

Grace Bible Church
2022 Biblical Counseling Conference
TRACK TWO



Session 4 – The Philosophy of Addictions

INTRODUCTION

I. Addiction is a “Worship Disorder” (the heart of the problem)

A. Exodus 20:3 *You shall have no other gods before me. (ESV)*¹

1. Placing themselves as god and living to please and serve self rather than pleasing and honoring God
2. Sin and idolatry are the general terms, but drunkenness is the specific term
3. Another term is witchcraft “Pharmakia”
4. Secular world relabels this problem as an outer man problem [disease] with a spiritual component

B. As biblical counselors we know that it is a heart problem [spiritual first, and physically manifested].

1. What the world calls addiction, or substance use disorder, or AUD, or OUD, manifests as a *physical* problem but the root issues are in the *spiritual* realm.²
2. Quote from *The Heart of Addiction: A Biblical Perspective*:

“My desire is to deal with your spiritual person in this book. There is an interaction of the physical person and spiritual person; however, the will, soul, attitude, and thoughts (or mind) are all terms that are distinctly spiritual. It is your spiritual heart that matters most to God. 1 Samuel 13:14 describes David as “*a man after*” God’s own heart when it says: “*The Lord has sought out a man after his own heart.*” The Lord must perform spiritual heart surgery for every one of us so that our hearts of selfishness become transformed... Psalm 119:36 *Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain!*” (Shaw, p.8-9)³

3. Proverbs 4:23 - *Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.*
 - a. God wants their hearts.
 - b. They have served idolatrously – but wrongly—the god of self
 - c. Idolaters demand others worship and serve their false god of self
 - d. They have not served worshipfully the One True God
 - e. Again, help the counselee early on to think of it as an inner man (spiritual) issue first before the outer man (behavioral issues) are talked about
 - f. Have notecards on their person with TRUTH

¹ All scripture quotations are taken from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version © (ESV®) copyright © 2001. By Crossway. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

² Read Chapter 1, “A Spiritual Problem,” *The Heart of Addiction: A Biblical Perspective*, Mark E. Shaw, Focus Publishing, 2008, 2018.

³ Mark E. Shaw, *The Heart of Addiction: A Biblical Perspective*, Mark E. Shaw, Focus Publishing, 2008, 2018.

- g. Your counselee has a BELIEF problem... they believe lies.

C. Addiction is a problem of unbelief

Hebrews 3:7-15 *Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, "Today, if you hear his voice,⁸ do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness,⁹ where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years.¹⁰ Therefore I was provoked with that generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their heart; they have not known my ways.'¹¹ As I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest.'¹² Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.¹³ But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.¹⁴ For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.¹⁵ As it is said, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion."*

1. "Brothers," this is talking to Christians, therefore believers can struggle with unbelief
2. Result is falling away from the living God (not a loss of salvation – but separation from Him relationally)
3. Sin is...
 - a. Deceitful (not a disease of addiction- disease suggests suffering and victimhood)
 - b. Sin hardens your heart (wrong beliefs about God are always there)
 - c. Hard heart of unbelief is the real, overall problem (**Heb 3:12**)
4. Unbelief manifests in billions of wrong views about God and man and life!
 - a. Identify lies. (Confrontation in a gentle way – **Gal. 6:1**)
 - b. Renounce them **Eph. 4:22**
 - c. Because they have deceived themselves in their sin and suppressed the truth (**Rom 1:18**).
 - d. Announce truth: Every single day (residential program perhaps) they need help with reminders, exhortations so they don't harden their hearts and act on lies rather than truth.
 - e. Example: LIE- How could God let all this evil and suffering happen?
TRUTH – Teach **Gen. 1-3** as you present the Gospel and the truth about God: God is using suffering. He hasn't taken us out of all suffering yet. He is redeeming it. God is not the wicked angry God they are thinking of.
5. **Hebrews 3:19** *So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.*
 - a. Literally this rest was the promised land for Israel. God is pointing us to Jesus.
 - b. Your addicted counselee cannot physically rest – always seeking their object to get them up or down / pills, drink, etc
 - c. But spiritually speaking the work of salvation by Jesus Christ is finished work. No longer need for atonement.
 - d. They need to know that their unbelief is preventing their spiritual rest.
 - e. **Heb. 4:11** *Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.*

