



## PRINCIPLED PLEASURE

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(Habakkuk 2:5-7)



The new century presents many challenges. In a time of impatience and selfishness, a person's wants and desires often can gain instant gratification. Science and culture provide helpful advances and opportunities. However, some people get trapped in a downward spiral of addiction to substances and behaviors used to gratify impatient desires.

### WHAT IS ADDICTION?

The word "addiction" technically means that the brain has become neurochemically dependent on substances ingested into the body, or on the chemicals the brain produces when one performs certain behaviors. Neurochemical dependence assumes the brain will actually "crave" the substance or substance-producing behavior. Over time, more of the substance is required to achieve the same effect in the brain because the brain has an amazing ability to adjust whatever is put into it. This factor is called "tolerance." It also means that when any addict stops the addictive behavior, the brain will "rebel" against the absence and go through a phase of detoxification.

Neurochemical addiction is caused by *chemicals* such as alcohol, cocaine, or heroin. However, some believe that certain *behaviors* can create neurochemical reactions. Sexual thoughts, for example, create certain chemicals that cause intense feelings of pleasure. Simply fantasizing about sex can create these "pleasure" chemicals. Experts in sexual addiction argue that sexual thought and activity can create a neurochemical addiction similar to a substance addiction. Gamblers, likewise, experience a release of adrenaline when they take risks with money. A gambler can become addicted to the body's production of this chemical. Research has further shown that very few addicts suffer only one addiction. They

may have a dominant one, but they also turn to a variety of other addictions as well. A new diagnosis that is gaining acceptance is Multiple Addiction Disorder (MAD). Whether addicts use chemicals or chemical-producing behaviors or both, their brains become a chemical smorgasbord.

One factor that can make recovery so difficult is the synergy of the neurochemical and emotional dependencies involved in addiction. Substances and behaviors get associated with relief of certain emotions even while they are creating a chemical dependency. Smokers know, for example, that they can detoxify from the effects of nicotine in a few days. What is harder, though, is the emotional dependency they created by associating smoking with relaxing or with relaxing situations.

### WHAT CAUSES ADDICTION?

Addicts are lonely. They are starving for love, attention, and nurture. Many are angry that their needs—either when they were children, or as adults—have gone unmet. Some are angry at having been physically, sexually, or emotionally abused as children. The combination of loneliness and anger drives addicts deeper into their addiction. They may even be angry at God for not taking away or "delivering" them from their desires. Addicts often did not form healthy attachments to parents and others as children; they may not know how to find real love. That is why many peop-

substitute addictive substances or behaviors for relationships.

Addiction is a problem of original sin—addicts believe they can control their lives better than God can. In seeking control, addicts are totally out of control. "For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do" (Rom. 7:14, 15). An addiction will get worse over time; it will always lead to destructive consequences.

### **RELIEF FROM ADDICTION**

Relief from addiction is usually referred to as "sobriety." The addict is in "recovery." When addicts experience ongoing sobriety, they will occasionally need to celebrate these victories. Achieving sobriety and staying in recovery is a combination of spiritual, emotional, and physical work.

**Spiritually, addicts must take the risk** of confessing their powerlessness. They fear that if others know about their addiction, they will be ridiculed and abandoned. Fellowship with others who can tell their stories to one another is one of the essential elements of getting well. Confessing powerlessness to others brings an addict closer to being willing to return control to God. This is in the spirit of James 5:16, which encourages fellow believers to confess sin to each other in order to bring healing.

Emotionally, addicts will need to address old wounds that have caused them to feel unloved and unlovable. This may be a matter of intensive counseling that addresses traumas and memories of abuse as a child. Healthy churches will work to create opportunities for them to have support groups. This kind of fellowship is also a matter of accountability. It is support that reminds an addict about staying sober from the addictive activity. Sponsors, mentors,

or guides who have become sober for longer periods of time will be an integral part of an accountability network. Addicts will need to be accountable to change the behaviors that led to addiction. New habits of healthy behavior will need to be substituted for old destructive patterns.

Physically, addicts may need to seek medical evaluation or medical intervention. They may need medical help to detoxify. Also, some may need evaluation as to whether or not medications are necessary to bring brain chemistry back to a healthy balance.

The treatment of any addiction is often a very specialized program and will require caregivers that are experienced in providing one. Ultimately, we must all remember that there is a hunger for God and for fellowship that underlies all addictions. We must be quick to provide soul care for those needs if we are to truly help addicts to be set free from their addictions.

### **FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of addictions include:

- > Psalms 44:21; 51:1-19
- > Proverbs 23:21, 29-35
- > Luke 21:34
- > 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20
- > Ephesians 5:18
- > Hebrews 10:22-25

Learn More: Turn to the key passage note on addictions at 1 Corinthians 6:9-12 on page 1498. See the personality profile of Gomer on page 1130.

