

Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

**Using Intentional Relationship Building and Community Presence to Minister to an
Addicted Population in Cookeville, Tennessee**

Submitted to

Dr. Galen K. Johnson

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of

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By

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Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

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ABSTRACT

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Addiction and substance abuse are banes in American society as they destroy lives, families, hopes and dreams. Individuals with potential for productive lives and societal contributions are reduced to hollow shells and find themselves laser-focused on their next fix. Cookeville, Tennessee, is no different than any other rural American town as addiction and substance abuse are prevalent, especially within the northwestern areas of the city. West View Baptist Church was planted in this area in 1950 and has actively attempted to minister to the community's residents for the last 71 years. Recently, internal issues in the congregation and increasing disconnections with the community facilitated by the cultural implications of addiction and substance abuse have led to significant impasses in the church's effectiveness in missional outreach. There is a lack of academic work focused on in-person, active evangelism programs in communities significantly impacted by the culture of addiction. Therefore, this project utilizes information gained through numerous surveys of persons who have successfully engaged in various recovery programs to develop and implement a training curriculum to prepare church members to minister among those suffering from addiction and substance abuse. Further work is anticipated beyond this project as church members will begin active missional outreach in the community immediately bordering the church campus.

Dedication

To my beautiful wife, Andrea, you saw what I was but looked past that person to whom God was making me. You had the resolve and conviction that you knew the old me was no good for you, yet you kept an open mind when you heard that God had transformed me. I love you more today than yesterday, but not as much as tomorrow.

For Bailey Grace, your Daddy loves you to the moon and back. I have always been open with you about my life, and I pray that God has stopped the cycle with me and that you will never know what it is to be under the influence of anything. You are an amazing young woman, and I am so proud of you! God has huge plans for your life.

For James David, little buddy, words are inadequate to say what I want you to know. I love you, Boogey, and you will never know how much! I believe that God put you with us to rescue you from the life you would have had. Your biological parents loved you, of that, I am sure. But, unfortunately, the drugs, alcohol, defunct relationships and all that was in their lives made them unable to put you first, even though they wanted you very much. It is people like them that I pray this project will reach, that other families will not be torn apart by addiction and despair.

I am so blessed to be part of the West View Baptist Church family and thank each of you for your love and patience. The past ten years have been the most incredible experience I could have imagined. Thank you for allowing me to be what God has called me to be and for walking through this life with my family and me. I love each of you. Now is the time that we hear the call of Christ seriously to reach the lost with the true gospel of salvation. Addiction and substance abuse sit at Hades' gates, holding people captive, and it is time the Church sees them set free.

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Abbreviations

DMIN	<i>Doctor of Ministry</i>
FBC	<i>First Baptist Church, Cookeville, TN</i>
LUSOD	<i>Liberty University School of Divinity</i>
P-BRSS	<i>Peer-Based Recovery Support Services</i>
WVBC	<i>West View Baptist Church, Cookeville, TN</i>

Prologue

Before moving into the project addressed in this writing, an important note is needed. As it stands, this project is not as complete as was initially desired. The original plan would have seen a highly energized and excited congregation ministering to a population of persons with significant issues, such as addiction and substance abuse, which generally create significant cultural barriers between themselves and the church. However, when this project started in the middle of 2019, no one could have predicted the radical shift in every aspect of life that would come during the COVID-19 pandemic of the last 18 months.

With the rapid changes in American society created by the COVID-19 pandemic, it became necessary to rethink the project's end state. The primary concern forcing a different point of a conclusion is the potential danger to both residents of the project area and West View Baptist Church members during direct personal interaction of the kind that the initial project would have required.

From March 2020 to December 2020, there was an alarming number of positive COVID-19 cases in Putnam County. Since the initial stages in early 2020, there have been 9,730 cases with 131 deaths in a county with 80,245 people.¹ December 18 through 31 saw a case count of 1,184 persons with an average new case influx of 105.4 per day.² This significant increase in positive cases is alarming to local officials and healthcare professionals.

