

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT ADDICTIONS

Excerpted from Biblical Counseling by Chuck Smith

Any addiction, whether to alcohol, drugs, prescription medicines, pornography, gambling, cigarettes, or even food, is a form of idolatry. The first commandment is, "You shall not have any other gods before Me." The second commandment is, "You shall not bow down to them or serve them" (see Exodus 20). When a person is addicted, they are really bowing down and serving that addiction as their god. It is the sin of idolatry. They become a slave to it and they are held in bondage. Jesus said, "Whoever commits sin is a slave of sin" (John 8:34).

Adam had perfect liberty in the garden. He had the freedom to eat of any tree in the garden that he pleased, but God warned him, "Don't eat of that tree! That will bring you into bondage. That will bring you into death." God didn't tie him up in the corner of the garden, nor did God build a high wall around that tree. He had the freedom to eat of it. But Adam exercised that freedom in such a way as to bring death and bondage to sin and to the flesh. As he obeyed the desires of the flesh rather than the Word of God and the commandment of God, he then found himself a victim to his flesh.

So many people are dying a slow death because their addiction has a hold on them, almost as if it were demonic; and the only thing that can free a person from this hold is the power of Jesus Christ. Jesus came to open the eyes of those that are blind, and "to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound" (Isaiah 61:1). "Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:30).

GOD'S PERSPECTIVE

Proverbs 5:22-23
1 Corinthians 6:12-13
1 Corinthians 9:24-27
1 Timothy 6:6-10
James 1:14-15
1 Peter 4:1-3
2 Peter 2:19

GOD'S PROMISES

John 8:34-36
Romans 8:12-15

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES
Proverbs 23:29-35

MAKE A CHANGE

Proverbs 23:20-21
Rom. 6:1-2, 11-13, 16
Romans 12:1
1 Corinthians 6:19-20
2 Corinthians 7:1
1 John 1:8-9

ALCOHOL

Drinking alcohol has been debated within the church for years. There are many Christians who feel at liberty to drink wine, and to be frank, I cannot make an airtight scriptural case against it. However, Paul said, "All things are lawful for me," but he declared, "I will not be brought under the power of any" (1 Corinthians 6:12). I personally feel that it is unwise to take anything into your system that can bring you under its power, or "under the influence." It alters a person's thinking, and thus their judgment. In addition, alcohol has been proven to damage a person both physically and mentally.

There is a thirst within the spirit that can't be satisfied with material or emotional things. Only a meaningful relationship with God can satisfy that yearning within. Sometimes people seek to drown this thirst with alcohol. Ironically, all they're doing is creating a fuzzy mind so they won't have to think about it. But when they sober up, the thirst is still there. By turning to the bottle, an alcoholic only creates new problems greater than the first.

If you will turn your life over to Jesus, He will set you free from that which is destroying you. More than that, He'll bring you satisfaction; He'll fill your thirsty soul. Be filled with the Spirit of God and you will find that which your soul and spirit are longing after.

Though it may be lawful, I believe you're better off not to drink or ingest anything that can bring you under its influence. Live a life that's completely consecrated and committed to God. The Bible says, "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise" (Proverbs 20:1 KJV).

GOD'S PERSPECTIVE

Proverbs 20:1
Proverbs 21:17
Proverbs 23:29-32
Isaiah 5:11, 22
Habakkuk 2:15
Galatians 5:19-21

GOD'S PROMISES

John 7:37-38
John 8:36
1 Corinthians 10:13
2 Corinthians 5:17

MAKE A CHANGE

Proverbs 23:20-21
Luke 21:34
Romans 13:12-14
1 Corinthians 5:11
1 Corinthians 6:19-20
2 Corinthians 7:1
Ephesians 5:18-21

For those who serve in ministry:

GOD'S PERSPECTIVE

1 Timothy 3:8-9
Titus 1:7-9

MAKE A CHANGE

2 Timothy 2:4

ANGER

Are you quick-tempered or quick to "fly off the handle" when something doesn't go right? The only thing some people are ever going to know about Jesus Christ is what they see in you. How do you represent Jesus? Do you represent Him as being upset, mad or angry over small annoyances?

The only way we can really be His representative is through the power of the Holy Spirit. We can spend our lives thinking about all of the things that make us upset, or we can spend our lives thinking of God's lovingkindness, goodness, mercy, and grace—and extending that to others. Proverbs 19:11 reads, "The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger, and his glory is to overlook a transgression." It's the discretion of a man to put off his anger, and it is his glory to pass over a transgression. Love covers a multitude of sins. Don't respond or react in anger to a situation. Defer that action until your anger has subsided. Then, many times, once it's subsided, you'll say, "Well, what difference does it make? Nobody was hurt." This is a good rule for driving the freeways. Overlook someone's transgression, rather than get frustrated and stew over the matter.

The next time something upsets you, don't react. Instead, I would exhort you to just count your blessings and be thankful for what God has done. And then let your heart rejoice in His goodness.

