



Week 3: Freed from Addiction

Big Idea

Through God's power, you can overcome the addictions in your life.

Ice Breaker

Salty or sweet? What is your favorite snack? What is it that makes it your favorite? How often do you indulge?

The Problem

Addictions come in many forms; some of them are more socially acceptable than others but all of them stop us living in the freedom God wants for our lives.

Some common addictions include drugs, alcohol, porn, money, credit card debt, spending, TV watching, over eating, control, coffee, smoking, material things, gossip, approval seeking, Diet coke, Internet, texting, and video games... the list goes on and on.

1. How would you define an addiction? When do you think something changes from being something you "struggle with" or "consistently enjoy" to being an addiction?

2. Reading this list and thinking about other possibilities do you think you have an addiction? Why or why not?

We all have choices to make and the enemy is waiting for the opportunity to tempt us to make a wrong choice and sin. He knows our weaknesses and knows how to tempt us. It might be that one more drink, or that one more credit card charge, maybe that one more bite or just one more text message... "There can't be any harm in it"? That one more thing is what leads to our addiction.

Genesis 4:7 says

"If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it."

The problem is not new. Addictions replace God in our lives because they become our gods. They become the focus of our thoughts, the way we spend our time.

3. What do you think people find in their addictions that they don't find in God?

Now what?

Through God's power we can overcome the addictions in our lives.

Step 1- Turn to God.

Paul writes in Romans 6:12-14,

“Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its mortal desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.”

We need to ask ourselves who or what are we allowing to be our lord? That is our addiction. We must turn to God and acknowledge our addiction.

4. In your life where are you consistently finding security, or comfort, or excitement or relief that doesn't involve God? Have you thought of it as an addiction before?

Step 2 – Share the final ten.

It is often easy to confess the first 90% of our sin, but it is the final 10% that is the hardest. It is a risk but we need to “bring the dark into the light”. It might be that we think that our final 10 is worse than the other person's so we hold back. The enemy wants us to keep that final 10 to ourselves where it will continue to hold us hostage. The story of a rich young man who found it too hard to give up his addiction is described in the Gospel of Mark,

“...a man came running up to Jesus, knelt down, and asked, ‘Good Teacher, what should I do to get eternal life?’ ...you know the commandments: ‘Do not murder. Do not commit adultery. Do not steal. Do not testify falsely. Do not cheat. Honor your father and mother.’ “Teacher,” the man replied, “I've obeyed all these commandments since I was a child.” Jesus felt genuine love for this man as he looked at him. “You lack only one thing,” he told him. “Go and sell all you have and give the money to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” At this, the man's face fell, and he went sadly away because he had many possessions. “ Mark10:17-22 (NLT)

5. Like this rich man, is there one thing/addiction God has been asking you to give up? Share with the group how you feel about the possibility of living without it.

6. Why do we work so hard to keep our addictions secret?

7. How would your life be different if you were free from every addiction that is holding you hostage?

Step 3 – Fight for freedom

“We are in a battle. The enemy wants to steal from you. He wants to kill you, and he wants to destroy you. He wants to isolate you. He wants to give you a little bit of porn, a little bit of debt, a new credit card, some food that you love, a relationship you just can't get out of and he wants to keep bringing that person back into your life, and he just keeps giving you this stuff... and he's watching you, and he's smiling, and he's thinking to himself, “Wow. Now I'm going to sit and watch them destroy themselves.” - Craig Groeshel, Lead Pastor, LifeChurch.TV

8. How does the possibility of being in a battle with Satan make you feel? Do you think most people recognize or acknowledge this spiritual battle? Why or why not?

If we go back to our sinful ways the devil wins. We must continue the fight daily. 1 John 1:6 talks about “walking in the light” so that we will know God’s forgiveness and the freedom of living with Him.

God asks us to do things that might seem irrational. We saw that when he asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac or Peter to walk on water. He might be asking you to cut up your credit cards, get rid of your computer, or find a new set of friends.

9. What radical changes is God asking you to make in your life at this time? Or, if God has asked you to make radical changes in the past can you share your experiences with the group as an encouragement to those who are hurting now?

James 5:16 says, “Therefore confess your sins to one another and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective”

We are called to confess to one another, and then to pray for each other so that all may be healed and receive God’s strength to walk away from the addictions holding us hostage. What could that look like in this group?

What’s Next

Now is the time to ask God for healing. In the safety of the group, dare to ask for help. Having shared the addictions holding you back from knowing God’s true freedom in your life pray for one another and commit to holding each other accountable in the days, weeks and months ahead.

Take some time this week to read further, 1 John 1:5-2:14 and James 5:13-20. Ask God to speak to you about how you can continue to walk in his light and pray for those in your group who have confessed their need for his help. Journal what you feel He is saying to you through his Word.

Week 3 Leader's Guide - Freed From Addiction

1. Merriam-Webster's dictionary defines the verb addict as "to devote or surrender (oneself) to something habitually or obsessively <addicted to gambling>". It would seem that a level of obsession and inability to stop a behavior is what marks the onset of an addiction
2. If someone hasn't admitted an addiction to themselves or others before this is a difficult question. Make sure to allow enough time for everyone who wants to, to contribute to the discussion.
3. Addictions can seem to provide instant satisfaction or comfort in the short term.
4. We are hoping that people will be hearing from God for themselves. This question may bring up new issues that didn't arise in the answers to question 2. We are not seeking to condemn anyone but offer the chance for new beginnings.
5. Money in itself is not bad. It was the young man's security in his possessions that was the issue here. Encourage the group to share the things in their lives that are stopping them depending on God.
6. This question continues the dialogue as secrets come to light. Try not to stop the discussion with solutions. Allow members to work things out for themselves as they realize the true solution lies in turning to God.
7. This question leads us to the true freedom we can know when we turn from our addictions and follow Jesus. Living free from addictions will release amazing quantities of time, resources and energy for the Kingdom.
8. If spiritual warfare is a new idea for your group there may be some interesting comments. If we are asking people how they feel we should be prepared to validate their feelings even if we do not share them. A fruitful discussion can often come out of the most "off the wall" comment.
9. This is where the rubber hits the road for group members. Naming our addictions is one thing, committing to real change is something else. If members have stories of God's grace touching their lives they will be a real encouragement to others. Try not to be the first to share your testimony but allow someone else to take the lead. You may even want to approach one of your group members ahead of time to ask them to be open about their journey as a Christ follower.

Make sure to allow significant time to pray for each other this week. Many important issues may have been raised during the discussion and it is important not to leave things unresolved. It may be appropriate to split into smaller groups to allow a high level of honesty and openness. Encourage members to follow up with their prayer partners during the week. If further action is necessary to support any of your group members fight an addiction you might need to help them seek the help they need.