

Pressing Forward

Bible-Based Addiction Recovery

Adapted from the book by Trent Childers

This is a Christ based system that is not associated with or to be confused with AA, NA or any other such recovery organizations or systems.

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Part 1: The Concept

“It is the science behind addiction, with consideration towards the successful methods of recovery employed in recent decades, that the following concepts are submitted. We seek to offer the reader the best method of recovery available, one that results in the best resulting quality of life. This is the concept.”

1. The Science of Addiction

- A.) Addiction is a condition that results when a person ingests a substance (alcohol, cocaine, nicotine) or engages in an activity (gambling) that can be pleasurable but the continued use of which becomes compulsive and interferes with ordinary life responsibilities, such as work or relationships, or health. *Psychology Today*
- B.) Pleasure-causing chemicals (e.g. serotonin, dopamine, endorphins) are released from the “reward pathways” in the brain. These chemical responses serve as a reward system that can give motivation and incentive: “In simplistic terms, activation of the pathway tells the individual to repeat what it just did to get that reward.”
- C.) Conclusion: Understanding the physical, psychological, social, and spiritual effects of addiction should provide the addict with the motivation to discontinue his/her current lifestyle and Press Forward in living according to the guidelines prescribed by the Great Physician.

Pressing point:

“You do not have to remain a slave to your addiction. The cycle of addiction can and must be broken.”

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2. The Bible and Addiction

“Addiction is allowing something to exercise authority over you; the addict submits himself to the master of addiction and allows the practice to consume them.”

- A.) The Bible addresses addiction and defines it clearly.
- B.) The apostle Paul wrote (*1 Cor 6:12*) “I will not be brought under the power of any”; “power” here meaning (*Gk.1850*) to *control*: - exercise authority upon, bring under the (have) power of.
- C.) Jesus said “whoever commits sin is a slave of sin” (*Jn 8:34-36*); the word “commits” (*Gk.4160*) is used here as in a prolonged form of an absolute, suggesting that whoever continues in sin also continues to be a slave to it. If sin reigns in a person’s life (*via addiction*), it will demand obedience to it (*Rom*

6:12). On the other hand, if focusing the will on the opposite of sin (*righteousness*) we give our lives over to the control of a life of purity (*of body, mind, soul, spirit*). (Rom 6:18)

The Bible and Drugs

“The Bible addresses the valleys of addiction, but it also offers the solution to suffering under a false master.”

- A.) In Gal 5:20 the word “sorcery (*or witchcraft*)” is mentioned, which includes drug abuse.
- B.) In the original language used in writing the New Testament (Koine Greek) the glosses for “sorcery” are from Gk.5332; medication (“pharmacy”), that is, (by extension) magic (literal or figurative): - sorcery, witchcraft. (a drug, that is, spell giving potion); a druggist (“pharmacist”) or poisoner, that is, (by extension) a magician: - sorcerer.

Pressing point:

“Not only is the problem of addiction mentioned in the Bible, but the solution of the problem is stated as well.”

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3. Change Your Thinking

“Garbage in, garbage out.”

- A.) When putting something into your mind, it will come back out in one form or another. (Mk 7:20-23) The “heart” in this passage refers to the mind (*Gk.2588*). After years of indulging in addictive behaviors, the mind becomes warped, rewired as it were, and needs to be trained to think in a different, healthier manner. The mind needs to be washed free of its evils, and then it can begin to heal.
- B.) Focus on the long-term consequences of what you are doing. Focusing on the temporal, immediate satisfaction is a fundamental thinking flaw. What will it do to family, friends and health? These should motivate the addict not to continue to abuse substances. (Phil 3:14; 1 Cor 9:27; Phil 1:21; 2 Tim 4:7-8)
- C.) The key to focusing on long-term thinking, there is a need to welcome God’s word to dwell within. It is powerful (Heb 4:12) but must be studied before it is accessed. (Ps 119:11; Phil 4:8)
- D.) Spend time with other faithful servants of Christ. These will build you up, contribute to your pure thinking, and take your hand if you stumble.

Pressing point:

“When facing temptation to use, think about the consequences, study your Bible, and spend time with Christians.”

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4. Change Your Behavior

“It is possible to overcome a sinful lifestyle seemingly consumed by addictive behavior. However, it is first crucial to understand sin and take it seriously.”

- A.) Sin is lawlessness and the flouting of God’s word. (1 Jn 3:4)
- B.) There is no sin in desire itself; you do nothing wrong in wanting, and you have the ability to walk away without shame. It is only after “desire has conceived” that sin is born and then “brings forth death”. (Jas 1:14-16)
- C.) You are the decision maker; you alone will choose to sin and are accountable for the repercussions that follow. (1 Cor 6:9-11)
- D.) There is always hope. Paul had dedicated his life to destroying Christianity but he was granted mercy since he had done it in unbelief (1 Tim 1:13), which motivated him to serve Christ and forsake his old ways (Gal 2:20).

Pressing point:

“For your life to be different, you must change the way you live. Change is difficult; however, in Jesus it is possible.” (Mat 19:26)

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5. A Better Life

“The life Jesus offers is unsurpassed by any other.”