GOD'S PERSPECTIVE

Proverbs 10:12
Proverbs 12:16
Proverbs 14:17, 29
Proverbs 15:1
Proverbs 19:11
Proverbs 25:28
Proverbs 29:22
Ecclesiastes 7:8-9
Galatians 5:19-21

GOD'S PROMISES

Romans 12:19

MAKE A CHANGE

Psalm 37:8
Proverbs 22:24-25
Luke 6:28-29
Eph. 4:26-27, 30-32
Colossians 3:8
James 1:19-20

DEPRESSION

Depression doesn't just hurt you; it also hurts everyone around you. There is nothing more depressing than talking to a person who is depressed, sometimes lasting weeks, months, and even years. Everything you suggest that might help, they return with a negative statement and attitude. You do your best to lift them up out of it but it seems they have brought you down instead. But there is a cure.

When we're miserable and think despairing and hopeless thoughts, we can literally dig our own grave. But by setting our minds upon the Lord, we come into a whole new state of consciousness. No longer one of total despair and hopelessness, but one of victory and hope. And that's what Jeremiah did. He changed his thought patterns from, "Oh, woe is me and there's no one to help me" to thinking, "Through the LORD'S mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:22-23). You can get into this self-pity mode very easily by concentrating upon yourself, but as you begin to think about the Lord it will lift you up right out of the deepest depression.

GOD'S PROMISES

Psalm 147:3
Romans 5:3-5
2 Corinthians 1:3-4
2 Corinthians 4:16-18
2 Corinthians 12:10
Ephesians 3:16-19
Titus 3:5-6
James 1:2-8

MAKE A CHANGE

Psalm 27:13-14
Psalm 37:3-7
Psalm 42:5
Proverbs 3:5-6
Romans 12:2
1 Corinthians 15:58
Philippians 3:1
Philippians 4:4

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES

Job 1:20-22
Job 2:6-10
2 Corinthians 12:9-10

PRAYER

Psalm 16:7-8
Psalm 55:16-18
Psalm 73:26
Lam. 3:17-18, 21-26

DRUGS

The word “sorcery” stems from the root word *pharmakeia*, which is also translated as witchcraft. When we find sorcery or witchcraft in the Bible, it refers to the use of drugs for hallucinogenic or mind-altering purposes, like narcotics. God’s law strictly prohibits drug abuse because when you allow the abuse of narcotics to reside in your life, it will ultimately destroy you. Narcotics are very insidious. The very first thing a narcotic will do is attack a person’s willpower to resist. People can become hooked so quickly. Narcotic abuse then destroys good judgment and sensitivity to right and wrong, and people soon find themselves doing things they would have been appalled and shocked at before.

One of the most devastating effects of drug abuse is becoming enslaved to the drugs. Satan loves to take a person captive, holding them as a hostage against their will. Paul wrote to Timothy, “that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will” (2 Timothy 2:26). Satan does not fight fairly or by the rules. But thank God, Jesus Christ came to set at liberty those who were captive, and to open the prison doors to those who are bound.

The power of Jesus Christ can break the hold that Satan has upon someone bound by drug addiction, “to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Jesus” (Acts 26:18). That’s what the gospel is all about, freeing people from the power of darkness.

GOD’S PERSPECTIVE

1 Samuel 15:23

Psalms 52:7

Isaiah 47:9

Ezekiel 18:30-32

Malachi 3:5

Galatians 5:19-21

Revelation 21:6-8

GOD’S PROMISES

Revelation 22:14-15

MAKE A CHANGE

Ephesians 5:18

1 Corinthians 6:12

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE

Revelation 9:20-21

FOOD

Jesus warns us concerning the last days before His return, that we should be careful not to be caught unaware or by surprise as the result of surfeiting, which is eating and drinking too much (Luke 12:45-46). Eating and drinking too much can cloud our judgment. Solomon warned, “It’ll bring you to poverty, son.”

In the book of Leviticus God gave extensive instructions to the children of Israel concerning what they could and could not eat. Today you can find an interesting book written by Dr. S. I. McMillen called *None of These Diseases*, which explains the medical reasons for these dietary laws and cleansing rituals.

I don’t think that we can load ourselves up with junk food and ask God to give us a healthy body. That’s inconsistent. When my friends and I used to drive home from Bible school, we would stop by the market and buy a gallon of ice cream, a pint of whipped cream, chocolate syrup, and bananas. Then we would get home and I would whip up a quick banana cream pie. As we sat down to devour it, the guys would look at one another and say, “Who’s going to ask the blessing?” I’d say, “You’ve got to be kidding. You can’t in all good conscience ask God to bless this. Just eat it and suffer the consequences.” Don’t ask God to bless what you know isn’t good for you. Once in a while dessert is fine, but it’s foolish to eat like that all the time and expect God to bless you with strength and health.

Paul wrote, “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31). What a great bottom line principle this is! If we do not grasp anything else, God help us to grasp this truth. The purpose of our existence is to live for His glory. Let this one question be uppermost in our minds whether or not we should or shouldn’t do something: Can I do it for the glory of God?

