

2. ADDICTS ARE NOT A MYSTERY TO GOD

Main Theme: Where Does the Bible Speak About Addictions?

A biblical definition of addictions

A central, common feature of addictions is the **quick onset of bodily sensation** (pleasant sensory experience). Simply put, things that people get addicted to are things (substances or activities) that people do or use because they *like the feeling* that those substances or activities produce.

Scripture speaks strongly about a number of these:

1. **Sleep** (Proverbs 6:9, 10, 10:5, 19:15, 20:13, 24:33, Isaiah 56:10, Matthew 26:40, 43, 45 (and parallels in Mark and Luke))
2. **Alcohol** (Genesis 9:24, Proverbs 20:1, 21:17, 23:29ff, Isaiah 5:11, 12, 22, 22:13, 28:1, 7, Hosea 7:5, Amos 6:6, Ephesians 5:18, 1 Timothy 3:8, Titus 2:3 etc.) Because Alcohol is a **mind-altering substance**, drugs that alter one's state of mind should be included under this heading.
3. **Food** (Exodus 32:6, Judges 9:27, Isaiah 22:13, Zechariah 7:6, Matthew 24:38, Luke 12:45, 17:28, 1 Corinthians 10:7, 11:22, etc.)
4. **Sexual relations** (Numbers 25:1, Matthew 15:19, Mark 7:21, Romans 13:13, 1 Corinthians 5:9, 11, 6:9, 13, 18, 10:8, Galatians 5:19, Ephesians 5:3, Colossians 3:5, 1 Thessalonians 4:3, Hebrews 12:16, 13:4, Jude 7, Revelation 21:8, 22:15, etc.)
5. **Other things that bring about the same physical reaction:** anger, love, weightlifting, nicotine, pain, TV, movies, eating out, coffee breaks, sense of well-being, exercise, gambling, nose drops, cocaine, work, sports, sugar, people, caffeine, shoplifting, lying, chocolate, risk, success/winning, pornography etc.¹ (The list could go on almost endlessly)
6. The world is now discovering this **broad definition** of addictions too: As one researcher has put it: *"In short, the brain doesn't have individual brain circuits for cocaine use, alcohol consumption, gambling, porn use, and so on. Rather there is **reward circuitry** in the brain (also known as the mesolimbic system), which can become activated, depending upon a person's learned behaviors. **Anything** that activates this circuitry intensely is potentially addictive."*

Some of the World's Definitions of Addictions

Definition 1

¹ This sample list is from Edward Welch's Addictions: A banquet in the grave: Finding hope in the power of the gospel P&R page 12. I have added a few others to the list.

An **addiction** or **dependence** is a recurring compulsion by an individual to engage in some specific activity, despite harmful consequences to the individual's health, mental state or social life. The term is often reserved for drug addictions but it is sometimes applied to other compulsions, such as problem gambling, and compulsive overeating. Factors that have been **suggested** as causes of addiction include genetic, biological/pharmacological and social factors.

Definition 2: Dr. Robert Hicks (Reviewed November 2005)

Popular conceptions of addiction do not stop at drugs and alcohol. People can become overly attached to gambling, chocolate, computer games - even using the internet. These non-drug addictive behaviours are similar in that the person has a lack of control over their behaviour.

There are popular and professional definitions of addiction. In everyday language, we think of someone who is addicted to something as having what could be called an unhealthy habit.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/health/conditions/addictions/aboutaddiction_whatis.shtml

Definition 3: National Health Service UK (November 2007)

Addiction is not having control over doing, taking or using something, to the point that it may be harmful to you. Common addictions are to alcohol or drugs, but it's possible to become addicted to anything - from gambling to chocolate. Whatever the addiction may be, the person cannot control how they use it, or become dependant on it to get through daily life.

<http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/articles/article.aspx?articleId=650>

Definition 4: Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary 11th Edition

ad•dict : to devote or surrender (oneself) to something habitually or obsessively²

Some of the World's Suggested Causes of Addictions

Several explanations (or "models") have been presented to explain addiction. These divide, more or less, into the models which stress biological or genetic causes for addiction, and those which stress social or purely psychological causes. Of course there are also many models which attempt to see addiction as both a physiological *and* a psycho-social phenomenon.

- The disease model of addiction holds that addiction is a disease, coming about as a result of either the impairment of neurochemical or

²Merriam-Webster, I. 2003. *Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary*. Includes index. (Eleventh ed.). Merriam-Webster, Inc.: Springfield, Mass.

behavioral processes, or of some combination of the two. Within this model, addictive disease is treated by specialists in Addiction Medicine. Within the field of medicine, the American Medical Association, National Association of Social Workers, and American Psychological Association all have policies which are predicated on the theory that addictive processes represent a disease state. Most treatment approaches, as well, are based on the idea that dependencies are behavioral dysfunctions, and, therefore, contain, at least to some extent, elements of physical or mental disease. Organizations such as the American Society of Addiction Medicine believe the research-based evidence for addiction's status as a disease is overwhelming.