- A.) The abundant life (Jn 10:10) that Jesus offers has many meanings. The Koine Greek for “abundant” (Gk.4053) as it applies here denotes “in the sense of beyond” or “superior”.
- B.) A faithful Christian’s life is a restrained one, without the earthly pleasures of addiction. It is one of contentment in whatever state he finds himself in, whether rich or poor, hungry or fed, and willing to endure the suffering of Christ in order to find true joy. (Phil 4:11-13)
- C.) Mankind’s greatest flaw is in thinking that the greatest pleasures in life are attained through possessions, which are temporal. It is better to have the hope of the life beyond and the assurance that nobody can rob us of it.
- D.) The life of addiction brings impaired physical and mental health, whereas with the abundant life in Christ a person has a healthy body, mind and soul.
- E.) Being a faithful Christian isn’t a walk in the park either. Transitioning from the bondage of addiction to living in Christ is a process that takes genuine effort. Thinking must be transformed and conformed to Christ. (Rom 12:1-2)
- F.) It is crucial not to set unrealistic expectations of yourself. The harmful decisions of your past carry negative consequences and will not simply disappear because of your decision to change. But you can sleep at night without being guilt-stricken.

Pressing point:

“Do not settle for a miserable existence. Jesus has a better life waiting for you.”

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6. True Contentment

When you realize that when this life will end, you will “be ready for the eternal one to begin.”

- A.) Imagine being in prison for doing what is right. If there was ever a time to complain and not be content, that would be it. Yet the apostle Paul wrote the epistles to the Philippians as a prisoner, letters renowned for their joyous nature.
- B.) Even in the darkness of injustice and ignorance, Paul and Silas sought out the loving embrace of the Lord. (Act 16:22-25)
- C.) “Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am to be content.” (Phil 4:11) Paul never said he was content but that he “learned” to be content. He had to go through the process of learning to self-discipline himself in order to reach his present state. (1 Cor 9:27)
- D.) Paul listed the conditions in which he learned to be content in. He said he “learned the secret” (Phil 4:12) that seems not many have found.
- E.) Paul then gave the cause of his contentment. “I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me”. (Phil 4:11-13) This was his state of mind that he didn’t have before he was placed into Christ.
- F.) Contentment can be found only in Christ because He alone can assure us of eternal life once this life is past. Outside of Christ, we are left to depend upon external circumstances in the here and now for happiness, and when those are taken away, so is our contentment.

Pressing point:

“Contentment can be found even in the midst of much tribulation. The problems of this life become small when one realizes all that Jesus provides.”

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Part 2: The Practice

7. Attitude of Gratitude: (Phil 4:6-7)

“How can you have inner peace if you are not a grateful person?”

- A.) Make a gratitude list: In no specific order, make a list of the things you are grateful for each day, keeping it in a notebook.
- B.) The more items on the list the better, even if the same thing is repeated over and over. Repetition is needed. It is important to give thanks to God often. And, daily reminders of why you should be grateful will refocus your thoughts.
- C.) Little things: It could always be worse. Be grateful they are not.
- D.) Big things: These are great accomplishments, especially when working on mending relationships.
- E.) Consistency: Set a specific time to make your list that works best for you.

Pressing point:

“Begin to live like you are thankful for everything with which you have been blessed. Remind yourself by making a list. Think and pray about your list often.”

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8. Accountability Partner: (2 Cor 5:10)

“...to help motivate you to do what is right.”

- A.) Someone of godly character, bound by biblical moral principles, a person well known for faithfulness in worship and service to God.
- B.) Someone you are comfortable with, who needs to tell you what you need to hear, not what you want to hear. There is no improvement without correction.
- C.) Contact with your AP must be frequent in order to let them know that you haven't “used”, preferably every day.

Pressing point:

“Learn to be accountable for your actions; get help in the form of an accountability partner”.

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9. Inventory, pt. 1; Resentments (Mk 7:20-23)

“You have chosen to be angry due to how you view the situation.”

- A.) Make a list of people you resent; make note of the reasons why, including what they did/said, and how it affected you. You don't have to feel that way.
- B.) Confront what is on the inside to affectively deal with what occurs on the outside. Letting your resentment rest is dangerous. Confront the issues.
- C.) View the situation from different angles. It will be difficult but the rewards of doing so far outweigh the consequences.
- D.) Changing your view of a situation requires honesty and without bias.

Pressing point:

“It is important to examine yourself and make an inventory of resentments, then strive to change your feelings toward them.”

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10. Personal Inventory, pt. 2; Fears & Triggers (1 Pet 4:3-4; 1 Jn 2:15-17)

“Those past actions cannot be undone; you need to face them, accept them, and move forward so you can effectively serve Christ.”

- A.) Confront your fears: List them, along with why you think you have them.
- B.) Go over them with your AP, discussing how to confront those fears.
- C.) Make a list of “triggers”, things that have the potential to provoke you to indulge in addictive behaviors; names of people, places or things. Avoid these triggers since they are in your past.
- D.) People: List why they are triggers and develop a plan of action so when you do come in contact with them you will be prepared. They want you to be right there with them.
- E.) Places: List them and how to go about avoiding them.
- F.) Songs: Lyrics often promote addictions as well as tunes listened to when you once used. Vulgar, filthy music needs to be avoided anyway if you desire to follow

Christ. Do not intentionally listen to them and work on viewing those songs differently.