Today maybe you are in the bondage of surfeiting and it has a hold on your life. You can see it is destroying you, and you’re somehow unable to get free. “All things are lawful for me,” Paul said, “but I will not be brought under the power of any” (1 Corinthians 6:12). Many times people foolishly exercise their liberty in doing things that bring them into bondage. Don’t use your liberty as an occasion for the flesh, because if you do, it’ll destroy you. Surrender your life over to Jesus and He will set you free from that which is destroying you. More than that, He’ll satisfy your hungry and thirsty soul.

GOD’S PERSPECTIVE

Psalm 81:10
Proverbs 23:19-21
Proverbs 25:16
Matthew 6:25
Matthew 26:41
Luke 12:40-46
John 4:34
John 8:36
1 Corinthians 3:16-17
1 Corinthians 6:12-13

GOD’S PROMISES

1 Corinthians 10:13

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE

Daniel 1:8-14

PRAYER

Philippians 4:13

MAKE A CHANGE

Proverbs 23:2
Romans 12:1
1 Corinthians 6:19-20
1 Corinthians 9:27
1 Corinthians 10:31
Galatians 5:16
1 Peter 4:1-2

FORNICATION

Fornication is having sexual relations outside of marriage. The world terms it “making love.” However, it’s not an act of love at all; it’s an act of lust. A person who entices someone else into the act of fornication is selfish since they are not considering the other person, but only thinking about satisfying their own desire. Fornication is a very unloving act and it is only by Satan’s deception that a person would think of it as an act of love.

To the Christian who commits the sin of fornication, Paul writes, “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not!” (1 Corinthians 6:15). Jesus took it a step further, “You’ve heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:27-28). Jesus looks at the heart—you’re guilty even if you haven’t actually committed fornication.

You see, if a person goes around lusting in his mind but never actually gives in, that man would be self-righteous. “I’ve never committed adultery. I’ve never committed fornication.” But in his heart, he has. Now if he were to say, “Oh God, I have impure thoughts. God, I’m an unclean man. Help me, God,” he then casts himself on the mercy of God. And in so doing that man will attain the righteousness imputed to Jesus Christ by his faith to overcome those lustful thoughts and live a Christlike life.

GOD’S PERSPECTIVE

Proverbs 5:20-23
Proverbs 6:23-25
Proverbs 7:4-5
Matthew 15:19-20
Mark 7:21-23
1 Corinthians 6:9-11
Galatians 5:19-21
Hebrews 13:4

GOD’S PROMISES

Isaiah 55:7
1 John 1:9
Revelation 22:14-15

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE

Revelation 2:14

PRAYER

Psalm 51:7, 10

MAKE A CHANGE

Acts 15:20, 29
1 Corinthians 6:18
Ephesians 5:3-5
Colossians 3:5
1 Timothy 4:12
2 Timothy 2:22

GAMBLING

Gambling has an addictive capacity. A man can find himself under the dominion of this addiction and under its power so quickly. You see, a person who is involved in sinful iniquitous practices, such as gambling, is actually yielding himself as a servant unto sin.

The Bible says, “Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?” (Romans 6:16). A person who has a gambling addiction is a servant of Satan. The moment he gives himself over to this sin, he comes under the power of Satan. And once he is under Satan's power, he will not let go. The power of Satan is greater than a man's power to resist. Only Jesus Christ can free a man from sin.

The psalmist very wisely prayed, “Lord, do not let any iniquity have dominion over me” (Psalm 19:13). And thus if there is anything that has the capacity of bringing you under its influence or under its power, it is wise to exercise your liberty to avoid it.

GOD'S PERSPECTIVE

Exodus 20:17
Proverbs 23:4-5
Proverbs 28:22
Ecclesiastes 5:10
Ezekiel 33:31
Matthew 6:24
1 Corinthians 6:12
1 Timothy 6:6-10

GOD'S PROMISES

Matthew 6:33
1 Corinthians 10:13
Hebrews 13:5
1 Peter 5:2-4

MAKE A CHANGE

Luke 12:15
1 Corinthians 10:31
Galatians 5:1
Colossians 3:2, 5-7
1 Timothy 6:17

PRAYER

Psalm 19:13
Proverbs 30:8-9

HOMOSEXUALITY

The prophet Ezekiel tells us the sin of Sodom started with pride, abundance, idleness, and they neglected the poor and needy. (Ezekiel 16:49-50). The term “sodomy,” is the obvious sin of Sodom. But as God looked into these men's hearts and analyzed Sodom's sin, He saw its more subtle form, the roots before it bore fruit.

God emphasized that the sin of Sodom was actually pride. Pride is thinking of yourself more highly than you should; it is an exalted opinion of yourself. So many times we look at the blessings that God has granted to us, and we act as though our genius, abilities, or wit have brought God's favor and blessings upon our lives, not realizing that if we have anything worthwhile and good within us, it has come from God.

There are certain roots of sin that when tolerated will germinate into vile fruit. Homosexuality and sodomy were actually the final manifestations of the people's sins. Their sins of pride had been germinating under the soil for a long time before being manifested in its final form.

God created the sex drive within us basically to become the highest form of expression of love between a husband and a wife who have pledged themselves exclusively to each other, and through its fruit the procreation and the perpetuation of mankind. It is not designed for one's own delight or pleasure, but rather a beautiful gift to be shared between a husband and wife. The Bible is very clear that homosexuality is something that is opposed to God. Those who are practicing homosexuality have chosen to live after the flesh rather than to walk in the Spirit. The Bible says it is sin; it is not to be accepted nor tolerated. It is something to be dealt with.