On December 20, 2020, Governor Bill Lee issued Executive Order 70, establishing Tennessee's social gatherings restrictions. The order directed Tennesseans to maintain at least six

¹ "United States Census Bureau Quick Facts: Putnam County, TN.," accessed January 10, 2021, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/putnamcountytennessee,US/PST045219>.

² "Covid Data for Putnam County," Accessed January 10, 2021, <https://covid19.tn.gov/data/dashboards/?County=Putnam>.

feet of separation from persons outside their household and not, in any event, to be in a group of ten or more persons in an indoor public place for social gatherings. Although the order does not restrict the exercise of freedom of religion, it does state, “places of worship are strongly encouraged to continue to utilize virtual or online services.”³ As of September 2020, a resurgence of COVID-19 threatens to perpetuate this hesitancy in direct missional outreach.

The pandemic situation in Putnam County has significantly impacted the motivation of church members to conduct face-to-face outreach events. This problem appears to have reduced the receptivity of persons residing in the project area to the point where there is substantial concern about the feasibility of reaching an end state of applying the facets of this Ministry Project within the ministry project area. With these new barriers to the completion of this project, this writer proposes the following changes.

Necessary Changes to the Project

The primary change is the actual end state of the project. Initially, this project would have resulted in the church actively conducting in-person outreach and ministry within the project area to area residents. This process would have included completing an 8-week discipleship-based Bible study focusing on addiction and recovery, along with some form of feedback from participants. The overarching hope was that residents would come to faith in Jesus Christ and become engaged in recovery from life-controlling issues through this outreach ministry.

Instead of immediately engaging in those ministries, the new goal of the project is to equip the church for mission ministries relating to persons with addiction and substance abuse issues. For the project progression, this new goal will require the congregation to first examine

³ Bill Lee. “Tennessee Executive Order 70,” accessed December 21, 2020, <https://publications.tnsosfiles.com/pub/execorders/exec-orders-lee70.pdf>.

their concerns, fears and comfort issues with reaching out to a population so different from themselves. The vast cultural, economic and societal differences between the project area residents and the congregation members mandate that the church members engaged in the ministry understand the needs and issues experienced by project area residents.

This writer intends to proceed with the initial survey approved in January 2021 by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for administration within local recovery groups. An additional questionnaire will be developed for administration to West View Baptist Church members and other local Southern Baptist congregations to determine what felt needs exist related to missions' outreach readiness within the context of substance abuse and addiction. The information gathered will facilitate creating a discipleship course internal to West View Baptist Church focusing on outreach to persons with substance abuse and addiction issues.

Ultimately, this ministry project's new goal will be developing a discipleship curriculum to prepare church members for missions' outreach to persons with substance abuse and addiction issues. The curriculum development will utilize both surveys and various existing addiction and recovery program curricula and independent research. Evaluating the program's impact will occur through a follow-up session with those who participate in the discipleship course related to whether they feel better equipped for an outreach ministry akin to the intention of the original thesis project.

While this end state is only for the current time, the intention is to continue moving toward a point where the outreach ministry envisioned in the original project occurs. By taking time to pause at the juncture of training the church, the project will create a better-prepared group for the work once the current pandemic situation has abated.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Addiction is not a new issue. It has been part of American culture since colonial times, as evidenced by Benjamin Rush's work. Herbert Hudson most eloquently describes the history of addressing addiction in the United States. Beginning with Rush and his *An Inquiry into the Effects of Ardent Spirits Upon the Human Body and Mind* (Orig. Pub. 1785), Hudson explores the more significant developments involving alcohol addiction and recovery, primarily looking at twelve-step models.¹ From Hudson's work, the reality that substance dependence has been a long-present issue in American society becomes apparent. Data from the Tennessee Drug Overdose Data Dashboard supports Hudson by showing the increasing impact of drug use, a readily admitted precursor to addiction. The most current data available, from 2018, reveals a 25% increase from 1,451 to 1,818 in Tennessee drug overdose deaths over the same data from 2015.²

Before moving forward, a critical point demands attention, which will recur throughout this thesis. Jonathan Benz voices that there has never been a single person who set out in life intending to become addicted to drugs, alcohol, sex, gambling or any number of volatile activities. A person will engage in behaviors that lead to addiction and suddenly find himself compulsively controlled by his vice.³ The condition of addiction is never an intended destination.