G.) Times: Hours, days of the week or month could all be triggers that your AP needs to know about. Think of the activities you associate with your addiction.

Pressing point:

“Our personal inventory should include fears, causes of guilt, and a list of what triggers our urges, along with a plan to avoid them.”

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11. Daily Inventory

“There is one key characteristic here: humility.”

A.) Continued maintenance: Create a daily inventory, and follow it on a repeated basis. Look for similarities since you cannot fix a problem unless you are aware of it.

B.) Admit any and all wrongs since pride is the direct opposite of humility. Allow your AP to point out your wrongs and accept them. You want to deal with your past, not forget it. Everything we do, right or wrong, teaches us a lesson if we are willing to listen. Remembering what you were will help keep you from being that person again.

C.) Train yourself to plan your days each morning or, better still, at the beginning of every week. At the close of each day, reflect on all you said and did. For instance:

- Situations I handled poorly and why.
- Situations I handled well and why.
- Resentments I developed and why.
- Did I waste time or was I properly productive?
- Did I crave that substance/behavior today? In what situation did those cravings arise?
- Did I meditate on God’s word today?

Pressing point:

“Living a sober and righteous life requires routine maintenance one day at a time. Strive for honest self-evaluation and a humble heart of acceptance.”

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12. Making Amends (Lev 6:1-5; Eze 33:14-16)

“A desire to follow Christ includes a desire to make possible restitution and be willing to right any wrongs where possible.”

A.) Making amends is biblical and will lead to inner peace but requires restitution be made to the one wronged.

B.) The desire to live right includes a desire to make amends with those we’ve wronged.

C.) Begin this process knowing you can’t “undo” the wrongs but you can make them

right.

- D.) List the people you've wronged and go back over the list, seeking help from your AP on approaching this with caution. You may want to send a letter or call first before you approach anyone personally.
- E.) Take responsibility for your actions, but do not approach these matters in such a way that you will cause more harm than good.
- F.) This is not about waiting for people to ask you for restitution, but rather about being prompted to make amends by your desire to follow Christ.
- G.) Be careful the list doesn't overwhelm you. Remember, this is a process. Move forward with the best of your ability because the reward is precious.

Pressing point:

"'Making amends' or 'making restitution' whenever and wherever possible is both an appropriate and biblical answer to those whom we have wronged."

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13. Having a Vision

"BEGIN WITH THE END IN MIND."

- A.) List four people and what you would like each of them to say about your life.
- B.) Live in such a way that leads you to the desired destination: Heaven.
- C.) Write a "mission statement" that aligns with biblical principles. It needs to be led by the Bible and, therefore, will be Bible-centered. (Phil 1:21)
- D.) "Roles and goals": Define your role (*husband/wife, father/mother, son/daughter, employee, friend, etc.*) and the goals you want to accomplish in that role. Being a Christian is not a separate role, but rather dictates how you live in your specific role. (Col 3:4)
- E.) Write down how you will live your life according to biblical principles, i.e., having a biblical work ethic that will bring glory to God. (Mat 5:16)
- F.) Personalize your mission statement and make it your own, letting the Bible dictate what you write.
- G.) There is purpose to life and it involves the hereafter. It cannot exclude God from your vision. (Lk 12:16-21; James 4:13-17)

Pressing point:

"Important to any achievement (including sobriety) is to have a clear vision of where one is headed and to have goals ready to get you there, all of which are centered upon Jesus Christ."

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14. Achieving the Vision

"Be active and you will become too busy and preoccupied to think of former bad habits."

- A.) "Idle hands are the devil's playground" - It will contribute directly to bad habits so be active, be busy. It is too easy to succumb to vice when bored. (1 Tim 5:13-14; Eph 5:15-16) Redemption bears the idea of "[making] wise and sacred use of every opportunity for doing good, so that zeal and well doing are as it were the

purchase money by which we make the time our own.”

- B.) Redeem the time: If you are active and busy, your mind will have no opportunity to linger on old habits and dependencies. However, rest and action require a balance. Technology has the potential to trap us in idleness.
- C.) Establish a strong work ethic and be dependable.
- D.) Write a schedule for filling your time with positive and healthy activities, including all your priorities and schedule them accordingly. Avoid idleness.
- E.) Let the Bible be your guide (Ps 119:105) and your key to recovery (Ps 119:11) as well as Heaven (Jn 12:48). Avoid waiting to the end of the day to read/study. Choose the most convenient time. Ask your AP to guide you in this.
- F.) Get out of debt. It will relieve you of stress and is a biblical principle. (Ps 37:21) Make a written budget. Use the “debt snowball” (Dave Ramsey).
- G.) Employment: Visit the nearest job center. Be careful in deciding your career. Ask yourself, “Is that job a threat to my recovery?”
- H.) Education: If you didn’t graduate from high school, set a goal to get your GED.
- I.) Volunteer/help others: Avoiding idleness, helping others is a key to avoiding depression. Most importantly, be kind to others.
- J.) Obtain healthy hobbies.