None of us are immune from problems with our flesh. There is a battle whether or not I am going to be controlled by my flesh or allow my spirit to be in subjection and harmony with God's Spirit. If you regularly attend church and you are engaged in sinful practices, don't be deceived into thinking that your church attendance is going to cover your sin. If it supersedes your commitment to Jesus Christ, it is all a form of pride and idolatry, and you will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Paul wrote, "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness," for "although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God." You see, men became proud. They didn't give God the glory and the credit for what He had done, but "their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools...and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever" For this reason God gave them over to a mind that was void of God, and ultimately God gave them up to all kinds of vile practices such as the sin of homosexuality (see Romans 1:18, 21, 22, 25).

GOD'S PERSPECTIVE

Gen. 1:27; 2:24; 5:2

Leviticus 18:1, 22

Leviticus 20:13

Ezekiel 16:49-50

Proverbs 16:5

Proverbs 18:12

Proverbs 21:4

Isaiah 3:9

Obadiah 1:3

Matthew 19:4-5

Romans 1:24-32

Romans 2:8

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

Ephesians 5:31

Jude 4, 6-7

GOD'S PROMISES

Psalm 138:6

Proverbs 11:21

1 Corinthians 10:13

2 Corinthians 5:17

2 Timothy 1:7

2 Peter 2:4-10

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE

Genesis 19:4-5; 24-25

MAKE A CHANGE

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

Ephesians 4:20-24

1 Peter 5:5

PRAYER

Psalm 19:13

Psalm 119:133

LOVE OF MONEY

There's nothing wrong with money. It's a means by which we exchange commodities and goods with one another. The Bible doesn't say that money is evil—it says "the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil" (1 Timothy 6:10). If getting rich is the most important thing to you, and you are obsessed with wanting to get more and more money or possessions—that's when it becomes evil. When your love for money exceeds your love for the true and the living God, you are actually worshiping the god mammon, and you will then find yourself "straying from the faith in greediness, and pierced through with many sorrows."

There were many people in the Bible whom God blessed with great riches, but when their riches became more important than God, it became sinful. Such was the case for the young man written about in Matthew 19:20-22. His riches stood in the way of his following Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "Follow Me." But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

Riches are not wrong in and of themselves. But if your riches master your life, and if you are ruled by them and they have precedence over your relationship with God, then they are wrong. That's the essence; that's the heart of it. Do you want eternal life? Follow Jesus.

GOD'S PERSPECTIVE

Deut. 8:17-20
Proverbs 3:9-10
Proverbs 13:7
Proverbs 15:16
Ecclesiastes 5:10
Matthew 6:21, 24
Luke 12:15
Luke 16:13
1 Timothy 3:8
1 Timothy 6:10
Titus 1:7

GOD'S PROMISES

2 Corinthians 9:8
Philippians 4:19

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE

Matthew 19:21-24
Luke 19:8
Philippians 4:11-12

PRAYER

1 Chronicles 29:12-13
Proverbs 30:8-9

MAKE A CHANGE

Psalm 62:10
Proverbs 3:9-10
Proverbs 23:5
1 Timothy 6:17-19
Hebrews 13:5

LUST

Lust can never be satisfied. It will always demand more. The only cure for lust is to starve it to death. If you feed it, it will go into a feeding frenzy and draw you deeper and deeper into it.

The sin of lust began in the garden of Eden when Satan tempted Eve. So wouldn't it have been better had God not placed the tree there, averting the temptation to lust? But then how would God know you truly loved Him and wanted to obey Him unless you had a choice? Choices are necessary. Man was made in the image of God, self-governing, but there had to be something to choose from—something attractive and desirable. If it was ugly, bitter, or sour, all the temptation in the world couldn't get you to choose it. John summed it up, "For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world" (1 John 2:16).

If you are a child of God, you are called to live a life separated from the defilement of the things in the world. So therefore, we are to separate ourselves from living after the lust of our flesh. We are not to be controlled, governed or following after our fleshly desires. If you fulfill the lust of your flesh, it is a one-way road. You can't retreat. Your flesh will always demand more and more and more. The Bible says, "Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure" (1 John 3:3). God said, "Be holy, for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16). So it's important for us to live a life of holiness and a life of separation from the world.

GOD'S PERSPECTIVE

Proverbs 5:22-23
Proverbs 11:6
Ecclesiastes 10:8
Matthew 5:27-28
Romans 8:5-8, 12
James 1:14-15
2 Peter 1:2-4
1 John 2:16
Revelation 21:8

GOD'S PROMISES

1 Corinthians 10:13

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE

Genesis 3:1-4, 6
2 Samuel 11:2-4
2 Samuel 12:7, 9-10, 13-14
Job 31:1

PRAYER

Psalm 19:13
Psalm 119:37, 133

MAKE A CHANGE

Proverbs 6:25-26
Romans 6:12
Romans 13:13-14
Galatians 5:16
Colossians 3:5
1 Thessalonians 4:3-5
2 Timothy 2:22
Titus 2:11-12
Hebrews 13:5
1 Peter 1:13-16
1 Peter 2:11-12

MASTURBATION

Uncleanness is immorality, one of the works of the flesh listed in Galatians 5:19, and it can be a powerful sin that controls your life. So it's understandable that you could lose hope.