¹ Herbert E. Hudson, "Developing a Syllabus for Pastors and Those in Ministerial Training on Addiction Recovery through Twelve Step Philosophy" (D.Min., United States -- Illinois, Trinity International University, 2016), 72, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1870053530/abstract/47225E96796147C0PQ/1>.

² "Data Dashboard: Fatal Drug Overdose Timeseries Trends," Accessed March 21, 2021, <https://www.tn.gov/health/health-program-areas/pdo/pdo/data-dashboard.html>.

³ Jonathan Benz. *The Recovery-Minded Church: Loving and Ministering to People with Addiction*, (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2016), 104-105.

Instead, it is more often the result of engaging in risky choices and behavior. Addiction often is an unintended place where individuals find themselves and realize they are not sure how they arrived in their current state.

Sadly, it seems that with every generation, the problem of addiction increases. Based on this researcher's experience as a Department of Children Services Social Worker and personal conversations with numerous elementary teachers over the years, it appears that children watch their parents deal with life's pressures by relying on drugs or alcohol. A common issue noted by teachers in White, Warren, Van Buren and Cannon Counties in Middle Tennessee is that many children are raising themselves and their siblings. The oldest will wake, dress and feed the younger siblings and then will get everyone on the bus for school, all while a mother, grandmother, father or any number of various persons presumably sleep off the high from the night before.

Addiction is not just a rural issue, as it reaches all levels of society. Those suffering from addiction can hail from the upper crust of millionaires and the socially or politically elite. Likewise, Rescue Missions, shelters and highway underpasses overflow with those not-so-known persons dealing with the same addictions. Although anyone can fall into drug or alcohol addiction, the more visible brunt in Cookeville, Tennessee, seems to be carried by those at the lower end of the economic spectrum.

Programs to combat addiction and set people on a path to recovery require numerous resources but have seemingly limited impact. Addiction and its social, psychological, emotional and spiritual implications receive significant attention from government, professional and religious entities. Within Putnam County, Tennessee, there are numerous treatment

organizations. If merely having available treatment programs could solve the problem, Putnam county's addiction issues would have ended decades ago.

Regardless of available programs, countless barriers remain. These include lack of support such as transportation, funds to pay for treatment, economic stability to allow a person to survive without an income for an extended time while seeking treatment. These and many other complications present seemingly insurmountable walls to keep people trapped in addiction and indigency. Katherine Karriker-Jaffe states, “Visible drug sales, high alcohol outlet density and social disorganization each contribute to substance use and associated problems.”⁴ Each of these risk factors is present within the geographic area of the project. The pastor of West View Baptist Church (WVBC) has witnessed drug sales from cars parked beside the church playground. Additionally, there are three liquor stores within half a mile of the area and no social organization for the project area's adult residents. This project intends to prepare WVBC to minister the love of Jesus Christ to a specific community hugely impacted by addiction and the lifestyle that accompanies it.

This Doctor of Ministry Project will examine the addiction recovery issue from a different direction than the current programs available to the community. The existing curricula, both professionally led and peer leader based, call for people to leave what is comfortable and attend a meeting or counseling session in any one of numerous locations. The ultimate goal of this project is to create an organic relationship-based model, much like Christ's, to engage and minister to those trapped in an addiction-oriented culture.

⁴ Katherine J. Karriker-Jaffe; “Neighborhood Socioeconomic Status and Substance Use by U.S. Adults,” *Drug and Alcohol Dependence* 133 (2013): 212–21.