Pressing point:

“Idle time is a dangerous enemy to sobriety. By learning to schedule your time and stick to it, you can eliminate this danger.”

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15. Health and Nutrition

“Your eating habits are actually connected to recovery from your addiction”.

- A.) “You are what you eat”- What you eat will affect how you feel.
 - Limit sugar intake; try Stevia, local raw honey, and coconut sugar.
 - Avoid (or at least limit) soda consumption. Caffeine *“produces symptoms similar to amphetamine and cocaine intoxication, with an associated development of tolerance and physical dependency”* and *“could trigger a craving for a stimulant in no way related to coffee”*. Try the following:
 - Drink no more than two cups of a caffeinated beverage a day.
 - Switch to decaf wherever possible; remember that even decaf has some caffeine.
 - If currently consuming too much caffeine, do not cut it from your diet suddenly; gradually decrease over time until you either limit your caffeine intake or eliminate it completely.
 - Avoid processed food as much as you possibly can.
 - Check nutrition labels; if you can’t pronounce it you probably don’t want to eat it.
 - Cook with healthy oils, like grape seed or coconut oils.
 - Eat your veggies.
 - Eat snacks like nuts and fruit instead of chips and candy bars.
 - Avoid fried food; grill, roast, or bake instead.

- Eat more chicken, fish and turkey.
- B.) Exercise: One of several ways to elevate serotonin levels in your body that will greatly affect your mood. The other levels of influence are sunlight and diet. A healthy lifestyle will contribute to feeling better, which in turn will aid you in your recovery. Thinking of your body as a “temple of the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor 6:19-20) will help see the connection between living a healthy life and serving God. (1 Cor 6:12; 3 Jn 2)

Pressing thought:

“Health and nutrition play a key role in staying sober. What you eat or drink, how often, and how much can affect your mood in the same way mood-enhancing drugs would.”

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Part 3: The Doctrine

16. Biblical Authority

Anarchy: a state of disorder due to absence or non-recognition of authority.

The Chain of Authority

- A.) Authority of the Father: Jesus, during His earthly ministry, affirmed on several occasions His submission to His Father. (Mat 11:27; Jn 5:43; 10:18, 25, 29, 32)
- B.) Authority of Christ: Just as Christ affirmed the authority of God, so did the Father recognize the authority of Christ, His Son. (Mat 17:2-5; 28:18)
- C.) Authority of Holy Spirit: (Act 1:4-8; 5:1-4)
- D.) Authority of the Apostles: The apostles, as recorded in Acts 2, received the Holy Spirit’s guidance as promised. (Act 2:42; 1 Cor 14:37)
- E.) Authority of the Written Word: (Eph 3:6; Jn 20:30-31; 2 Pet 1:3) With so many denominations one would ask why so many? Who is right and who is wrong? Can we know for certain one way or another?” (1 Jn 2:3-5; 5:2-3, 13) The Bible, the word of God, is the standard by which we know. If a mother told her child to clean his room and he said he didn’t think that she meant it but would love him anyway, is he really representing what his mother told him? Yes, she will love him anyway but the fact is that he didn’t respect her authority enough to obey her command. The key to respecting God’s authority is in being intellectually honest with the text of the Bible.
- F.) Hindrances to honesty as it pertains to Bible truth: Family tradition. (Mat 10:34-37) Religious groups. (Act 9:1-6) Sacrifice. (Mat 16:24-26) Feelings. There has to be an absolute standard and God’s word is it. (Act 8:35-39; 23:1; 1 Jn 5:13)

Implications for Biblical Authority

Consequences: Positive if authority is respected and negative if not. (Jn 12:48)

Pressing point:

“God is absolute, therefore, God’s word is absolute. The Bible, God’s word, is thus the standard of authority. You must be willing to overcome any and all barriers to accept that incontrovertible authority.”

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17. Getting to Know God:

The two characteristics of God: love and holiness.

God’s Love

- A.) God is love. (1 Jn 4:8, 16)
- B.) His love is manifested to us. (1 Jn 4:9-10)
- C.) God’s love entails helping others. Society views love as tolerating sinful behavior and that it is unloving to bring to someone’s attention his sinful conduct. (1 Cor 13) Love keeps the welfare of others in mind and never intentionally does anything to bring harm to another.

God’s Holiness

- A.) God is holy. (1 Pet 1:16) He does not overlook sin. Many act like they can live in sin and still be saved, simply on the basis that “God is love”. That is a gross misunderstanding of what loves means.
- B.) God’s holiness demands that He cannot overlook rebellion. In both Old and New Testaments people were punished for disobedience toward God. What do we think the mother in the above example (16. E) should do to her rebellious son? Just love him and his rebellion will stop?

Implication: We have been created as free moral agents to choose between right and wrong. The Bible is filled with commands for the same reason a parent tells a child not to touch a hot iron or stick a fork in a socket. God doesn’t want us to experience the punishment that will result from disobedience (*thinking His love negates our suffering the consequences*). If God cannot be loving without warning us of the penalties, how can we be loving without warning people of the nature of sin through sharing the message of the Gospel? Can anyone just “slide by” the judgment having neglected God’s command?