- The genetic model posits a genetic predisposition to certain behaviors. It is frequently noted that certain addictions "run in the family," and while researchers continue to explore the extent of genetic influence, many researchers argue that there is strong evidence that genetic predisposition is often a factor in dependency.
- The experiential model devised by Stanton Peele argues that addictions occur with regard to experiences generated by various involvements, whether drug-induced or not. This model is in **opposition** to the disease, genetic, and neurobiological approaches. Among other things, it proposes that addiction is both more temporary or situational than the disease model claims, and is often outgrown through natural processes.
- The opponent-process model generated by Richard Solomon states that for every psychological event **A** will be followed by its opposite psychological event **B**. For example, the pleasure one experiences from heroin is followed by an opponent process of withdrawal, or the terror of jumping out of an airplane is rewarded with intense pleasure when the parachute opens. This model is related to the opponent process color theory. If you look at the color red then quickly look at a gray area you will see green. There are many examples of opponent processes in the nervous system including taste, motor movement, touch, vision, and hearing. Opponent-processes occurring at the sensory level may translate "down-stream" into addictive or habit-forming behavior.
- The allostatic(stability through change) model generated by George Koob and Michel LeMoal is a modification of the opponent process theory where continued use of a drug leads to a spiralling of uncontrolled use, negative emotional states and withdrawal and a shift into use to new allostatic set point which is lower than that maintained before use of the drug (Koob and LeMoal, 2001; Koob and LeMoal, 2006).
- The cultural model recognizes that the influence of culture is a strong determinant of whether or not individuals fall prey to certain addictions. For example, alcoholism is rare among Saudi Arabians, where obtaining alcohol is difficult and using alcohol is prohibited. In North America, on the other hand, the incidence of gambling addictions soared in the last two decades of the 20th century, mirroring the growth of the gaming industry. Half of all patients diagnosed as alcoholic are born into families where alcohol is used heavily, suggesting that

familiar influence, genetic factors, or more likely both, play a role in the development of addiction. What also needs to be noted is that when people don't gain a sense of moderation through their development they can be just as likely, if not more, to abuse substances than people born into alcoholic families.

- The ***moral model*** states that addictions are the result of human weakness, and are defects of character. Those who advance this model do not accept that there is any biological basis for addiction. They often have scant sympathy for people with serious addictions, believing either that a person with greater moral strength could have the force of will to break an addiction, or that the addict demonstrated a great moral failure in the first place by starting the addiction. The moral model is widely applied to dependency on illegal substances, perhaps purely for social or political reasons, but is no longer widely considered to have any therapeutic value. Elements of the moral model, especially a focus on individual choices, have found enduring roles in other approaches to the treatment of dependencies.
- **The *habit model* proposed by Thomas Szasz questions the very concept of "addiction." He argues that addiction is a metaphor, and that the only reason to make the distinction between habit and addiction "is to persecute somebody." (Szasz, 1973).**
- Finally, the *blended model* attempts to consider elements of all other models in developing a therapeutic approach to dependency. It holds that the mechanism of dependency is different for different individuals, and that each case must be considered on its own merits.³

A Biblical Explanation of the Cause of Addictions in Contrast to the Above

The Bible understands and explains this exact phenomenon in its **own terms**. In Scripture we have such a mature view, there is no need for the views explained above.

Addicts Have Fallen into False Worship

Scripture shows the human race to have fallen from true and satisfying worship of God to the false, unsatisfying worship of idols. In the case of addictions, the addict will pursue his substance or activity in a manner that can only be called *worship*.

1. Scripture teaches to **worship God only**: Exodus 20:3-6, Revelation 19:10, 22:9
2. Mankind has plummeted to the **worship of created things**: Romans 1:21-23, 2 Timothy 3:4, Isaiah 44:17. (Dictionary definition of worship: extravagant respect, devotion, esteem)

³ This article is from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Addiction>

3. People **depend** on idols for a pleasant life-experience and meaning rather than on God. Habakkuk 2:18-20, Jeremiah 2:13

Addicts Have Fallen into sin

Scripture teaches that the entire human race has fallen into sin. Sin has so affected and dominated the lives of human beings that they continually struggle toward what is wrong and away from what is right. This drive is overwhelming, enslaving, deceptive and ever-increasing. These are the themes we see in the lives of addicts to an advanced degree. Sin lures Addicts to their own destruction.

1. Sin has overwhelmed **inclination, purposes and desires**: Genesis 6:5, 8:21, Ecclesiastes 9:3, Jeremiah 17:9, Mark 7:21-23, Ephesians 2:1-3
2. Sin has **enslaved**: Titus 3:3, John 8:34, Romans 6:17
3. Sin has **deceived** into self-destruction: Isaiah 44:20, James 1:13-15,
4. Sin demands **ever-increasing** indulgence, bringing **ever-increasing** regret and shame. Sin drives cravings. Romans 6:19.

Addicts Are Restless

One need not spend much time with addicts at all to discover that they are compelled to be perpetually moving. This restlessness is well explained in Scripture. How can they expect peace when they are neither at peace with God, nor do they have the peace of God?

1. **Restlessness** in the place of peace **with** God (Romans 5:1) and peace **of** God (Philippians 4:7).
2. Consider Cain's restlessness (Genesis 4:12, 14. See also Leviticus 26:36, Deuteronomy 28:65-66, Psalm 109:10, Hosea 9:17)

Addicts Want Control

Scripture again bears witness to the relentless drive within fallen man to be his own master and lawmaker. He will not respect God, thank God, nor obey God. The addict will set his own objectives and carve his own path. Naturally, this ends in ruin and misery.

1. **Insistence on autonomy is seen in the following ways:**
 - a. People, addicts, won't even give God the **respect** ordinarily given to a father or master: Malachi 1:6.
 - b. Every person has turned to his **own way**: Deuteronomy 29:19, **Isaiah 53:6, 55:7**, 58:13, 66:3, Acts 14:16, Romans 3:10-18.
 - c. Insistence on autonomy is *implied by the exchange* of Creator worship to the worship of created things (see point on false worship above)

- d. Often obvious at a young age—***no submission to authority***. (Case study: undisciplined toddler who performed to get what he wanted has become an addict.)
- e. Something often forgotten by counsellors is that most drugs to which drug-addicts are addicted are ***illegal***. The very practise of obtaining them is sinful. This also demonstrates a lack of submission to any authority.

Consider that the world ridicules the Scriptural approach because it is classed as the ***moral*** approach.

For secular views on the causes of addictions see the insert above, under the definition of addictions.