Overarching Plan

The guiding premise by which this project will progress is that which Christ demonstrated as He traveled across Israel, Samaria, Judea and the region. The pattern Jesus portrayed was that He connected relationally with the people, met their physical needs, revealed to them the love of God through His own life and presented the call to place their faith and hope in Him. WVBC in Cookeville, Tennessee, intends to engage residents of the project area in a manner that other local outreach ministries have not previously attempted.

Through modeling the ministry of Christ, the church plans to go into the project area and establish relationships with residents. This forming of relationships will entail several progressive and repetitive steps, including meeting physical needs such as food and clothing within the project area instead of requiring residents to leave their community to go to a separate location to receive ministry benefits. The relationships can thus grow as regular, frequent contact is maintained. The church hopes to begin breaking down many barriers to ministry, primarily the need for transportation, the immediate availability of help and the perception by both the church and the residents of each other as outsiders and disconnected. To do so, the church will meet and connect with people where they live. The ultimate hope is that bidirectional trust might develop and, in turn, an opportunity to begin a Bible study group focused not on addiction recovery, as might be expected, but rather on overcoming the common human problem of life-controlling issues. This project has a two-fold purpose. The first is to create opportunities for the church to live out the call of 1 Peter 3:15 to live in a way that allows those in need of life transformation to see the hope that comes from a personal saving relationship with Jesus. The second purpose is to complete the church's mission to “teach them to obey all I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:20).

Ministry Context

Since its inception, community ministry has been the heart of WVBC. It was founded in the early 1940s as a First Baptist Cookeville (FBC) mission to provide a place for service and worship by families that lived about one and a half miles from FBC. The charter members all lived in the immediate neighborhood and desired to worship and serve closer to their homes. Soon the church purchased land for a building, and pastor John Brown began holding services in what became affectionately known as John Brown's Chicken Coop, the basement and foundation for what would eventually be the church building. On May 14, 1950, the church was chartered and has consistently served those living within the surrounding neighborhoods since that time.

Change is the Only Constant

As time progressed, the membership of the church began to change. The charter member numbers declined as they passed away, moved into assisted living and nursing homes or moved closer to their adult children. Likewise, the community also transformed with the passing of one generation to another. A stark reality became apparent to the church; the quiet little community it served was quickly disappearing. Charter members' children had moved away, and with their parents' passing, there was little desire to return to the area. Quite often, real estate development firms purchased the homes and immediately placed them for rent. The church began to wane as the community and church disconnected from one another and as new families with no ties to the community replaced those strongly connected to it.

Immediately adjacent to the church, several homes in the late 1980s were torn down and replaced with lower-income or even subsidized rental properties. One block away from the church, a short-term hotel took the place of several homes. This single-story building became known as L-Block and, by 2005, was occupied predominantly by persons with significant legal

issues, including alcohol and drug addiction. To one degree or another, the same story repeated throughout the community that had given birth to WVBC just a few decades prior.

For the past year, the playground at WVBC has remained locked when not used by the church. Children are allowed in only after someone inspects the grounds for needles discarded by intravenous drug users, broken bottles, pills and other items that might harm the children and create a liability for the church. In 2018, homelessness and its associated issues increased significantly after the city police boarded up an abandoned house down the street from the church. People resorted to sleeping behind the church, hidden among the air conditioning units. As recently as September 13, 2020, the pastor called on police to dispose of used syringes left on a rail outside the clothing closet entrance, readily accessible to anyone, including children.

More significantly, there have been recent incidents with people using the cover provided by the church's bushes to hide while injecting methamphetamine and heroin. Interestingly, when city police are requested to respond to these incidents, the person who was undeniably using illicit drugs is directed by officers merely to leave the premises and not return.

