

# Seeking God’s Help in Addictions

## God’s Word on Drugs

The enemy of souls tempts people into a life of sin. He does not want anyone to attain eternal life in heaven. Mood altering drugs are one of his tools.

What does God’s Word say? There is “no new thing under the sun” (Eccles. 1:9). Already in the Old Testament, people were reminded about the destructive power of drugs and addiction that had started in their youth.

“Therefore shall evil come upon thee; thou shalt not know from whence it riseth: and mischief shall fall upon thee; thou shalt not be able to put it off: and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, which thou shalt not know. Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast laboured from thy youth; if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail” (Isa. 47:11,12).

Sorcery, witchcraft and enchantment are derived from the Greek word *pharmakeía*. Strong’s Concordance, 5331 states *pharmakeía* (from *pharmakeuō*, “administer drugs”) – properly, drug-related sorcery, like the practice of magical-arts, etc. (A. T. Robertson).

Sorcery is spoken of as sin in Acts 8:9–11 and Revelations 9:21. God’s Word reveals a sobering message about the last times and the use of mood-altering drugs and addiction. “And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived” (Rev. 18:23).

The prophecies of God’s Word are being fulfilled. The political leaders of many nations have or are legalizing marijuana. Dear reader, battle temptations and put sin away in Jesus’ name and blood. Eternal life in heaven awaits all who endeavor to keep faith and good conscience.

**Rod Nikula**

## Drugs Enslave—The Gospel Frees

Opioid addiction is a prevalent issue in society today. Opioids are a class of drugs that include the illegal drug heroin, synthetic opioids such as fentanyl, and pain relievers available legally by prescription, such as oxycodone (OxyContin®), hydrocodone (Vicodin®), codeine, morphine, and many others. Pain relievers are commonly found in believers’ homes. They present dangers to the person that needs them, as well as temptations for others living in, or having access to the home. Addiction to opioids or other drugs can enslave one to a life of sin.

### **Be Watchful**

“Let us watch and be sober” (1 Thess. 5:6). God’s Word encourages us to be watchful in our faith-life and in our homes. This is especially important for believers concerning pain relievers. In the past, not much thought was given to how these were used or stored. Now, the enemy of souls has made these into a great temptation, which can ruin our life and take away our faith.

“Sober”—what does it mean? Some definitions are “clear headed; not drunk; well-reasoned and balanced; as well as an earnestly thoughtful character or demeanor.” Drugs and alcohol can cause us to be the opposite of all the definitions of “sober.” These can put us in a state of mind wherein we may do things we might not otherwise do. Although it might seem to be a good way to avoid uneasiness in our lives, it does not cure the uneasiness. It causes more distress in the long run.

Painkillers are routinely prescribed by doctors and dentists. For example, after a major surgery, tooth removal, broken bone, deep cut, or for someone who suffers from arthritis or other chronic pain. Codeine might be prescribed for a bad cough or cold. Prescribed painkillers can quickly become addictive, both physically and psychologically. One can quickly find themselves over-using them. Minimal usage is encouraged, and stop taking them as quickly as you can.

If you are prescribed opioid medicines, you should take them exactly as prescribed by your doctor. Do not take medicines that are not yours. Always ask questions when your doctor gives you a new or different medicine. When you’re getting a prescription filled, know why you are taking it, for how long, and if there are risks associated with the medicine.

What can we do to prevent others from becoming victims of opioid addiction? First, safely store all prescription medications in locked cabinets. Bathroom cabinets are too easy to access by others, including visitors, youth at “hops,” etc. At first you might not notice that some pills are missing, as typically only a few are taken. Throw away pain killers as soon as they are no longer needed.

### **Care for, Love, and Forgive**

Provide a safe home for children and youth. Care for each other with the forgiveness of sins so that unity of the Holy Spirit could dwell there. Youth have many temptations, including peer pressure to try drugs or alcohol. So quickly, opioids can enslave the brain into addiction, resulting in the use of stronger drugs, alcohol and gambling.

Have a conversation with your children. Put temporal, busy life aside as often as needed to be there for your children’s questions and education, especially spiritual matters. Watch for behavior changes, ask questions, express feelings, and above all, patiently love each child.

Thankfully, believers have God on their side. He is more powerful than the enemy of souls, including addictions. Seek professional help early rather than after addictions are too advanced.

If opioids, or other drugs have led to a life of sin and addiction, do not believe the devil’s whisper that sins are too great to be forgiven. Go instead to a trusted believing friend to hear the gospel preached, that you too can believe all sins forgiven in Jesus’ name and blood. For great is God’s love and mercy. God helps in time of need. Jesus says, “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. 18:20).

**Dr. Heini Aho**

# God Helps the Addict and Loved Ones

The thought of addiction to opioids, mood altering drugs, chemicals, and alcohol makes me shudder. Addiction to these substances brings terrible consequences and can take everything one values, including relationships with loved ones, job and home. In its place are scenarios that a sober mind would never dream of. Even time is lost. Years vanish in a drug or alcohol induced haze. How can I help – how can we help – someone that is addicted?

Mood altering substances hook one into a life of sin, trapped in a downward spiral, spinning out of control. As a licensed alcohol and drug counselor, I hear painful stories of addicts desperately trying to break free from chains that bind mercilessly to a substance whose only goal is death. Many relate of helplessness, living completely against their morals and values, leaving deep, painful scars.