<sup>7</sup>Now therefore, it is already an utter failure for you that you go to law against one another. Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather *let yourselves* be cheated? <sup>8</sup>No, you yourselves do wrong and cheat, and you *do* these things *to your* brethren! <sup>9</sup>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,<sup>a</sup> nor sodomites, <sup>10</sup>nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>11</sup>And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

#### GLORIFY GOD IN BODY AND SPIRIT

<sup>12</sup>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. <sup>13</sup>Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them. Now the body *is not* for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. <sup>14</sup>And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power.

<sup>15</sup>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! <sup>16</sup>Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body *with her*? For "*the two*," He says, "*shall become one flesh.*"<sup>a</sup> <sup>17</sup>But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit *with Him*.

<sup>18</sup>Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his

6:9 <sup>a</sup>That is, catamites 6:16 <sup>a</sup>Genesis 2:24

#### KEY PASSAGE



#### Addictions

### THE FORCE

(6:9-12)

God gave people "richly all things to enjoy," but Satan works tirelessly to take God's blessings and twist them into evil. The beauty of sex in marriage is corrupted by the sin of sex in other relationships. The enjoyment of a wide variety of delicious foods is corrupted by gluttony, the addiction of eating too much—not to mention other eating disorders. The provision of material blessing is corrupted by greed and love of wealth.

Paul explained that "all things are lawful," meaning that believers are allowed to enjoy many things as long as they are not forbidden by Scripture. But they must never allow themselves to be controlled or "brought under the power of any." An addiction is powerful. If a believer is moving toward an addiction in some area of life, the Holy Spirit will make them aware of it. We must seek God's guidance to maintain balance.

To Learn More: Turn to the article about addictions on pages 1186, 1187. See also the personality profile of Gomer on page 1130.

#### SOUL NOTE



**Balanced Meals** (6:12, 13) Some who face a difficult eating disorder—whether it be an addiction to food, or an addiction to going without food—understand the power of that addiction. God provided food for the animals and people He created in order to sustain them. Food is meant for sustenance—"foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods." A food addiction takes the focus off God and puts it on one's food or stomach—both of which will eventually no longer be needed. People who struggle with eating disorders should seek Christian professional guidance to gain a proper perspective and pattern for eating. **Topic: Eating Disorders**

- And will take back My wool and My linen,  
Given to cover her nakedness.
- <sup>10</sup> Now I will uncover her lewdness in the  
sight of her lovers,  
And no one shall deliver her from My  
hand.
- <sup>11</sup> I will also cause all her mirth to cease,  
Her feast days,  
Her New Moons,  
Her Sabbaths—  
All her appointed feasts.
- <sup>12</sup> “And I will destroy her vines and her fig  
trees,  
Of which she has said,  
‘These *are* my wages that my lovers have  
given me.’
- So I will make them a forest,  
And the beasts of the field shall eat  
them.
- <sup>13</sup> I will punish her  
For the days of the Baals to which she  
burned incense.  
She decked herself with her earrings and  
jewelry,  
And went after her lovers;  
But Me she forgot,” says the LORD.
- GOD’S MERCY ON HIS PEOPLE**
- <sup>14</sup> “Therefore, behold, I will allure her,  
Will bring her into the wilderness,  
And speak comfort to her.
- <sup>15</sup> I will give her her vineyards from  
there,

## PERSONALITY PROFILE



## Addictions

## GOMER: ADDICTED TO ADULTERY

(HOSEA 3)

Addictions are powerful enemies to our relationship with God. Whether the addiction is to alcohol, drugs, sex, gambling, web-surfing, shopping, or whatever, addicted people can attest to their seeming inability to control their desires.

Gomer had an addiction. As a “harlot,” she sold sexual favors for money. The Bible is unclear whether she had been a prostitute before Hosea married her, or if God was telling Hosea that she would become adulterous. In either case, Hosea knew what he was getting in Gomer. She married Hosea, lived with him, and had children, but the children were not Hosea’s, but “children of harlotry” (Hos. 1:2).

Despite Gomer’s actions, Hosea loved her. She sought comfort not in his love, however, but in her addiction. She ran to others who made love but did not love her. They used her and left her alone and empty. Then Hosea bought her back.

The story illustrates the power of love, and the faithfulness of God toward His sinful people. It also tragically illustrates the results of an addiction. For Gomer, her sexual addiction pulled her away from her family and then left her alone and empty, needing to have Hosea pay a paltry amount of money to redeem her. No one else wanted her.

Addictions usually begin very subtly—an experience, substance, or individual that brings pleasure begins to become an obsession. Eventually, the obsession takes control. Rarely can a person escape the addiction without some form of intervention. Addicts must determine to change, replace the addictive substance with something more wholesome, and then finally find a way to meet their need differently.