Pressing point:

“God’s love does not cancel out His holiness, but rather they exist in harmony. Obedience is necessary.”

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18. Difference in the Testaments:

Understanding this is key to understanding the Bible.

- A.) The Law of Moses was never meant to be permanent. (Jer 31:31-32; Heb 8:6-13)
- B.) The Law was made because of sin, to reveal it, and to show its ugliness. (Rom 3:20; 7:7) It was only to last until Christ came. (Gal 3:23-25; Mat 5:17)

- C.) Christ fulfilled the Old Covenant (Lk 24:44-49) through His blood (Mat 26:28-29) having nailed it to the cross (Col 2:13-17).
- D.) Establishment of the New Covenant: It is considered as a person's last will and testament which only takes affect after the person's death. (Heb 9:16-17) Christ's will was ratified on Pentecost. (Act 2) In binding any part of the Law of Moses on us today we would not be "rightly handling the word of truth". (2 Tim 2:15)
- E.) The need to study the Old Testament today: Both testaments go hand in hand since the Old conceals the New whereas the New reveals the Old. It contains eternal moral truths that will strengthen a Christian in his service to Christ and the treatment of others.

Pressing point:

"Jesus fulfilled the old Covenant and established His Covenant with His blood. We are bound by this, not the Law of Moses."

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19. Getting to Know Jesus

"Jesus is easily the most influential figure in the history of the world, but Who is He?"

- A.) He is God: There was never a time when Christ did not exist. He is part of the Godhead, along with the Father and Holy Spirit that created everything. (Gen 1:26; Jn 1:1-3)
- B.) He is Savior: If a man could save himself, Jesus never would have had to leave the glory of being with God to come to this sin-stricken world. (Jn 17:5) Man needed- and still needs-a Savior because "the wages (*Gk.3800- rations for a soldier, that is, his stipend or pay*) of sin is death". (Rom 6:23)
- C.) He is King: Only the citizens of His kingdom (church) will be saved. (Col 1:13)
- D.) He is Prophet: Prophets were spokesmen for God. Jesus, as God in the flesh, spoke the will of His Father. (Jn 6:38; Heb 1:1-4)
- E.) He is The Christ, the Son of The Living God: Christ is a title rather than a name. We must believe He is the Christ in order to be saved. (Act 8:35-37; Rom 10:9)
- F.) He is High Priest: Under the New Covenant, all Christians are priests (1 Pet 2:5) and Jesus is our High Priest. (2:16-18; 4:14-16)
- G.) He is Judge: Jesus came into the world to save (Jn 3:17), but the day will come when He will be arrayed as Judge and only those who have lived according to His standard will be saved. (Jn 12:48)

Pressing point:

"Jesus is God, King, Prophet, the Christ, the Son of the living God, High Priest, and Judge. Submit to Him."

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20. His Church

"...an assembly of people belonging to Christ-those who have been "called out" of the world." (Eph 2:19-22; Col 1:13; 1 Pet 2:9-10)

- A.) Universally: Col 1:18; Mat 16:18
- B.) Locally: 1 Cor 1:2; Rom 16:16
- C.) An Assembly: 1 Cor 11:18; 4:17

The Body

- A.) Christ's body, interchangeably with "church", is made up of those who have been purchased with His blood. (Act 20:28) People become members of it when they comply with the terms of His gospel.
- B.) Christ has authority over His church:
 - He is the Head (Eph 1:22, Col 1:18), and His headquarters are in Heaven (Col 3:1).
 - There is one body (church) (Eph 4:4), comprised of local churches united through "one faith" (Eph 4:5).
 - Jesus is the Authority over His body (Mat 28:18-20; Col 3:17), so all authority must come from Him through His Word (Jn 12:48).
 - His church is subject to Him (Eph 5:24); you cannot properly submit to Him outside the body.
 - His church is His bride (Eph 5:23-33; 2 Cor 11:2), which Paul likens to a husband/wife relationship.
- C.) Salvation is only in the church:
 - Jesus died for His church (Act 20:28; Eph 5:25), His blood purchased it and is essential to salvation (Mat 26:28) therefore the saved are in His church (body).
 - Jesus loves His church (Eph 5:25) and we must respond by submitting to Him in His body.
 - Jesus is the Savior of His church (Eph 5:23) therefore He cannot be your Savior if you are outside His body.
 - Reconciliation with God is in His church (Eph 2:16).
 - The called are in His church (Col 3:15), called by the Gospel (2 Thes 2:14).
- D.) God receives glory in the church:
 - God's wisdom is made known by the church (Eph 3:10).
 - Christ's church is according to the eternal purpose of God (Eph 3:11).
 - God is glorified in the church Jesus built (Eph 3:21).
 - His church is glorious (Eph 5:27).