- f. Teach them that your works cannot accomplish rest.
- g. The god that they're serving is SELF, and self is never satisfied
- 6. **Hebrews 4:7** *again he appoints a certain day, "Today," saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts."*
 - a. Again, God is saying, 'Don't harden your hearts,' to Christians
 - b. A tendency for everyone is to harden your hearts when you hear God's Word.
 - c. Pray, asking God that you hear, to listen and not harden our hearts.
 - d. The word today means this is something to do immediately
 - e. God is saying this THREE TIMES in Hebrews to believers: (Don't harden your hearts!) Emphasize and teach this to your counselees.
- 7. **Hebrews 4:14-15** *Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.*
- 8. **Hebrews 4:16** *(a great verse to memorize) Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*
 - a. The time of need is the time of temptation.
 - b. All are tempted to stay in their lie and their unbelief rather than believe the Word of truth.
 - c. Out of the belief come the desires of the heart, and those desires produce thoughts, words, and behaviors.
 - i. Believing lies about God and man results in living without purpose, order, hope, fellowship with God and His people.
 - ii. Living with belief in a God who made you in His image results in hope and identity in Christ Jesus – not about what you do, but who you are

II. Viewing Your Counselee as Saint, Sufferer, Sinner

- A. As a saint...
 - 1. Look for actions they are doing in obedience
 - 2. Encourage about their identity in Christ
 - 3. Give hope that change is possible because of the Holy Spirit
- B. As a sufferer...
 - 1. There are elements of suffering in everyone's lives
 - 2. Suffering means that you are dealing with circumstances that are not your fault, (that you didn't ask for)
 - 3. Painful childhood experiences broken homes (divorce), bullying, etc are examples of suffering and you must help your counselee think biblically about those circumstances
- C. As a sinner...
 - 1. What they say reveals their unbiblical thinking (**Mark 7:20-23**)
 - 2. The point of biblical counseling is replacing truth where lies are believed

III. Tools of Idolatry: Isaiah 44:9-22

- A. World groups people according to their outer man behaviors or the “tools” they use
- B. Idolatry covers all behaviors in which one turns to something that is created rather than the Creator.
 - 1. Sexual sin/ pornography
 - 2. Gambling / money and spending
 - 3. Food (restricting or too much, going to food for comfort)
 - 4. Alcohol and other drugs
- C. Choosing those things habitually because you like the way it makes you feel—enslavement results and it becomes life-dominating sin
- D. Reminder: Addiction is a worship disorder in which one is serving the god of self
 - 1. Person in addiction is just using a tool⁴
 - 2. Cocaine, alcohol, sexual pleasure, gambling, restricting food, overeating food, spending money etc. to serve self, to carve out the way they want to be or appear in their idolatry.
 - 3. Picking up another tool (addiction) is very easy after one is put down if the heart hasn't changed—continuing to serve the god of self.

Verses of Scripture from Isaiah 44:9-22	Teaching points
⁹ All who fashion idols are nothing, and the things they delight in do not profit. Their witnesses neither see nor know, that they may be put to shame. ¹⁰ Who fashions a god or casts an idol that is profitable for nothing?	“all” v.9 means “all” “sweeping assertion, there are no exceptions” “do not profit” – won’t yield long term gain “my witnesses” vv1-8, 21-22 is a contrast of what God’s people look like compared to the IDOLATER. “my people” first 8 verses; Rest of verses are not his people. Shame is inevitable for them; Created things will not bring them what they want. They need the Creator. v. 10 Reveals the motive of the idolater. There IS a profitable result that the addictive choice brings to them. There is a gain (no one does it for nothing). They like the feeling, the escape, the irresponsibility, the satisfaction of themselves.
¹¹ Behold, all his companions shall be put to shame, and the craftsmen are only human. Let them all assemble, let them stand forth. They shall be terrified; they shall be put to shame together.	Accomplices of the idolater. Shame will result for all. Pagan lifestyle brings no benefit ultimately.

