What Does the Bible Say About Addiction?

INTRODUCTION.
A. Our lives are filled with various forms of dangers, struggles, and trials. Sometimes our lives go great and other times we suffer greatly. However, there are times when we bring the nightmares into our own lives. Quite often people will bring these nightmares on themselves through various forms of addictions; addictions which control them, move them, and can decimate their lives.

B. There are different forms of addiction:
1. Quite often the word addiction brings to mind some type of drug abuse or alcohol abuse. However, strictly defined, “an addiction is the habitual compulsion to use a substance, or to engage in an activity without much regard for its detrimental effects on a person’s physical, mental, financial, social and spiritual well-being.”
2. Addictions can be chemically based, emotionally, or behaviorally based. Consider the following examples.
   a. Drug addictions
      1. Alcohol addiction
      2. Cocaine addiction
      3. Opiate addiction
      4. Heroin addiction
      5. Meth addiction
      6. Methadone addiction
      7. Marijuana addiction
      8. Nicotine addiction
      9. Caffeine addiction
     10. Steroid addiction
     11. Vicodin addiction
     12. Prescription drug addiction
b. Behavioral Based Addiction – “Behavioral addiction is different from drug addiction in the sense that no mind-altering substance is being ingested. Still, it displays the same symptoms as drug or alcohol abuse. A behavioral addict, by definition, is someone who couldn't control or stop an activity despite experiencing adverse consequences of the activity.” (Ibid.)

1. Gambling addiction
2. Food addiction
3. Sexual addiction
4. Love addiction (closer to codependency)
5. Pornography addiction
6. Work addiction
7. Exercise addiction (Dieting as well)
8. Video game addiction
9. Shopping addiction

c. Emotional issues – Many of the aforementioned addictions are driven by emotional issues and needs, such as the food addictions or the sex addiction. While some addictions might be stopped “cold turkey,” there are many times when conquering an addiction requires outside help addressing what might be the driving source of the addiction.

C. The reason for the aforementioned review of addictions was to help us recognize the many possible areas where addictions can be manifested within our lives.

D. As Christians, we are to be living by a standard of holiness and righteousness. Addictions within the life of a Christian are contrary to us living righteously before God.

E. In this lesson, we will consider what the Bible says about addiction. This information is crucial to helping you and I to not develop an addiction and it is crucial in helping us to see why and how we can overcome addictions.

I. ADDICTION IS A FORM OF IDOLATRY.

A. Let us first begin by showing idolatry can be more than worshiping a false god. The apostle Paul teaches us covetousness is idolatry. (Colossians 3:5;
Ephesians 5:5)

1. Consider the following comment on idolatry as seen in 1 Corinthians 5:10: “New-Testament usage does not confine the term to the worship of images, but extends it to the soul's devotion to any object which usurps the place of God.” (Vincent Word Studies, 1 Corinthians 5:10)

2. If we develop an addiction to some type of behavior or drug, then our devotion to that addiction has taken the place of God.

B. With addictions, we become obsessed with fulfilling some type of habitual and compulsive craving. We end up worshiping our own selves.

1. The apostle Paul refers to those who worshipped their “belly” or their lustful cravings and desires. (Philippians 3:18-19)

2. The apostle Paul also referred to those who were motivated by serving “their own belly.” (Romans 16:18)

C. Make the decision to protect yourself from addictions by worshiping God above all else. Do not allow any desire, any drug, or any behavior to take the place of God.

II. ADDICTION IS THE REIGN OF SIN.

A. While sin can reign within our lives just by us giving into temptations, with addictions, we turn the control of our lives over to sin.

B. The apostle Paul reminded the church in Rome not to allow sin to reign in their lives. (Romans 6:12-16)

1. When we give in to addictive behavior, we are obeying the lustful cravings of our bodies. (vs 12) At that point we make ourselves “slaves . . . to sin leading to death.” (vs 16)

2. With addictions, we are presenting our “members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin.” (vs 13)

C. The reason sin is able to reign in our lives is because the devil is crafty, using whatever he can to trap us. The Hebrew writer uses the phrase, “and the sin which so easily ensnares us.” (Hebrews 12:1)

D. If we allow sin to reign in our lives, then we are allowing ourselves to be devoured by the devil, that “roaring lion.” (1 Peter 5:8)

1. Consider how many lives have been devoured by addictions.

2. Consider how many families have been destroyed because of
addictions.

3. Not only will our physical lives suffer when we let sin reign in our bodies, but our souls will be devoured as well.

E. With an addiction, a person’s sole objective is to serve the addiction. He becomes the one who fulfills “the desires of the flesh and of the mind.” (Ephesians 2:2-3) Whenever we are addicted to something we are effectively, “Yes master, whatever you say I will do.”