Identifying the Body

- A.) The name by which the assembly identifies itself matters. If the church belongs to Christ, then it follows that the church should bear a name that honors Christ.
- B.) Biblically, the church is given certain designations that honor Christ since He is the owner.
 - "church of God" (Acts 20:28; 1 Cor 1:2; 10:32; 11:22; 15:9, etc.)
 - "house of God", "church of the living God" (1 Tim 3:15)
 - "church of the firstborn" (Heb 12:23)
 - "Kingdom of His dear Son" (Col 1:13)

- “body of Christ” (1 Cor 10:16; 12:27; Eph 4:12)
- “His body” (Eph 1:23; 5:20; Col 1:24)
- “household of faith” (Gal 6:10)
- “household of God” (Eph 2:19)
- “churches of Christ” (Rom 16:16)

C.) These designations identify an assembly as belonging to Christ (God in the flesh), rather than identifying an assembly with a particular doctrine or practice. We desire to be simply Christians (Act 11:26) in the assembly of Christ since one cannot be saved outside of it.

Pressing point:

“Jesus purchased His church (assembly) with His blood, and you must be in that body in order to be saved by His blood.”

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21. Salvation in His Church

“Since salvation is in the body (church) of Christ (Eph 5:23), then one would need to be placed into the body in order to be saved.”

- Are you saved?
- If so, when were you saved?
- How were you saved?
- Have you been baptized?
- If so, how were you baptized (water sprinkled/poured on you; immersion)?
- Were you saved before or when you were baptized?

The Beginning of His Church

A.) The terms “kingdom” and “church” are used interchangeably. (Mat 16:18-19)

B.) The kingdom was to come with power and came on the day of Pentecost following the Lord’s resurrection as recorded in Acts 2.

- The power from the Holy Spirit came (Act 2:1-4).
- The place was Jerusalem (Act 1:8; 2:5)
- The preacher was Peter (Act 2:14).
- The prophesy of Joel and David was confirmed by Peter, referring to that day and the kingdom (Act 2:16-36).
- The pardon (i.e. deliverance) was received by calling on the name of the Lord (Act 2:21, 38-47).

C.) This was the first day anyone was added to His church. 3,000 souls were added to His body (church) when they heard the gospel preached, believed the message, repented of their sins, receiving remission of those sins and the Holy Spirit when they obeyed the Gospel and were baptized. The “calling” here refers to their repenting and being baptized (Gk. 907- to make whelmed, fully wet; i.e. immersed) for the remission of sin. And even though baptism “now saves you” (1 Pet 3:21), in order to remain saved one must also be “devoted... to the apostles

teaching and fellowship” (Act 2:42) and continue to “walk in the light, as He is in the light, [having] fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son [will continually cleanse you] from all sin” (1 Jn 1:7). (Mk 16:16; Jn 3:5; Act 2:41, 47; 22:16; Rom 6:3, 4; Eph 5:26; 1 Cor 12:13; Gal 3:27; Col 2:12; Tit 3:5; 1 Pet 3:21)

- D.) Water alone does not save, neither can the blood of Christ save in and of itself. Only when the two are combined “through faith in the powerful working of God” (Col 2:12) in obedience to the Gospel “by the water and the blood” (1 Jn 5:6) can a person be saved.
- E.) When we have submitted in obedience, Jesus Christ is the source of our salvation.

Pressing point:

“You are added to the body of Jesus when doing what the Lord has said, how and why He said to do it, and after doing it, Jesus is still the source of salvation”.

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22. Repentance

“Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man Whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead”. (Act 17:30-31)

- A.) Sins committed after baptism are forgiven through humble repentance. (Mat 21:28-32) Repentance- Gk.3341- reformation; by implication reversal (of [another’s] decision).
- B.) Repentance is a change of mind brought about by godly sorrow (2 Cor 7:10) and leads to a change in life.
- C.) Repentance is vital to conversion. One cannot convert to Christ without it.
- D.) It is not enough to say you believe the Gospel; you must live in accordance with it. You cannot biblically make the decision to be baptized if you have not committed to change your life. (Mat 3:7, 8; Lk 3:7, 8)

What Repentance is Not

- A.) Repentance is not being sorry for getting caught. (2 Cor 7:10)
- B.) Repentance is godly sorrow. It alone is not repentance.
- C.) Repentance is not saying you are living right (lip service). The road to Hell is paved with good intentions.
- D.) Repentance is not deciding to change only for convenience.

Examples of Repentance

- Herod was sorry he publically made a promise to Herodias’ daughter without considering the consequences. His was worldly sorrow, not godly. (Mat 27:3-5)
- Judas was sorry he had betrayed the Lord which was worldly sorrow since it leads to his committing suicide. (Mat 27:3-5)

- The prodigal son “came to himself” and repented, went to his father, confessed his sin, and desired to make restitution. He showed a godly sorrow. (Lk 15:11-24)
- Zacchaeus “sought to see Jesus” and was pricked in his heart to do right. His repentance led to his desire to make restitution to those he harmed. (Lk 19:2-10)
- Peter denied the Lord (Mat 26:34) and afterward “wept bitterly” (Mat 26:75) because of his godly sorrow. He later preached the first sermon in the kingdom. (Act 2)