⁴ Thanks to Jocelyn Wallace who helped my understanding of using a tool in idolatry.

<p>¹² The ironsmith takes a cutting tool and works it over the coals. He fashions it with hammers and works it with his strong arm.</p> <p>He becomes hungry, and his strength fails; he drinks no water and is faint.</p>	<p>Strong arm is his best strength. Those choosing substances become experts at the shooting into the veins; the anticipation and preparation is intentional. There is a gain (no one does it for nothing) They like the feeling, the escape, the irresponsibility, the satisfaction of themselves—all exhilarating for them! Spend lots of time looking for the perfect tool (drug combination and progression). Hungry, strength is failing, not drinking water, faint. (They need a physician as soon as possible for the physical consequences!)</p>
<p>(Jump to verse 21-22) Remember these things, O Jacob, and Israel, for you are my servant; I formed you; you are my servant; O Israel, you will not be forgotten by me. ²² I have blotted out your transgressions like a cloud and your sins like mist; return to me, for I have redeemed you.</p>	<p>“fashions” – a lot of effort is contrasted with v.21 where God formed/fashioned the individual (“I formed you.”) Contrasting God’s people with the idolater</p>
<p>(Back to Verse 13) ¹³ The carpenter stretches a line; he marks it out with a pencil. He shapes it with planes and marks it with a compass. He shapes it into the figure of a man, with the beauty of a man, to dwell in a house.</p>	<p>Careful attention to the detail and planning in carving out just the right idol. Don’t let the addicted person tell you they didn’t plan and were careless. They planned their drug use... not haphazard... precise. Shapes his god into what he knows and sees, beautiful person self-idolization, only what we know. Ourselves in our feeble glory.</p>
<p>¹⁴ He cuts down cedars, or he chooses a cypress tree or an oak and lets it grow strong among the trees of the forest. He plants a cedar and the rain nourishes it.</p>	<p>False idol depends upon human purpose for existence... false god is “created” by the human. (Secular programs of twelve steps say you choose your higher power... idolatry living for self in sober way!) Sober idolatry! Actually dependent upon the real God of Creation – natural processes sustained by God (rain!)</p>
<p>¹⁵ Then it becomes fuel for a man. He takes a part of it and warms himself; he kindles a fire and bakes bread. Also he makes a god and worships it; he makes it an idol and falls down before it.</p>	<p>Trees cut down and used for fuel to make a fire. Same material of the god that is manufactured is consumed. The log can’t save itself. It cannot save the idolater. Our real true God is a consuming fire (Heb 12:29, Deut 4:15-20) God doesn’t depend on you! He is a consuming fire and independent</p>

	of any help from man! We are low. He is High.
¹⁶ Half of it he burns in the fire. Over the half he eats meat; he roasts it and is satisfied. Also he warms himself and says, "Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire!"	Same wood that was meant for the idolatry – it does bring some satisfaction as eating meat does. The wood is only doing what it was designed to do, but he assigns a spiritual awakening to this fire. Look at the power of this! Idolater not acknowledging God's naturally ordained process and missing the one True God who designed it all.
¹⁷ And the rest of it he makes into a god, his idol, and falls down to it and worships it. He prays to it and says, "Deliver me, for you are my god!"	He is satisfied and now his attention is on praising ("worships" and "prays") the idol he "made." The leftovers of ordinary human activity provide gods to whom people turn for deliverance. Asking something that you assign power worth to deliver you that burns up in a fire is foolishness. The addiction programs don't call it foolishness they call this insanity... so their solution is that you need to be fixed from your insanity problem... or "restored to sanity" but that's not it. You need salvation and to put away your idolatry. The "deliver me" request the addict is making to the cocaine, but they never get back to that first initial high experience.
¹⁸ They know not, nor do they discern, for he has shut their eyes, so that they cannot see, and their hearts, so that they cannot understand.	Idolatry is blinding. God has given them over (Romans 1) and they will end up blind, unable to understand. There is unrepentant sin. Awareness and confession of sin would bring enlightenment. Luke 7:36-50 woman with the alabaster flask was aware of her sin and enlightened to wanting to worship Jesus elaborately!
¹⁹ No one considers, nor is there knowledge or discernment to say, "Half of it I burned in the fire; I also baked bread on its coals; I roasted meat and have eaten. And shall I make the rest of it an abomination? Shall I fall down before a block of wood?"	Plain answer before them. Their darkened hearts cannot see that the block of wood (that they used for ordinary human purposes) can't rescue them. Person struggling with idolatry of addiction serving the god of self, they cannot rescue themselves from the hurt, the suffering, or their sin. Can't forget it though they try. Addict must deal with the suffering in a relationship with Christ.