7th and Pine Projects and the Expansion of Addiction Issues

In the late 1980s, the city erected a subsidized housing project just a half-mile from the church where 7th and Pine Streets intersect. During outreach ministries in the development, from 2011 to 2015, church members learned that many residents of this housing complex are single mothers and persons with various disabilities. There is a preponderance of issues the residents deal with, and most focus around the misuse of prescription drugs and the frequent use of illegal drugs, predominantly methamphetamine. These issues have become increasingly impactful in the surrounding community. Addiction is commonplace on the west side of Cookeville. Whether it

involves alcohol, tobacco or much harder drugs, the influence of addiction is apparent in the community.

Changes in the Church

Change is not just limited to the community but has also impacted the church itself. The late 1970s and 1980s saw a significant decline in church membership due to the issues previously discussed. Conversely, in the early 1990s, under the leadership of a new pastor, a period of growth came upon the church as families from outside the surrounding community began attending WVBC. Increased outreach ministries and involvement in Christian Discipleship ministries revitalized WVBC and led to the need for more space at the church itself. With a membership exceeding 400 persons and a sanctuary that could hold 175, the need for increased worship space was evident.

The most significant change for WVBC occurred in the early 2000s when the church engaged in an \$800,000 building project to expand worship and educational space. Within a short time, over 70% of the congregation left WVBC. The decline continued until just recently. Since 2015 the church has stabilized. While numeric growth remains nonexistent, the drop is also no longer experienced. The congregation currently consists of 80 members, Comprised of roughly equal numbers of senior adults and married couples with high school-aged children. The average age of the membership is approximately 55 years old, as calculated by adding all members' ages and dividing by the total number of members.

Before the COVID-19 crisis, only two of the 13 available rooms for Sunday School saw regular use. The co-ed senior adult class meets in the sanctuary due to its proximity to the main entrance and typically has ten in attendance. Similarly, the co-ed adult class usually has six to eight in attendance and utilizes the fellowship hall.

The church's current condition following COVID-19 shutdowns is that many members have returned to participate in worship services, whether they remain in their cars for drive-in worship service or enter the sanctuary to watch the live-streamed drive-in service. Sunday School has only restarted since September 6, 2020, beginning with the youth and early elementary classes. In the following weeks, the adult co-ed class will also resume. As of late spring 2021, the senior Sunday School has renewed meeting. The hesitancy to restart the other classes was due to the class members' high susceptibility to the COVID-19 disease.

WVBC does not accurately reflect the social diversity of the surrounding area regarding race and social and economic status. The church is monoracial, monoethnic and has low economic variety. All members are white, southern and middle class, with significantly conservative views. It seems that this lack of diversity and the resulting lack of empathy is most likely a significant issue in reaching the project community. A further problem in ministering to the project area is preconceived notions by church members who hold a negative view of people impacted by addiction, alcohol abuse and economic challenges.

Previous Outreach Experiences in the Project Area

Over the last several years, the church's outreach ministry efforts have seen less than encouraging results. First and foremost, engagement with the surrounding community has been slightly successful as none of the persons contacted have maintained any relationship with the church. Secondly, this lack of tangible success has left some people in the church feeling disappointed and demoralized. Two ministries that have consistently engaged community members are free meals and the clothing closet/food pantry. However, those who attend these events seldom visit the church for any worship services. When community members visit, it is primarily a single occurrence, and a physical need such as food precipitates the visit.

In summary, the ministry context for this project involves a long-established Southern Baptist church with substantial physical resources but moderate financial means and limited membership. The targeted group for this ministry contrasts significantly from the church congregation in both social and economic demographics. This project intends to equip and send members of WVBC to live out the Great Commission among those who reside in an addiction-impacted area near the church. First and foremost, members must show Christ in action and engage in breaking down barriers by establishing genuine relationships. Secondly, by making the most of those relationships, the members will actively seek opportunities to share the gospel with project area residents through Bible study and personal interactions. Ultimately this project intends to plant discipleship groups within the project area that will focus on seeing people set free from life-controlling issues and addictions

Problem Presented

Discussion among members of WVBC present on a Wednesday evening in late 2019 led to an encouraging moment. When asked what the congregation felt the church needed to be doing regarding ministry to the local community, the immediate answer was “reaching out to alcoholics and drug addicts that live around the church.” Considering the congregation's history relative to the nearby residents and their life issues, hearing this blessed and excited the pastor.