The Change of Life

- A.) Repentance is a change of mind that directly results in a change of life, not the changing of life itself.
- B.) There are many who feel they cannot be saved because of all the bad things they have done in the past or think they need to make amends before they can be saved. Note the Philippian jailer; having the responsibility of keeping the inmates secure he was about to kill himself when he saw the open doors and unfastened bonds. When Paul cried out that none had escaped the jailer fell down and asked “Sirs, what must I do to be saved” after hearing Paul and Silas “praying and singing” the night before. Their being content in such conditions affected the jailer which led him to tend Paul and Silas’ wounds. After hearing the explanation in answer to his question, it led to him, along with his family, to be baptized. (Act 16:33)
- C.) In his epistle to the Corinthians, Paul gave a list of their past sins (1 Cor 6:9-11) and yet those who had stolen did not have to pay everyone back before they could obey the Gospel. The blood of Christ washed away their past sins. (1 Cor 6:11)
- D.) Repentance will lead to a faithful life, including making amends where possible.
- E.) Repentance must result in a discontinuance of living in sin along with changing ones habits by being helpful where needed. (Eph 4:28)

Pressing point:

“Repentance is a change of mind prompted by godly sorrow, which leads to a change of life. You must repent.”

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23. Faithfully Serving Him

“Becoming a child of God is the beginning of a life in which one has put off the old and put on the new.” (Col 3:9-10)

- A.) “You shall love the Lord your god with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Mat 22:37-39) “There is no other commandment greater than these.” (Mk 12:29-31)
- B.) Loving the Lord: There is only one God (Mk 12:32), Who has never accepted a divided devotion. If I am not able to give my loyalty to God, then it follows that something else must have it.

- One does not obey God out of a sense of duty or obligation; rather one obeys God because he loves Him.
- C.) Loving Our Neighbors: Note the order. True love for God results in true love for your neighbor. (Lk 10:30-37)
- D.) Loving Ourselves: Many problems in this world stem from the individual's lack of self-love. We are made in the image of God (Gen 1:26-27) thus there is a dignity that belongs to our lives. God made something He thought was worthy enough to send His Son to die for and thus save. (Eph 5:29-30)
- E.) The Good Samaritan: A story about those claiming to love God without proving it, verses those rejected by society that show their love for God by showing their love for their fellow man, no matter what class. (Lk 10:25-28)
- F.) These two commandments are the foundation upon which all of scripture stand. (Rom 13:9-10; Gal 5:13-15)
- G.) The love we are required to share with our fellow man is not a surface-level kindness. God demands that we love deeply and truly, respecting our neighbors as fellow creations of the Lord. (Lk 6:27-36)
- H.) Love seeks the best for others, even enemies. (Jn 13:34)
- I.) We cannot love God and our neighbors properly without displaying the same love God has for his creation. (Act 10:34; 1 Tim 2:4)

Pressing point:

"Having a true love for God and mankind will result in faithful service to the Lord."

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APPENDIX A

Twelve Steps; Truth vs. Tradition

"We are interested in truth, which is absolute and objective, meaning it is true regardless of anything else. It stands strong despite opposition to it. It is our duty as people created in God's image to follow the evidence where it leads and accept truth, even if it flies in the face of popular belief. "

Why this is not the "12 step" approach.

- A.) If anything contradicts biblical teaching, it should be rejected.
- B.) When we speak against a particular teaching, it is not to be condescending, arrogant, or rude, but because of our love for the truth and a desire for people to obey it and go to Heaven.
- C.) When any model of recovery contains biblical principles it must be compared with God's inspired Word, the Bible. We ask only that you honestly examine the evidence, despite any preconceived beliefs you have about this matter.

Spiritual, But Not Religious

Excerpt from an AA newsletter: "One of the most common misconceptions about Alcoholics Anonymous is that it is a religious organization. New and prospective members in particular, when confronted with AA's emphasis on recovery from

alcoholism by spiritual means, often translate “spiritual” as “religious” and shy away from meetings, avoiding what they perceive as a new and frightening set of beliefs.”

- A.) AA avoids being labeled an “organized religion”.
- B.) They suggest (beginning with step 2) that one should include a ‘higher power’ in the recovery process but fail to realize that giving any “spiritual” advice makes them accountable to God. (1 Pet 4:11)
- C.) Claiming to be “not religious” does not change that responsibility in the slightest. You cannot separate God from His Word.
- D.) Since His Word is the absolute standard, then it should define “spiritual” and “religious”. It does not teach that one can be “spiritual” without being “religious”.
- E.) There seems to be a mindset that “religion” is a dirty word, and that Jesus actually “hated religion”. There are those who practice it “that they may be seen by others” (Mat 6:5) but Jesus called that particular group “hypocrites”.
- F.) There is a “vain” type of worship that Jesus spoke of. (Mat 15:9)
- G.) James wrote of a “pure religion” as opposed to one that is “vain” and gave defining acts that show the difference. (Jas 1:26-27)
- H.) The current religious scene is discouraging and may be a motivation for some to distance themselves from organized religion, but in the end we will answer according to what we have done. (Jn 12:48; 2 Cor 5:10)
- I.) According to AA, their “councilors” are expected to teach others how to recover through “spiritual” means, which incorporates God, but without enforcing His Law (the Bible). However, one cannot teach another person about God without revealing His will for mankind through His Word. (Act 17:22-23)

A Disease

In 1956, The American Medical Association declared “alcoholism an illness”. J.B. Myers, in his book, *Faith and Addiction*, wrote, “the disease model became the prevailing view, and in time, the sickness label spread to the abuse of other drugs and then to all kinds of problematic behaviors”. This mindset has “opened the floodgates,” as people exhibit unhealthy, compulsive behaviors regarding sex, gambling, eating, etc., are also said to have a disease.

