

Overcoming The Addiction To Sin

by Hendrik Joubert

Anyone who has worked with addicts will know how discouraging and frustrating it can be to help one free himself or herself from the slavery of addiction. Although not impossible, it often seems that way. The harsh sentences and treatment of drug traffickers in some countries are therefore understandable; although the addict more often than not start with consent these *roaring lions* walk about *seeking whom they may devour*. (1Peter 5:8) The Scriptures clearly teaches dual responsibility: ***Then He said to the disciples, "It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe to him through whom they do come!"***² ***It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.*** (Luke 17:1-2 NKJV)

One of the most telling reasons for failure is the expectance of failure. The effect is accumulative, until it becomes hopeless... This principle may also be found in the Scriptures: ***For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit,⁵ and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come,⁶ if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.*** (Hebrews 6:4-6 NKJV)

It takes a tremendous amount of patience, but also strength, on behalf of the helpers to remain confident so that their assistance may be positive. Realizing that addicts are manipulative and conniving one has to lead them to *confess* their dangerous behavior, and what it takes to maintain it, rather than trying to beat a confession out of them. The initial effort is very important as it may set the pattern for success or failure. We give up all too easily because of the *sweat* it takes to help the addict through the worst, and eventually to gain the confidence to break the addiction – as some have been able to do.

Is it not interesting how God leads us to our knees; His Son came to die on the cross when we were *helpless* with no way out. (Romans 5:6-11) He did not give up on us, in spite of the knowledge that the majority will not respond to His amazing grace; and many more will not remain faithful. Like the addict many will attempt to manipulate God and His word in order to maintain their sinful habits. ***Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites,¹⁰ nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.*** (1 Corinthians 6:9-10 NKJV)

One may argue that it is the threat of eternal damnation which serves to motivate. That God firmly and very deliberately warns us about it is true; however the act of sacrificial love does more to lead people to confess than all the threats of hell. ***"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep."*** (John 10:11 NKJV) Hell is not a threat, it is *reality*; the consequence of our sin. This fact remains a threat in the background while He invites us to avoid it.

By now the similarities in our battle to overcome our *slavery* and our *addiction* to sin should be obvious. The Bible teaches us that we are *slaves to sin* (Romans 6) just as addicts are slaves of their addiction. Let us notice especially the ways we justify maintaining our addiction, or falling back into sin. We have all the excuses for failing perfected; *after all, no one is perfect. Let him who is without sin cast the first stone...* (John 8:7) Yes, like their father the devil, sinners know how to quote Scripture in an attempt to justify themselves. (Matthew 4)

We use the addicts' failure to overcome in order to free us from trying to help, and they use our giving up as rejection and reason for continuing the behavior. How many times should we make an attempt to save their lives? Could we consider the question of Peter applicable? ***"Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?"*** ***Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.*** (Matthew 18:21-22)

Consider also the role of the church as a support group: ***Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.*** (James 5:16) ***Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*** (Galatians 6:2)

Our counselor is Jesus. When we come to realize this, we find the courage to change, as the One whom we have sinned against invites: ***"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."***²⁹ ***Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.***³⁰ ***For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."*** (Matthew 11:28-30)