As previously discussed, over the 70 years that WVBC has existed, the church and surrounding community have changed significantly. What were once family homes where mothers and fathers raised their children became rental investments by numerous real estate companies. The demographic composition has transformed from a nuclear family model to homes where single mothers struggle to meet their children's needs. Additionally, some homeless people utilize the exterior church facilities to get out of the cold and weather.

Accompanying these drastic differences is a change not only in demographics but, as previously mentioned, a change in the underlying community culture. The result has been a society that accepts, or at least ignores, the use of addictive substances. Alcohol and drug use are prevalent in the immediate community around WVBC, and the congregation is doing few things to minister to those entrapped by addiction. In summation, the problem is that WVBC in Cookeville, Tennessee, has not adequately addressed the addicted culture in the area near the church.

Purpose Statement

The desperate need is for transformation to occur within both the immediate community and the congregation itself. Considering the local cultural problem of addiction that has developed and intensified over the past 70 years, it is apparent that an effective outreach ministry is needed to aid those living within what would be the “Jerusalem” of WVBC (Acts 1:8).

The work that lies ahead is lengthy and mandates a commitment to the project. Before any engagement in reaching out to the community can begin, the congregation must challenge itself to see those it intends to reach as Christ would view them. First and most importantly, no one is beyond hope. Second, no member of the congregation is exempt from similar struggles and issues. Lastly, the only hope a person has is the life-changing power of Christ. Therefore, this project will focus on discipling the church toward a more focused missional mindset. Once the church is ready and pandemic conditions have abated, implementation will begin for an intentional outreach ministry within the community.

In reaching those in the community, the first period of interaction will establish rapport with those to whom the church is ministering. Simultaneous with establishing credibility and trust, meeting physical needs such as food and clothing will occur. After establishing genuine

relationships, the church can address the problems leading to the cultural propensity toward addicted lifestyles. This thesis project is to address the culture of addiction in the area around WVBC. Further, the intent is to develop an effective outreach ministry, resulting in salvation and life change for those residing in the project area.

Basic Assumptions

Addicts Want to be Free

The most critical assumption for this project is that those addicted to drugs or alcohol innately desire to be free from that addiction and, given appropriate support, will pursue that freedom. As has been previously mentioned, Benz strongly advocates that no one sets out intending to become addicted.⁵ Andy Farmer echoes Benz's sentiment as he speaks to the life of a young girl who knew the risks but felt she was immune to the possibility of addiction.⁶ Farmer shares that Lorraine justified her drinking and smoking by the reasoning that it made her feel good. Her life began to revolve around things associated with her use of alcohol and drugs. She never intended to be standing before a judge and labeled a criminal, not deserving of a free life. However, that is where Lorraine found herself before she finally recognized her need to be free.

Lorraine is a prime example that addiction is not an intended result. Instead, it is the culmination of poor decisions often accompanied by poor coping strategies, among many other influences. While no one wants to be addicted, people still find themselves in that position every day.

Bruce Epperly addresses pastors and the frequent stress and emotional issues that result from poor self-care, but what he discusses can cross just as easily to those caught by addiction.

⁵ Benz, *The Recovery-Minded Church*, 104–5.

⁶ Andy Farmer, *Trapped: Getting Free from People, Patterns and Problems*. Kindle ed., (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2016), Loc 1614.