	Addict must deal with the sin in a relationship with Christ Underneath all the assigned value they have given it they have to get to the truth – this is just a block of wood.
²⁰ He feeds on ashes; a deluded heart has led him astray, and he cannot deliver himself or say, “Is there not a lie in my right hand?”	Ashes – not real nourishment. Illustration of malnourishment of the soul. “ A deluded heart ” has led the addict astray, too! Delusions are lies. Not truth. Has led him astray. “ Cannot deliver himself ” even if he wanted to. Lie in my right hand – but they cannot see it... no awareness of it. He cannot discern it (verse 19)

- E. Addiction and Stealing – **Eph. 4:28** *Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.*
 - 1. Stealing literally from stores
 - 2. Stealing from employer by not working faithfully
 - 3. From stolen credit cards and from others
- F. Addiction and Coveting – **Rom. 13:9**- *For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”*
 - 1. Desiring to possess what God has not given yet
 - 2. Possessions or positions or power
- G. **Eph 5:18** command to *Do not get drunk with wine...* – Drunkenness is not just applied to alcohol from wine
 - 1. God doesn’t separate the substances.
 - 2. Alcohol is a drug in liquid form
 - 3. Physical processes happen no matter what substance you put into the body
 - 4. Drunkenness can cover it all!

IV. Strategy for Counselors

- A. Create short-term restrictions (put-off’s) and guardrails for new behaviors (put-on’s) **Eph 4:20-24**
- B. As you are winning the short-term battles, start addressing underlying heart motives for long-term change

V. CONCLUSION

- A. What the world calls addiction, or substance use disorder, manifests as a physical problem but the root issues are in the spiritual realm.
(Refer to p.6 *Heart of Addiction: A Biblical Perspective*, Focus Publishing, 2008, 2018)
- B. God’s Word is sufficient.

C. Summary:

1. Addiction is self-worship (a worship disorder).
2. Beliefs are the core issue. (Desires come from beliefs)
3. Biblical counseling with the Word of God and the power of the Holy Spirit is the only way to help them see truth.
4. Address your counselee as a saint, sufferer, and sinner.
5. Tools are not the gods – self is the god.
6. These are only tools – though they are spending a lot of time using them.
 - a. Don't just get them to drop the tool – they will immediately pick up another one.
 - b. We teach them to run to their Creator, to Christ, to the Word, to a Trusted Christian Friend⁵, and to a small group of people with whom they can live in transparency and in community within the local church.
7. You and I must be involved in biblically helping the addicted because the local church is the answer!

Recommended Resources:

The Heart of Addiction: A Biblical Perspective (Mark E. Shaw, Focus Publishing)

The Heart of Addiction Workbook and Leader's Guide

Divine Intervention: Hope and Help for Families of Addicts

Cross Talking: A Daily Gospel for Transforming Addicts

Next Steps: Be T.R.A.N.S.F.O.R.M.E.D

- An All-digital curriculum for a care group study
- 66 videos and leader's guides, and discussion questions to start an addictions outreach with a biblical perspective in your local church
- Taught by Dr. Mark E. Shaw of The Addiction Connection
- Find out more and download free sample lessons at www.theaddictionconnection.org

⁵ That phrase/concept "trusted Christian friend" or (TCF) was coined, and is developed further throughout *The Heart of Addiction: A Biblical Perspective*, by Mark E. Shaw (2008, 2018 Focus Publishing, Bemidji) see pages 4, 13, 38-39, 53, 106, 141-142, etc.