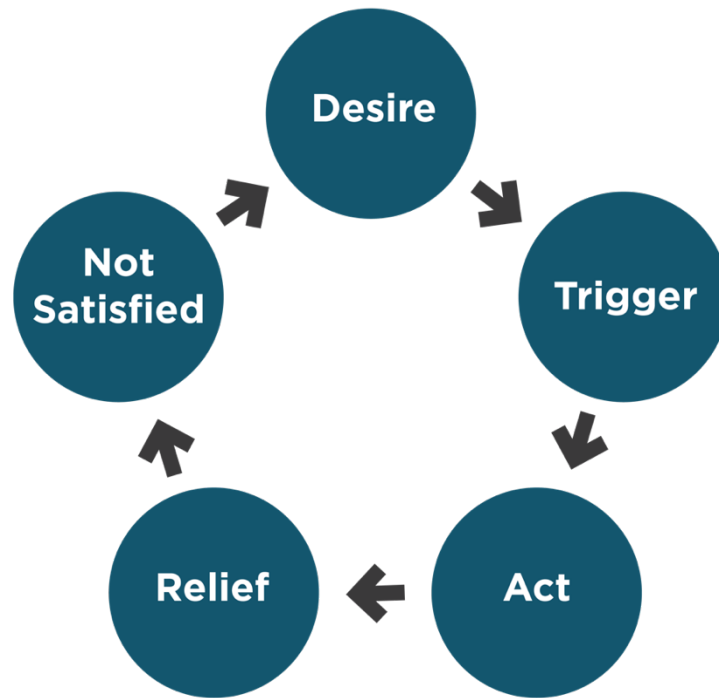


ADDICTION

A Care + Counsel Resource



The addiction cycle is a trap because it repeats itself endlessly.

- **Desire** - a craving.
- **Trigger** - anything that elevates desire and provides opportunity. Triggers can be impulsive, but often follow a predictable pattern.
- **Act** - respond to the trigger.
- **Relief** - short-term fulfillment.
- **Not Satisfied** - never fully fulfilled, sometimes accompanied by remorse or shame. Left unsatisfied, it demands increase in frequency and intensity, which leads to greater desire

And the cycle continues.

The key to breaking free from the addiction cycle is not at action nor trigger. But at desire.

The Addiction Struggle

Romans 7:14-25

The Struggle is Real

¹⁵ For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. ¹⁶ Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. ¹⁷ So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. - Romans 7:14-17

When you are struggling, you need to get to heart of the struggle. When you are struggling ...

- what do you desire?
- what do you fear?
- who are you trying to please?
- what do you believe at the moment?

The answers to these questions reveal your heart.

Sin arises when we desire something or someone more than God. Overcoming our struggle with sin begins by reversing this process and desiring God more than other things or other people.

The Struggle is Repeated

¹⁸ For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. - Romans 7:18-20

Have you ever said, “God, I’ll never do that again.” Only to do it again the next day. We make a promise, and we break it. We say, “I will” and we don’t or “I won’t” and we do. Our struggle is not just real. It’s repeated again and again and again. Like someone who struggles with addiction, Paul says his struggle is repeated.

“All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are helpful. “All things are lawful for me,” but I will not be dominated by anything. - 1 Corinthians 6:12

| Substance Addictions | Behavioral Addictions |
|--------------------------|--|
| Alcohol, drugs, nicotine | Gambling, pornography, sex, eating, shopping, television, cell phone, work, etc. |

An addiction is not always about quantity, but frequency. If you need a beer every day after work or need a glass of wine before you go to bed - you have an alcohol issue - even if it’s not in excessive amounts.

There are neurological elements to all addictions - including the release of dopamine into the body - but there are also spiritual elements to all additions. I do not deny neurological nor medical elements, but we are focusing on spiritual elements.

Addiction is a form of idolatry; they are false gods. Addictions are what we worship - we give our time, our attention, our money.

All addictions - whether substance addictions or behavioral addictions - cause harm to ourselves, others, and our relationship with God. Those who struggle with addition tell the same story of mental, physical, relational, sexual, and spiritual decay. All addictions are on a path to ruin.

Sin thrives in secrecy.

We become very adept at hiding them, but hiding them feeds them. You feel bad about yourself, so you eat compulsively. You eat compulsively, so you feel bad about yourself. You feel lonely, so you engage in pornography. You engage in pornography you feel more alone. You want to avoid an issue, so you drink to cope. You drink to cope, and you create another issue. You fear exposure so you withdraw from community and retreat into isolation. You retreat into isolation and the struggle becomes greater.