Addictions destroy individuals, families, friendships, reputations, and careers. Addictions make people victims of their own desires. Despite all this, God offers hope to the addict. God wants to free His people from anything that takes His rightful place in their lives. He wants to show them that He can meet all their needs. With God’s help and the compassionate accountability of other believers, addicts can be set free—bought back. Jesus has already paid the price.

To Learn More: Turn to the article about addictions on pages 1186, 1187. See also the key passage note at 1 Corinthians 6:9–12 on page 1498.

- 13 Therefore my people have gone into captivity,  
Because *they have* no knowledge;  
Their honorable men *are* famished,  
And their multitude dried up with thirst.
- 14 Therefore Sheol has enlarged itself  
And opened its mouth beyond measure;  
Their glory and their multitude and their pomp,  
And he who is jubilant, shall descend into it.
- 15 People shall be brought down,  
Each man shall be humbled,  
And the eyes of the lofty shall be humbled.
- 16 But the LORD of hosts shall be exalted in judgment,  
And God who is holy shall be hallowed in righteousness.
- 17 Then the lambs shall feed in their pasture,  
And in the waste places of the fat ones strangers shall eat.
- 18 Woe to those who draw iniquity with cords of vanity,  
And sin as if with a cart rope;  
19 That say, "Let Him make speed *and* hasten His work,  
That we may see *it*;  
And let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw near and come,  
That we may know *it*."
- 20 Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil;  
Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness;  
Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!
- 21 Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes,  
And prudent in their own sight!
- 22 Woe to men mighty at drinking wine,  
Woe to men valiant for mixing intoxicating drink,  
23 Who justify the wicked for a bribe,  
And take away justice from the righteous man!
- 24 Therefore, as the fire devours the stubble,  
And the flame consumes the chaff,  
So their root will be as rottenness,  
And their blossom will ascend like dust  
Because they have rejected the law of the LORD of hosts,  
And despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.
- 25 Therefore the anger of the LORD is aroused against His people;  
He has stretched out His hand against them  
And stricken them,  
And the hills trembled.  
Their carcasses *were* as refuse in the midst of the streets.
- For all this His anger is not turned away  
But His hand *is* stretched out still.
- 26 He will lift up a banner to the nations from afar,  
And will whistle to them from the end of the earth;  
Surely they shall come with speed, swiftly.
- 27 No one will be weary or stumble among them,  
No one will slumber or sleep;



## SOUL NOTE

**Hooked (5:11)** The prophet Isaiah warned of judgment ("woe") on those addicted to alcohol. He said that they are so dependent on it that they begin early in the morning and continue drinking until late at night. The tragedy of addiction is that it controls and dominates the desires and choices of the addicted. The even greater tragedy is the rejection by the addicted of the Lord's work in their lives: "They do not regard the work of the LORD, nor consider the operation of His hands" (5:12). God alone can provide the lasting comfort, joy, and relief that people mistakenly seek in alcohol.

**Topic: Addictions**

pearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, *false* humility, and neglect of the body, *but are* of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.

there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ *is* all and in all.

#### NOT CARNALITY BUT CHRIST

**3** If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup>Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. <sup>3</sup>For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup>When Christ *who is our* life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

<sup>5</sup>Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. <sup>6</sup>Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, <sup>7</sup>in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.

<sup>8</sup>But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. <sup>9</sup>Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, <sup>10</sup>and have put on the new *man* who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, <sup>11</sup>where

#### CHARACTER OF THE NEW MAN

<sup>12</sup>Therefore, as *the* elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; <sup>13</sup>bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also *must do*. <sup>14</sup>But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. <sup>15</sup>And let the peace of

God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. <sup>16</sup>Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. <sup>17</sup>And *whatever* you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

#### THE CHRISTIAN HOME

<sup>18</sup>Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

#### SOUL NOTE



**Mindset** (3:2) As believers we should set our minds (our focus and priorities) "on things above, not on things on the earth." This does not mean refusing to hold a job or care for one's family; instead, it means that believers have a different attitude in all that they do. Because we love God and want to live for

Him, we center our lives on Christ. When we set our minds on things above, we begin to see life from God's perspective. So we work and serve to please Christ. **Topic: Attitudes**

#### SOUL NOTE



**Overcomers** (3:5, 6) Believing sets us free from legalism, but we still have to be careful to stay away from certain activities that are against God's will for us.

These verses describe some of those sinful desires that believers should "put to death." Sexual sins, evil desires, and covetousness (a form of idolatry) should have no place in a believer's heart. It takes a conscious daily decision to say no to these sinful temptations and rely on the Holy Spirit's power to overcome them. **Topic: Addictions**