If we examine why we do the things that we do, we need to realize that man is a trinity made up of body, mind, and spirit. Either my mind is going to be controlled by fleshly desires, or it is going to be controlled by spiritual desires. If I am living after the flesh, giving in to the passions and desires of my flesh, then the result will be a carnal mind. Paul said we are to bring "every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5). When we find our minds absorbed in the things of the flesh, it's important to take a moment and stop and ask the Holy Spirit to take control. Start to sing a worship chorus. Turn your mind toward the Lord. Pray. Get into the Scriptures.

The Bible says, "How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your Word" (Psalm 119:9). The best defense that we have against the attacks and temptations of Satan is the Word of God hidden in our hearts. Saturate your life with the Word of God. As you are saturated with God's Word, there is that power against sin. The Word of God hidden in your heart gives you the best defense against the temptations of Satan. Reading God's Word will help you to live and to walk in the Spirit. When you do, you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.

GOD'S PERSPECTIVE

Romans 6:6
Galatians 5:19, 21-25
2 Timothy 2:25-26
James 1:13-15
1 Peter 2:11
2 Peter 2:19

GOD'S PROMISES

Romans 8:12-13

PRAYER
Psalm 19:13
Psalm 119:9-12
Philippians 4:13

MAKE A CHANGE

Romans 6:12
Romans 12:2
Romans 13:13-14
1 Corinthians 6:19-20
2 Corinthians 7:1
2 Corinthians 10:5
Galatians 5:16-17
Ephesians 4:22-24
Colossians 3:2
1 Peter 4:1-2

MATERIALISM

Materialism is a lust for the things of the flesh, to possess worldly things. Jesus said, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:19-21). That’s the bottom line: Where is your heart? Do you desire heavenly things or earthly things? Do you want a new car, home or clothes, or do you desire spiritual things such as a greater faith in God and a love and kindness towards other people? Whatever things you treasure most reveal the condition of your heart.

Materialism will blind a person to things that are perfectly obvious. God has given us all things to enjoy, our homes, our families, but the sin of materialism turns the blessings of God into a curse. These things that were intended to be a blessing can become a master, and a person can become enslaved to worldly things. The truth of the matter is, you are serving God or mammon, one or the other—but you can’t serve them both; you can’t mix light and darkness. Mammon is a worldly treasure. And since God has given to us the ability and the capacity to reason and to choose, we must decide whether we will serve God or mammon. You’re the one who makes the choice whether you will put your heart and your life into the things that are eternal or into the things that will pass away.

GOD’S PERSPECTIVE

Psalm 49:6-20
Proverbs 22:4
Proverbs 23:4-5
Ecclesiastes 5:10
Matthew 6:24
Luke 16:13
1 Timothy 6:6-10
Hebrews 11:24-26

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE

Luke 12:16-20

PRAYER
Proverbs 30:8-9

MAKE A CHANGE

Matthew 6:19-21
Mark 4:18–20
Luke 12:15
Galatians 5:16
Colossians 3:2-4
1 Timothy 6:17
Hebrews 13:5
1 John 2:15

PORNOGRAPHY

When a person gives himself over to lust, he loses all sense of balance and propriety, and as such is a person who has given himself over to pornography. He has to keep going deeper and deeper into that realm to find a sense of satisfaction. But he's never really satisfied. It's an appetite that doesn't quit—until it just has taken over and controls his life. He becomes enslaved and addicted.

But there is hope for the one who wants to be free from the addiction and slavery of pornography. Psalm 119:9-12 promises, “How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word. With my whole heart I have sought You; oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You.” Also, a healthy respect for God and the awareness that He is always with us helps us to purify ourselves, and to live in such a way that we do not offend Him.

It's a tragic thing to see a person who is really given over to lust, because their life becomes so unbalanced. There's no moderation at all. They go hog wild. But the tragic thing is that they never find a place of satisfaction.

With this ugly scene in mind the psalmist wrote, “And God gave them their request [or the lust of their heart], but sent leanness into their soul” (Psalm 106:15). And that's always the tragic consequence of giving yourself over to pornography. You suffer spiritually. You see, there is the world of the flesh and there is the world of the spirit, and they are mutually exclusive in that no person can serve two masters. You're either going to be mastered by your flesh or by the Spirit. And these two are warring against each other. Paul said, “For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish” (Galatians 5:17). There is a battle going on for the control of your life. If you give yourself over to the flesh to be controlled by the flesh, then it brings you into the bondage of corruption. It brings you into this desire that cannot be satisfied but only grows.

Paul the apostle said, “Walk in the Spirit and you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” And you will find that there's such a full satisfaction in walking in the Spirit. The problem is that people will not make a true and full commitment to God. They will either make provision or compromise. But the only cure is to commit your life completely to the things of the Spirit. And when you do, you'll find that you can't do two things. You cannot be walking after the Spirit and still living after the flesh. But that walk after the Spirit actually puts the flesh in its proper place and under control.

