how far this person has drifted from God and others.<sup>85</sup>

6. A Despaired heart

Normal sadness can lead to depression and despair for the person who is addicted due to their emotions being extreme. The perishing mentality leads to depression.<sup>86</sup>

7. A fearful heart

This person fears man rather than fear God. He or she seeks self-esteem from others, in order to get what he or she wants man is praised. The cure—God must be bigger than man.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> <sup>84</sup> Mark E. Shaw, *The Heart of Addiction: A Biblical Perspective* (Bemidji, MN., Focus Publishing, 2018), 106-107.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, 107-108.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid, 108-109.

<sup>87</sup> Edward T. Welch, *When People Are Big and God Is Small: Overcoming Peer Pressure, Codependency, and the Fear of Man* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Pub., 1997), 14-19.

- a) An addicted person may experience fear that may be brought on by a person you owe money to. A condemning conscience that does not rest.
- b) A fearful heart may come from a lack of trust in God goodness and faithfulness. Help the person see his or her fears and turn their fear into a healthy fear of God. This is critical for the sanctification process.
  - i. Help the person “put off” his or her sinful fears of their circumstances while renewing his or her mind by focusing on God’s faithfulness (Eph 4:22; Rm 12:2).
  - ii. Get his or her focus solely on God (Gen 32:7-12; Ps 77:4-14).<sup>88</sup>
  - iii. For homework the focus will be on fear, have the counselee study Scripture that speaks about God’s faithfulness and goodness. Have him or her write out the times when he or she sees God was both faithful and good.

#### 8. Growing in Contentment

Contentment is not a given, it must be learned (Phil 4:11). The hard work begins by replacing these harmful thoughts with grateful thoughts.

- a) Content begins by understanding that a Sovereign and loving God knows what is best for them. The Lord corrects and disciplines those He loves (Heb 12:6).
- b) The contentment comes when you find your identity in Christ (1 Cor 6:9-11).  
This is their hope and assurance.

#### 9. Growing in humility

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<sup>88</sup> John D. Street and Janie Street, *The Biblical Counseling Guide for Women* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2016), 281.

- a) Pride can be very destructive in a believer's life. It will affect how he or she sees life and having the right understanding on God (Prv 11:2).
- b) It is critical that an addict repents of his or her pride and learns how he or she views themselves. He or she needs to learn to not trust themselves and begin to trust God from Scripture (Rm 12:3). This takes humility.
  - i. The Lord teaches and guides the humble heart (Ps 25:90).
  - ii. The grace and power of Christ is perfected in our weakness (2 Cor 12:9-10).
  - iii. God opposed the proud but give grace to the humble (Ja 4:6).
  - iv. As homework for the counselee, I would have him or her study humility with a good study bible. Write down how he or she was prideful in all his or her ways.

10. As the counselee grows in the Lord and putting into practice the things that he or she has learned, he or she will begin to grow to respond when the temptation or craving comes by trusting in God more themselves.

## VII. Conclusion

- A. Unfortunately, because the lack of biblical understanding about addiction the immediate response of the church is to send the person struggling to an expert because of their so call disease, so he or she must go to a professional treatment center and work with the professionals.
  - 1. Being good stewards of God's Word means to see addiction through the lens of Scripture (1 Cor 4:1-2).

2. Because of the false lies in the medical field that addiction is indeed a disease the church must stand strong and trust that God calls addiction that is harmful a sin nature. We need to give this person a real hope that comes from God.
  3. Because so many are uninformed regarding addiction it will be said he or she never had a chance due to the disease or family members or friends will have no patience with him or her because of the life style. This person needs the gospel and love of the church.
- B. The only hope is the gospel of Jesus Christ and the church coming along side this person to help the change and be transformed in the image of Jesus Christ as he or she counsels the whole person.
1. The church is the place where a person who suffers can find biblical care (Rm 12:1).
  2. Change begins with the gospel as it transforms the heart of an addict. It is not recovery but transformation as he or she is renewed in their minds which brings glory to God (Rm 12:2; Gal 2:20). The Word of God can help and transform the whole body.
  3. The Word of God will speak truth to this person as he or she allows God to expose the heart in order to change his or her ways (Heb 4:12).
- C. The key is to be patient and caring for the long haul. If the person is willing to change and put towards the effort of obedience in Christ, you will see a radical transformation take place. He or she will no longer be linked as an addict but rather a child of God. In time, the body can be restored and as well be renewed with God and His Word.

D. As for the counselee Bill that I discussed in the opening? That person is me and I have been radically transformed by the power of God's grace that forgives and transforms! My whole body has been completely renewed as my brain has been linked with my soul.

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