F. If sin is reigning in our lives, then let us pray to God as did king David, “Direct my steps by Your word, And let no iniquity have dominion over me.” (Psalms 119:133)

G. Remember, you cannot serve two masters. Either you will choose to serve your addiction or you will choose to serve God. (Matthew 6:19-24)

H. Make the decision to protect yourself from addictions by choosing today not to allow sin to reign in your life. Take back the control of your life today.

III. ADDICTION IS CONTRARY TO HOLY THOUGHT.

A. With addictions, a person’s mind is focused on that which is worldly and not on that which is holy. Consider the admonition of the apostle Paul in Philippians 4:8-9.

B. Addictions come when we are no longer setting our minds on things above. Instead we are living for the moment, thinking only of that which is on the earth. (Colossians 3:1-2)

C. Addictions feed off of and are driven by a person’s love for the world. (1 John 2:15-17)

D. Setting our minds on “earthly things” is truly contrary to holy thought. The apostle Paul wrote, “whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things.” (Philippians 3:19)

E. Make the decision to protect yourself from addictions by setting your mind on things above, upon heavenly thoughts and concerns. If you are suffering from an addiction, then strive to think on holy and godly things and rid your mind of the ungodly pursuit of addiction and sin.

IV. ADDICTION REJECTS SELF-CONTROL.

A. The apostle Paul said a time would come when “men will be lovers of themselves . . . without self-control.” (2 Timothy 3:1-3)
B. As Christians, we are to be exercising self-control, making certain we are serving the Lord by abstaining from “fleshly lusts.” The apostle Peter wrote, “Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul.” (1 Peter 2:11)

C. Sadly, when we allow sin and addiction to reign in our lives, we have brought the situation on ourselves.
   1. When we sin, it is because we have chosen to give in to temptations. (James 1:12-15)
   2. We must be willing to run away from temptation, taking that “way of escape.” (1 Corinthians 6:18; 10:13)
   3. We must also remember when facing temptations the wise words of Solomon: “Can a man take fire to his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?” (Proverbs 6:27)

D. Let us keep the mindset of the apostle Paul when he wrote, “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.” (1 Corinthians 6:12)

E. Work to keep the control of your life. If you have given the control of your life to sin and addiction, then take back control and never again give the reigns of your life over to addiction and sin.

V. SEVEN STEPS TO OVERCOMING ADDICTION.

A. Recognize the cost of the addiction.
   1. How far will your addiction go? What will you have to pay for your addiction?
      a. Your family?
      b. Your children?
      c. Your marriage?
      d. Your friends?
      e. Your job?
      f. Your life?
   2. Addiction will cost you your fellowship with God and faithful brethren. (1 John 1:6-7)
   3. Addictions will ultimately cost you your soul. (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)
   4. If you are currently suffering from an addiction, then take the time to admit what the addiction is costing you. Take stock of everything
you have lost because of your addiction.

B. **Have faith that you can overcome addictions.**
   1. You can overcome an addiction, you can overcome sin. However, we can only overcome by faith. (1 John 5:4)
   2. Faith in God gives us the strength and conviction to overcome. However, we must realize that such conviction comes by studying God’s word. (Romans 10:17)
   3. According to the words of the apostle John, it is possible to overcome if the word of God abides in us. As long as God’s word abides in us we will have the faith to overcome. (1 John 2:13-14)
   4. If we overcome, then we will be able to “eat from the tree of life” which is in paradise. (Revelation 2:7)
   5. If we overcome, then we will not “be hurt by the second death.” (Revelation 2:11)
   6. If we overcome, we will “be clothed in white garments” and our names will not be blotted out from the Book of Life. (Revelation 3:5)
   7. If you are currently suffering from an addiction, if you will increase your faith in God, then you will have faith that it is possible for you to have victory over your addiction.

C. **Crucify your flesh with its passions and desires.** (Galatians 5:24)
   1. When you became a Christian, you were to have crucified that old man of sin. (Romans 6:3-7)
   2. If we have allowed sin to take a hold of our lives, then we must begin “cutting off” from our lives that which is driving or feeding the reign of sin. Consider the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:28-30.
   3. Putting to death an addiction will not be without great difficult. However, to live as a Christian we must have control over our passions and desires. We must keep that old man of sin dead.
   4. If you suffering from an addiction, then start the process of putting to death that old man of sin with its passions and desires and keep that old man of sin buried.