Now, we still live in a fleshly body—and there are still those body appetites. But thank God they don't rule me anymore. I'm not a slave to them and they take their proper place. God never intended that any of us should be a servant to our flesh, a slave to the desires of our flesh. God intended that we should have victory over the flesh. And that victory comes when the spirit is supreme and we're walking after the Spirit and living after the things of the Spirit. Then you do not fulfill the desires of your flesh. You don't need to.

You can have a life that is rich and full, and you're free from those things that were destroying you.

GOD'S PERSPECTIVE

Psalm 101:2-4
Psalm 106:15
Psalm 119:9
Proverbs 5:20
Matthew 5:28
Romans 13:14
Galatians 5:16-17, 19
James 1:14-15
1 John 2:16
Revelation 21:8

GOD'S PROMISES

Psalm 119:1-2
John 8:32
Galatians 5:16

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE

1 Kings 11:4-6, 11
2 Peter 2:14

PRAYER

Psalm 19:13
Psalm 119:18, 33, 37

MAKE A CHANGE

Job 31:1
Proverbs 4:23
Proverbs 6:25
1 Corinthians 5:9, 11
Galatians 5:24
Ephesians 2:1-6
Ephesians 4:22
2 Timothy 2:22
Titus 2:11-12
James 1:14-15
1 Peter 1:13-16
1 Peter 2:11

SEXUAL IMMORALITY

One of the great weaknesses of the church today is the toleration of sexual immorality such as fornication, or people living together outside of marriage, or homosexuality.

Don't give it an inch. Make no provision for it but put on the Lord Jesus Christ. It's important that we cast off the works of darkness and we put on the armor of light. That means to put a block on the Internet so sexual images don't pop up. These are the last days and we must walk in holiness and purity because we want to be found in the righteousness of Christ.

There are always those who fool themselves into thinking that they could live immorally and still be Christians. But the apostle Paul made it clear that "fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, sodomites, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, and extortioners will not inherit the kingdom of God" (see 1 Corinthians 6:9-10). That was a part of your past life. If you want to be God's child, He will clean up your life. Don't go back to that.

There are still others who say, "It's my body, I can do as I please." Isn't that what we're hearing today, especially when it comes to pro-choice? Well, that may be true of the person in the world, but it is not true of the child of God. It's not your body anymore. It's been redeemed. You've been bought with a price. Jesus redeemed you from that lost, enslaved state, that you might be free now to serve, worship, and to glorify God in your body. The Bible teaches that the end result of being sexually promiscuous will be disastrous. It will destroy you and your life, and it will bring you into poverty. It will rob you of everything that is worthwhile and good, including your health.

Paul said to the church of Corinth, "Don't you realize that you cannot be joined together with a prostitute? Since you are Christ's, then you are seeking to make Christ a

participator in that immorality” (see 1 Corinthians 6:16-18). It can’t be! The Lord won’t join Himself to sin. He cannot be one with sin.

It is important that we purpose in our hearts to live a life of moral purity. That is what enabled Joseph to flee Potiphar’s wife when she sought to entice him (see Genesis 39). He had already determined in his heart that his body belonged to God, so when evil presented itself he knew he must flee. Paul wrote to Timothy, “Flee youthful lusts” (2 Timothy 2:22).

In our world today we have many people who worship sex; it’s their god or goddess. They’re too sophisticated to carve out little idols anymore, but nonetheless it is still their god. They may have pictures that would be an equivalent in a sense to these idols. If you observe that person’s life, you see that their whole life revolves around sex and sexual encounters. That’s what they live for and that’s what they talk about. It is really the god that controls their life. However, the Bible teaches that the end result of being sexually promiscuous will be disastrous. It will destroy you and your life, and it will bring you into poverty. It will rob you of everything that is worthwhile and good, including your health.

GOD’S PERSPECTIVE

Genesis 2:24
Exodus 20:14
Leviticus 20:10
Deuteronomy 5:18
Proverbs 2:16-19
Matthew 5:27-28
Matthew 15:19-20
Romans 1:18, 22, 24, 26-29, 32
1 Cor. 6:13b, 16
Galatians 5:19-21
1 Thessalonians 4:3-8
Hebrews 13:4
James 1:13-14

GOD’S PROMISES

Psalms 119:1-2
John 8:32
Galatians 5:16
BIBLICAL EXAMPLE
Genesis 39:12
1 Corinthians 6:15-17

MAKE A CHANGE

Prov. 5:1-5, 8-9, 15-23
Proverbs 6:23-29
Proverbs 7:1-5, 24-27
Romans 6:12-13
Romans 12:1-2
Romans 13:14
1 Corinthians 6:18-20
Colossians 3:5-7
2 Timothy 2:22
1 Peter 2:11
1 John 2:15-16

SMOKING

“As a Christian, can I smoke cigarettes? I find that it just sort of calms me down.” Let me ask you this: Can it get a hold on your life so that you’ve just got to have another one? Is that really calming you down? God never intended that man should be ruled by his flesh; God intended that you should be ruled by the Spirit. There are things that will hinder your progress in your walk with the Lord. They’re not wrong, whereby it’s a sin, but they are hindrances in the way of following Jesus.