We may have a loved one tormented with addiction and wonder how to help. Emotions run rampant, and we may be exasperated at yet another shocking incident that has happened. We might lecture, shame, yell, nag, or ignore, burying oneself in denial. This only widens the chasm. Rather, approach humbly with the love of Christ, offering forgiveness for all sins in Jesus' name and blood. This freeing gospel can soften the heart and open the ears. Communicate without blame or accusation. Focus on the problem, use facts, and speak the truth.

## **Taking the First Steps**

Encourage and assist an addict into treatment. It opens opportunities to work on improving self-worth, communication skills, expressing and processing emotions, working through resentments, unresolved grief, guilt and toxic shame, as well as relapse prevention skills and developing a recovery plan. A first important step toward recovery is to take ownership for using mood-altering substances, and not blame others and excuse or justify their use.

A recovering addict struggles to find where they feel they are understood and supported. Years in addiction may cause separation in relationships. It can be difficult to bridge the gap. Someone in recovery needs loved ones who practice patience, set healthy boundaries, provide encouragement, and understand the difference between supporting rather than enabling.

It takes time to rebuild trust. It helps if the addict can express remorse, gratitude, humility, and honesty. Open communication is important. Unhealthy activities need to be replaced with healthy ones. The gospel uplifts, strengthens and carries one in faith.

Family and friends can pray, reach out with daily phone calls, frequent visits, and bringing one to gatherings of believers. Doing activities together, such as playing games, singing, doing hobbies, sports, and coffee outings help. Support groups can also benefit.

## **Relapse**

Relapse is not uncommon. Isolation may be a warning sign of relapse, yet many individuals need time alone to rejuvenate. Interestingly, the odds of staying sober increase after the first relapse, and yet more after the second or third. Relapse teaches valuable lessons about the powerlessness of addiction, awareness of relapse triggers and warning signs, and importance in identifying a plan for relapse prevention.

For family members, relapse may be devastating, dashing hopes that the addiction was resolved. Do not take relapse personally. Pause, reflect, pray for patience, strength, and a forgiving heart.

## **God Comforts**

God can help when we trust in Him. I found comfort when I finally surrendered to God my worries and deep grief over my loved one lost in addiction. The pain still comes in waves, but as a child of God I also find joy in life, experiencing God's abundant blessings with my dear family and friends. Hope remains that one day my loved one will receive the grace of repentance.

One addict stated that he prayed daily for two full years for the cravings to lift, and finally it happened. God answered those prayers, in His time and according to His will.

**Patti Raisanen, Licensed alcohol and drug counselor**

## *Dear Heavenly Father,*

*You see everything I do and know all of my thoughts. I carry the scars of addiction. There are many things that a person can be addicted to that harm one's well-being and faith-life. Regardless, the struggles, temptations, fears, and consequences that result are the same. Father, you know how for years I found a fleshly but wrong comfort in drugs and alcohol. The scars of addiction have not disappeared with the preaching of the gospel, though the gospel is my strength each day.*

*With Your guiding hand, I receive strength to put one foot in front of the other. Allow me to fight the good fight, lead me away from each and every alcoholic beverage I see. The world is so evil and the devil's invitation for "relaxation" in the midst of stress is very enticing. Memories of that kind of relaxation fill my mind. And now the legalization of marijuana is yet another luring invitation for my weary body. Allow me, Lord, to fight the good fight even when I am alone and to keep the wheels of my vehicle from turning into those new marijuana stores. My thoughts intensify, "What could these stores possibly look like?" and "This could be much easier now...for many years, I needed to hide these drugs from everyone and buy in secret."*

*I cannot of my own strength fight this battle. Thank you, Lord, for providing those gifts that allow me to live in Your kingdom. I feel so small with these large temptations hovering over my head. I feel I am too poor to even pray but I know You encourage me to do so. Help me pray, even a weak simple prayer: "Lead me, help me." I find comfort in sharing my griefs with You.*

*You have blessed my life in so many ways, allow me to focus on those blessings instead of the difficulties that drive my temptations to sin. My times sitting in the back of a police car, having my driver's license and vehicle taken from me, and sitting in jail all served a purpose in my life. Thank You for those wake-up calls. I needed the threat of prison time to wake me from my addiction. Help others to recognize that calling too.*

*You have blessed me with a loving believing wife that tries her best to understand my struggles but more importantly, as a friend that is very willing to forgive. Keep my conscience tender and my feet ready to flee from temptation. Lord, if I fall give me strength and humility to walk the steps of repentance. Give my wife, family, and friends forgiving hearts and minds to continue to love me and strength to care for me as a believer despite my damaging struggles. Allow me to make new promises to believe.*

*Guide other believers, too, that struggle with addiction. Allow those that still deny their condition to see and seek help. Show them that they are not alone. Help their families and loved ones believe in Your helping hand even as You guided me. Give hope to those who are addicted. As my father encouraged me to believe and preached the gospel to me, so help those that are in need of peace and rest from life's troubles. Please continue to bless and keep me and give me peace.*

*Amen.*

**Writer's name withheld**

**Discussion thoughts and questions:**

1. How might you begin a general discussion with your children, family, or friends about addiction?
2. How should we approach someone that we think has fallen into sin? What could we say?
3. Discuss the importance of prayer, and how prayer has helped you in your life.
4. Sing song of Zion #350. Verse by verse, share what these words mean to you.
5. Suggest some ways to support and help someone that suffers from an addiction. Is there a need for this support in your congregation?