D. **Make use of prayer in your life.**
(James 5:13)

2. Make your request to God, asking Him to help you to have strength in overcoming your addiction. (Philippians 4:6-7) Pray this prayer daily “without ceasing.” (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

3. Seek the prayers of faithful Christians. (James 5:14-16)

4. However, prayer without action on your part will be useless. If you are unwilling to work to overcome your addiction, then prayer for you will be profitless. According to the apostle John, we are not to pray for one who is committing a “sin leading to death.” (1 John 5:16-17)

5. If you are suffering from an addiction, then pray to God for strength to overcome. Turn to your brethren in Christ and ask them to pray for you as well. Make use of prayer to overcome your addictions.

**E. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ.**

1. Put on the “new man which was created according to God.” (Ephesians 4:20-24)

2. If we have put on the Lord Jesus Christ, then let us make no provisions to fulfill the lusts of the flesh. (Romans 13:11-14)

3. If you are suffering from an addiction, then make the decision today to put on the Lord Jesus Christ through obedience to the Gospel’s call to salvation. If you are a Christian, then live as the new man, created according to God, should live.

**F. Walk the right path to heaven.**

1. How did you get to your current place of addiction? You were on the wrong road! You were on the wrong path of life! You took a turn, made a decision which brought you to the door of addiction.

2. The path to heaven begins with Jesus Christ, the way. (John 14:6)

3. As a Christian, we must walk as children of light. (Ephesians 5:8-17)

4. Walk in the Spirit, in the word of God. (Galatians 5:16, 25; Ephesians 5:18-20)

   a. Daily Bible study. (Acts 17:11)

   b. Attend all the worship services and Bible studies of the local congregation. Such attendance will expose you to those
brethren who will work to provoke you to “love and good works.”  (Hebrews 10:24-25)

c.  Immerse yourself in God’s word.  If the word of God abides in you, then you can overcome the wicked one, you can overcome your addictions.  (1 John 2:14; Colossians 3:16)

5.  If you suffering from an addiction, then turn to the right path, the path which leads to heaven.  By following the right path, the “narrow gate”, (Matthew 7:13-14) you will begin to make the necessary decisions to overcome your addiction.

G.  Submit unto God and His will for you.

1.  Overcoming addictions requires a person to quit submitting to his own selfish wants and desires, and completely submit his will unto God’s will.  (James 4:4-10)  Consider the following steps to fully submitting unto God.
   a.  Recognize friendship with the world is enmity with God.
   b.  Submit to God.
   c.  Resist the devil.
   d.  Draw near to God.
   e.  Cleanse your hands.
   f.  Purify your hearts.
   g.  Lament, mourn, and weep.
   h.  Humble yourself in the sight or in the presence of the Lord.

2.  If we will submit unto God, then we will have life.  (Hebrews 12:9)

3.  We must recognize God’s way works in all situations for all times.
   a.  Isaiah wrote, “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.”  (Isaiah 55:9)
   b.  The apostle Paul wrote, “Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”  (1 Corinthians 1:25)

4.  If you are suffering from addictions, then make the decision today to submit yourself unto God.  If you will truly submit yourself unto God and His word, you will succeed in overcoming your addiction.

CONCLUSION.
A. Clearly, it is absolutely necessary we do not allow addictions into our lives. We must not allow ourselves to be brought under the power of anything other than our heavenly Father.

B. In this lesson we have shown addictions to be a form of idolatry, a reign of sin in our lives, contrary to holy though, and a rejection of self-control.

C. We also showed in this lesson a person can overcome addictions by:
   1. Recognizing the cost of the addiction.
   2. Realizing addictions can be overcome.
   3. Crucifying one’s flesh with its passions and desires.
   4. Making use of prayer in one’s life.
   5. Putting on the Lord Jesus Christ.
   6. Walking the right path to heaven.
   7. Being willing to submit unto God and His will.

D. You do not have to let addiction and sin have domination in your life. You can be set free from your bondage to sin today.
   1. If you are not a Christian, then . . .
      a. Study God’s word so that you can have faith in Jesus Christ. (Romans 10:17)
      b. Believe in Jesus Christ as the son of God. (John 3:16)
      c. Repent of your past sinful life, turning to completely follow Jesus Christ. (Luke 13:3)
      d. Make the public confession of your belief. (Romans 10:9,10)
      e. Obey Jesus’ command to be baptized. (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38)
      f. Upon so doing, you will be saved, your sins will be washed away by the blood of the lamp, and you will rise up to walk in a newness of life. (Romans 6:3-4)
      g. From that point on, live faithful until death and you will receive the crown of righteousness. (Revelation 2:10)
   2. If you are a Christian, then . . .
      a. Make the decision to gain control over your life today.
      b. With a repentant heart, ask the Lord to forgive you and pray for strength to win the battle. (1 John 2:1-2)
      c. Ask your fellow brethren to pray for you so that you might
be stronger and victorious in overcoming the temptations of life.