You’re a born-again Christian—so why does it seem impossible to stop smoking? Second Timothy 3:5 says, “Having a form of godliness but denying its power.” That is an

accurate description of much of the church today. They observe rituals by going to church every Sunday, and have a form of godliness, but they lack power.

Jesus said, “Without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). When you come to Christ and understand the cross, you realize not only was Jesus crucified for your sins, but you are crucified with Christ. I no longer am held by the power of sin but I am dead to sin and alive to God through Jesus Christ. Sin no longer rules over me. So this is the principle: As a believer, I am now crucified with Christ. I have reckoned my old life and nature to be dead.

Now, that doesn't mean I completely lose the desires of the flesh, but they no longer rule over me. I no longer have to obey them. I'm no longer a slave to my fleshly desires, but I'm a slave of Jesus Christ. My desire is to obey Him and to please Him. And because of this, I can overcome sin through Him.

God has given us pure air with oxygen to breathe. But when you breathe in chemical substances, such as nicotine, it will affect your brain to give an altered state of consciousness. It will give you a feeling of euphoria or excitement. But the truth is, that isn't why God created your breathing. By smoking cigarettes, or anything else for that matter, you are twisting the use that God had originally intended. And what happens? You soon become addicted and then you become enslaved. Now your body is ruling over you. You're no longer in control. God never intended that man should be ruled by his flesh; God intended that you should be ruled by the Spirit.

There are things that will hinder my progress in my walk with the Lord. They're not wrong, whereby I can label them as sin, but they are hindrances. Paul said, “All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any” (1 Corinthians 6:12). In the book of Hebrews it says, “Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares *us*, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us” (Hebrews 12:1). And so we need to deny those things that would hinder us that stand in the way of following Jesus. We need to use wisdom in the exercise of our liberty in Christ. Don't use your liberty as an occasion for the flesh, because if you do, it'll bring you into bondage.

First Corinthians 3:16-17 declares, “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.” If you are a child of God, then you are a temple of God and the Holy Spirit lives inside you. And as Paul reminds us, God's temple is holy and shouldn't be mistreated or defiled. Now there are some people who use this passage to teach against smoking cigarettes. That could certainly be a good application; but to be consistent, we must then include candy bars and everything else that is bad for us. Our bodies are His holy temples, and we need to keep them pure.

Let's say you agree that smoking cigarettes is wrong, and you want the Lord to help you quit. You're a Christian. You're born-again. So why does it seem impossible for you to

stop smoking? Second Timothy 3:5 says, “Having a form of godliness but denying its power.” That is an accurate description of much of the church today. They observe rituals by going to church every Sunday, and have a form of godliness, but they lack power. Churches have often just become social centers, where one can get some entertaining message dealing with psychological issues, and hear some inspiring music; but the power of God is left out.

Every one of us is either a servant of God or a servant of Satan. And it is God’s desire to bring us out of the bondage of the kingdom of darkness, Satan’s kingdom, and to bring us into His glorious kingdom. But there is a war going on, a spiritual warfare, and Satan is doing his best to keep you in bondage. And Satan uses the world and the flesh in order to bring you into bondage unto himself.

First John 2:14 declares, “I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the Word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one.” In other words, John gives us the secret to how these young men overcame sin: they were strong in God’s Word. They lived in it. King David asked, “How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your Word. With my whole heart I have sought You; oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You” (Psalm 119:9-11).

Oh, how we need the power of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God working in our lives. To ignore the power of the Holy Spirit and God’s Word is to teach people how to get along in life without God, and without Him we can’t do anything.

We’re no longer slaves to our flesh, sin or Satan when we’re born again (Romans 6; 2 Timothy 2:26). We’re also free from the Law. But we must exercise our freedom in a way that will not bring us back into bondage.

GOD’S PERSPECTIVE

Genesis 2:7
Exodus 20:3, 5
Deut. 5:6-7, 9-10
Job 33:4
Romans 6:6
1 Corinthians 2:5
1 Corinthians 3:16-17
Galatians 2:20
2 Timothy 2:26
2 Peter 2:19
1 John 2:14

GOD’S PROMISES

1 Corinthians 10:13
2 Corinthians 7:1
Galatians 6:7-8

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

PRAYER

Psalm 119:37

MAKE A CHANGE

Psalm 119:9-11
John 8:34, 36
Romans 12:1-2
Romans 13:14
1 Cor. 6:12, 19-20
Galatians 5:13, 24-25
2 Timothy 3:5
Hebrews 12:1
1 Peter 2:16

TELEVISION

Many people have stunted spiritual development because pleasure is their thing. Their minds are distracted and drawn away by the pleasures of this world. Movies and television contribute greatly to this. So many people spend their evenings in front of the television set, seeking pleasure, seeking to be entertained. Yet Paul the apostle speaks about the decadent society, the horrible things that were going on as far as violence and immorality, and he said, “Not only do they do such things but they take pleasure in those that do them” (Romans 1:32).