- A.) Reconciling the “disease model” with the Bible cannot be done.
- B.) Myers, in commenting on a similar definition of alcoholism, stated, “Notice that the characterization of this disease is not described in terms of biology but behavior”.
- C.) Alcoholism is diagnosed through observation of one’s behavior, thus, “addiction”, which is based on behavior, is not to be understood as synonymous with “disease”, which is based on biology. Myers wrote how behavior “is not biology, and the key to clarifying the whole issue is to separate the two. To illustrate, drinking alcohol and smoking cigarettes are behaviors, cirrhosis of the liver and lung cancer are diseases.” An addiction, which is purely behavioral, can lead to a disease, but they are not to be considered the same.
- D.) Addiction gene: According to Dr. Gabor Mate of Canada, it doesn’t exist. He wrote, “Although there may be some genetic dispositions for certain traits that

- may lead to addiction, for the most part genes are turned on and off by the environment.” *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts: Close Encounters with Addiction*
- E.) A child that is born with a crack addiction has the addiction because of its drug-induced environment in the womb, not because of an addiction gene inherited from its mother.
- F.) Myers explains: “The danger is that people who believe they cannot control their behavior continue to behave in keeping with the sickness label assigned to them by treatment professionals, family, and friends. As a result, the disease model establishes an addiction identity that makes it difficult for change to occur.”
- G.) Wayne Jackson wrote in his commentary “What About Alcoholics Anonymous?” concerning what the apostle Paul wrote to the church at Corinth and their past behaviors: “The apostle does not endorse the notion that a former drunkard must continue to cling to that appellation for some sort of supposed psychological advantage.” (1 Cor 6:10-11) According to AA ideology, he must continually chastise himself with the mantra: “I am a recovering alcoholic.”
- H.) It is foreign to Scripture to label oneself with the title of a ‘former’ behavior. It would be the same as a ‘former’ (fill in the designation, ‘senator, college student, president’ etc., or) high-school student, after graduating, as still being a high-school student.
- I.) Addiction is a sin problem. (Eph 5:18-22; Gal 5:19-21; 1 Cor 6:9-11) It is not as though a person came into involuntary contact with a germ which invaded their body.

“God as You Understand Him”

- A.) This makes following God subjective and according to one’s feelings, which actually defies God’s nature.
- B.) The following prayer, as found in the pages of the AA book:
- “God, I offer myself to Thee-to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of life. May I do Thy will always!”
- C.) By this prayer, we cannot view God “as we understand Him” because our understanding could conflict with His will. The Bible lays out a specific path to be followed. (Mat 7:13-14)
- D.) Only through God’s Word can we reach the conclusion as to Who God is. In the same AA newsletter it states: “We have no desire to convince anyone that there is only one way by which faith can be acquired. All of us, whatever our race, creed, or color, are children of a living Creator, with Whom we may form a relationship upon simple and understandable terms as soon as we are willing and honest enough to try. ...We think it no concern of ours what religious bodies our members associate themselves with as individuals. This should be an entirely personal affair each one decides for himself in light of past associations or his present choice.”
- Followers of God are supposed to be concerned with convincing others to

follow the proper way. (Mk 16:15-16; 2 Tim 2:2; 2 Cor 5:11; Act 26:28-29)

- The Bible affirms that there is, in fact, one way by which faith can be acquired. (Rom 10:17)
- We are to be concerned with other's religious affiliations because there is only one church in the eyes of Christ. (Mat 16:18)

“Higher Power”

If the “higher power” is referring to the “unknown god”.

Act 17:22 So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. 23 For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, 'To the unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you."

Conclusion

The Twelve Step model has many admirable characteristics, which we have implemented here. They are admirable, however, because they are derived from God's Word. Is it any surprise that in searching for how to help individuals with addiction problems, they turned to biblical principles? The Bible is the answer, and in realizing such, you need to devote yourself wholly to its teachings, even when it conflicts with popularly accepted belief. Once you bring God into the picture, you have also brought in the religion of Jesus Christ. Having God without the Bible is, quite simply, not an option.

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APENDIX B

New Creature: A Testimonial

(Read “There and Back Again”: An Addicts Tale by Bruce P. Hatcher- Pages 155-164)

“What contributes to my recovery? First, I realized I had a problem. Second, I had someone who cared enough about me to give “tough love.” Third, I had time to seriously consider and meditate about where my decisions were taking me. Fourth, I had some Divine intervention, not in a miraculous way, but by simply reading God's soul-saving message and meditating on it. Fifth, I effectively used the tools God has given to all men to aid in their conversion-I obeyed God's plan of salvation. Now I walk in newness of life, pressing forward.” (2 Pet 1:2-4)

Conclusion

“One Day at a Time”

“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things (*food, clothing*) shall be added unto you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”

(Mt 6:33-34)

This is not to say do not plan ahead, but rather do not let worries of the future hinder you from accomplishing what you should now for the Lord.

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