Sin thrives in secrecy. You don't need to tell everyone, but you need to tell someone.

The Struggle is Relentless

²¹ So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. ²² For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, ²³ but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. -

Romans 7:21-23

Do you see how the struggle is relentless ... it's constant. Evil lies close at hand because it's in us ... and there is a war going on ... a struggle between what we know what we should do and what do ... sin is trying to deceive you, destroy you, discourage you.

Notice the importance of your mind. The enemy wants to take our minds captive, that is why we need to take every thought captive and make it obedient to Jesus. This why need to keep renewing our mind with God's truth.

"you will know the truth and the truth will set you free." - John 8:32

Do you believe God is bigger and better than your sinful desires? I believe this question is at the heart of our struggle.

Is there hope in the struggle? Is there hope in addiction? Yes! Addiction does not need to be a life sentence.

Steps for Hope in Your Struggle

²⁴ *Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?* ²⁵ *Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.* - Romans 7:24-25

Step 1: Acknowledge your Condition

Wretched man that I am! You need admit where you are at. Don't minimize, excuse, rationalize, deny, hide. Admit your struggle. Cry out to God for His help.

Be honest with yourself.

This is where it starts: admit your foolishness. Refuse to minimize or rationalize. Ask yourself: Do I want to change? If so, why? If you don't know why you want to change, you will not change. You will not find freedom from foolishness without being honest with yourself.

Be honest with God.

He already knows and loves you as you are and loves you enough not to leave you as you are.

- Confess the sin of your foolishness to God. Not because you feel sad or guilty or "got caught." But because you know your foolishness is sin and you're ready to turn from your sin.
- Ask God to transform your mind and heart, to fill you with His Spirit, and give you strength to break the pattern of foolishness so you can walk in wisdom.

Be honest with others.

Foolishness often leads us to isolation. Proverbs 18:1 says, *"whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment."*

Isolation is the opposite of what we need. We need each other. We need each other for: Support, Prayer, Encouragement, Accountability, and Counsel Who are you allowing to "SPEAC" into your life?

Step 2: Acknowledge your Need

Who will deliver me from this body of death? You need admit your need for help. You need to feel helpless to get help. You can't change on your own. And you won't change on your own. You can't get help until you want help. Acknowledge your need for rehab or to see a counselor or to embrace accountability.

Write out a plan.

What do *you* need to do? What is *your* next step?

- Do you need rehab? Do you need further counseling? If so, when and where?
- What specific boundaries need to be established to avoid avoidable triggers? What do you need to get rid of?
- What will you do when you're tempted? Who will you call?
- How will you fill your mind and your heart with truth from God's Word?

What is your plan? Do you have a plan? Do you know it? Do others know it?

Get to the root desire.

What are you really seeking through your addiction?

And after identifying what you're seeking, address the "Why?" Why am I seeking relief? Or pleasure? What is the root? Is it a hurt, need, or void? You can't blame your actions on something from the past. But if you can identify it, you can begin to address it. This step may take some time and involve a Christian counselor.

Step 3: Acknowledge Jesus as Lord

Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! Surrender to Jesus - not just as Savior, but as Lord. Rather than being mastered by your struggle, submit to Jesus as your Master. Rather than being the Lord of your life, allow Jesus to be your Lord.

Live from your identity in Christ.

What lies do you need to identify and what truths do you need to embrace?

Jesus died on the cross to set you free! Are you living in the freedom that God wants you to experience?

Types of Addictions

Circle any that apply to you.

| | | | |
|---------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|
| Alcohol | Cell Phone | Pornography | Gambling |
| Caffeine | Medication | Food | Sugar |
| Illicit Drugs | Lying | Work | Sex |
| Nicotine | Politics | Person/People | Theft |
| TV | Video Games | Shopping | Fitness |
| Pleasure | Sports | Fantasy | Social Media |
| Lust | Gossip | _____ | _____ |

3 Questions to Ask:

1. What do you do when you're bored and lonely with nothing to do?
2. What do you do when you're stressed, frustrated, or worn-out?
3. What do you do when you're hurt, betrayed, or treated unfairly?

Is the answer to these questions a repeated pattern of behavior? If so, the solution is not to "Just say no!" but to get to the root of the desire.

Why are you seeking to -

- Find relief?
- Forget?
- Fill a void?
- Manage an emotion?
- Fit in with others?
- Be in control?
- Have significance?
- Get attention?
- Experience pleasure?

The truthful answer to these questions gets to your heart.

And once you get to your heart, you can seek healing and allow God to be sufficient for you. This is a journey. But to make progress on the journey will require some action steps.