Now you may be true and faithful to your marriage, you may be of the character and sort that you would never cheat on your wife, but if you are watching adultery on TV, in being entertained by it, you are vicariously entering into it.

When pleasure supersedes your relationship with Jesus, it can sap spiritual life from you, and it can keep you in an arrested spiritual state. Those who spend maybe eight, ten hours a week in front of the television will tell you, “Oh, I just didn’t have time to read my Bible.” And so many people allow these other things to become first and supersede their relationship with Jesus. And thus, though they have received Jesus and claim to be Christians, their lives never bring forth fruit. They never develop; they never grow. The fruitfulness is choked out by these other things.

I would like to suggest that this week, during that time when you normally sit down and pollute your mind with television—instead of clicking on the remote, turn your face towards God. Dedicate yourself to prayer and reading the Bible. Turn off your television and turn your face to God.

GOD’S PERSPECTIVE

Luke 8:14
Romans 1:28-32
Romans 6:21
Romans 8:7
2 Corinthians 10:4-6
Ephesians 4:17-19
1 Timothy 5:22
Revelation 18:4

GOD’S PROMISES

Isaiah 33:15-16
Romans 8:13
Galatians 6:7-8

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE

Psalm 50:18

PRAYER

Psalm 119:37

MAKE A CHANGE

Psalm 101:2-4, 7
Romans 13:14
Romans 16:19b
Ephesians 5:11-16
Philippians 4:8
Colossians 3:16
Colossians 4:5
1 Peter 4:3

TEMPER

A hot temper is like the wave of the sea that has no rest, driven by the winds of passion. It is like a volcano waiting to erupt.

So often a person will try to strategize a bad temper by saying, “Well, I’ve learned to count to ten before I react.” They try to figure out how to keep from losing their temper, but then they lose control and say all kinds of horrible, ugly things. And then they hate themselves for doing it. And yet when faced with a provocation again, they explode.

God has a better way. The person who has yielded his life to follow Jesus Christ is at peace with the circumstances of his life. He has greater patience; he is more gentle. There is a temperance knowing that God rules one’s life. As a person sees God working through their anger, it’s like they can’t believe it. It’s very exciting to see God doing this work within a person what they could not do for themselves. It’s God’s work; it’s His battle. Give your hot temper over to God and let the Holy Spirit help you overcome your anger.

GOD’S PERSPECTIVE

Proverbs 14:29
Proverbs 15:1, 18
Proverbs 25:28
Proverbs 29:22
Ecclesiastes 7:9
Galatians 5:19-21
Titus 1:7

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES

1 Samuel 20:27-33
Psalm 106:32-33

MAKE A CHANGE

Psalm 37:8
Proverbs 22:24-25
Ephesians 4:31
Colossians 3:8
James 1:19-20

TRANSGENDER

In the King James Version of the Bible, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 reads, “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.”

If you are engaged in these practices, don’t be deceived into thinking that your church attendance is going to cover your sin. If you are effeminate seeking to be female when you are male, or female seeking to be male, you will not inherit the kingdom of God.

The book of Jonah shares a valuable lesson. In the KJV, Jonah 2:8 reads, “They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy.” “Lying vanities” is translated “worthless idols.” Even though Jonah knew the Scriptures, he believed worthless lies. He thought he could escape the presence of God. Psalm 139:7-8 declares, “Where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there.” Another lie Jonah believed was that his plan for his life was better than God’s plan. Not so. God’s thoughts concerning you are “of peace and not evil” (see Jeremiah 29:11). Jonah also believed the lie that he could resist the call of God and still win. How many of these lying, worthless vanities do you believe?

It is a lie to think that you know better for your own life than does God. It is a lie for you to think that you can find happiness apart from God. And for you to attempt to do so you are only bringing misery and disaster upon yourself. You're forsaking your own mercy, because God is merciful. God is loving. And however God has created you is the very best thing that could ever happen to you, though you may not think it.

Jonah 2:9 continues, "But I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD."

"Salvation is of the Lord"—Jonah discovered he couldn't save himself. Salvation is not of my own works. It is not of my own efforts. I tried for a long time to please God with my works and my efforts, and I tried to be righteous by my own doing. But what a glorious day when I learned Jonah's lesson: salvation is of the Lord. After a lot of bitter experiences of failure, I learned that salvation is of the Lord. One of the happiest days in my whole life was when God taught me this truth—salvation is of the Lord—and I found my answer in Him.

GOD'S PERSPECTIVE

Genesis 1:27, 31

Deuteronomy 22:5

Deuteronomy 32:6

Isaiah 43:21

Acts 4:12

Romans 1:18-32

1 Corinthians 3:9

Ephesians 2:10

GOD'S PROMISES

Psalm 37:39

Psalm 138:8

Isaiah 29:23-24

Philippians 1:6

Hebrews 13:20-21

MAKE A CHANGE

1 Samuel 12:21

Psalm 100:3-5

Jonah 2:8-9

John 3:1-7, 12

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

Philippians 2:13-15

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE

Jude 7-8

PRAYER

Psalm 31:5-9

Psalm 139:14-18