In a moment of sobriety and clarity, addicts might realize the harm their lifestyle causes themselves and those they love.⁷ The realization of yet another failure can be enough to initiate drug-seeking activity, which perpetuates the scenario day in and day out.⁸ Addiction is a trap, and like any good trap, it effectively inhibits its victims' escape. The reality of shame, fear and guilt work against the addict to countermand any desire for freedom.⁹

Despite the power of the trap or the influence exerted by failure, shame, guilt or any other negatively oriented emotion an addict may experience, there remains the hope for freedom. Previously noted was the fact that many people fall into addiction daily. However, that statement does not communicate the whole reality of addiction because, every day, addicts are engaging in some form of recovery for the first time. While, even as you read this, some are taking the first hit from a crack pipe, others are stepping into their first Alcoholics Anonymous meeting. It can never be forgotten or downplayed that many addicts desire to be clean and free of their addictions. “If the epidemic of addiction in America is a sobering commentary about the state of our collective soul, the recovery movement bears witness . . . that the kingdom of the prodigal God is alive and well, setting the captives free and opening the eyes of the blind.”¹⁰

Addiction Lends Itself to Deception

Another assumption is that pride and distrust inhibit open discussion regarding an addict's genuine need for recovery. It is human nature to present the most positive façade in public, especially among the less acquainted. Sadly, a prominent daily feature among those addicted to

⁷ Bruce Epperly; *A Center in the Cyclone*, Kindle ed., (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2014), 5.

⁸ Mark R. McMinn, *Psychology, Theology and Spirituality in Christian Counseling*, Kindle ed., (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2012), Loc 826.

⁹ Stephen Arterburn, and David Stoop. *Understanding and Loving a Person with Alcohol or Drug Addiction*. (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2018), 53-54.

¹⁰ Benz, *The Recovery-Minded Church*, 161.

drugs and alcohol is deception. Whether an addict is trying to hide his condition from family, friends or strangers, deceit always exists. “The addict/alcoholic doesn't deal reputably with others, and their morality is often compromised. They may have, at one time, had character; it doesn't take very long for the addiction to destroy it.”¹¹ The Apostle John speaks to this when he notes, “The light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed” (John 3:19-20).¹²

The condition of addiction involves giving up so much that most addicts even try to deceive themselves. By denying that they have a problem, addicts attempt to minimize responsibility and simultaneously limit the opportunity for change in their lives. If an addict feels confident that she is not an addict, she will likely decide there is no reason to change.

The Church is not Perfect

Although the members of WVBC desire to reach out and minister to the project population, it would be unwise to assume that they are spiritually or emotionally ready to do that. The presence of spiritual immaturity and world reflecting ideas from church members regarding those to whom the church was ministering resulted in the cessation of specific outreach ministries.

A prime example occurred in late 2016 and revolved around a long-standing ministry. Before the membership collapse in 2005, the church engaged in Community Meals held on the first Wednesday of each month. During the issues of 2000 to 2010, these outreach ministries came to an end. With calling a new interim pastor in 2009, several ladies asked about restarting

¹¹ Arterburn and Stoop, *Understanding and Loving a Person with Alcohol or Drug Addiction*, 86.

¹² Unless otherwise indicated all Scripture citations will be taken from the New King James Version- NKJV (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).

the Community Meals. These were potluck-style events where members would cook and bring various dishes to share during a fellowship meal that was open to the general public. Within five years, these again became laborious, and many participated with the expectation of being appreciated by those attending. Additionally, some saw the people who came to partake in the congregation's outreach as unappreciative and manipulative.

The pastor discussed with several members that expectations for lost people to behave like Christians were simply untenable due to the Holy Spirit's absence in the lives of the lost. However, this counsel fell on deaf ears time and again. Following one challenging evening in 2016, the pastor consulted with the deacons and determined that these meals needed to be stopped, at least for a bit of time, as they created tension between members and guests and prevented an opportunity to demonstrate the love of Christ. With issues like these in mind, it is apparent that equipping the congregation to engage appropriately in local mission-oriented ministries is essential.

Definitions

Addicted Culture

Within every group of people is a unique culture and ingrained in that culture is a method of relating to people internal and external to the group. David Entwistle highlights culture's importance, stating, "None of us can completely rise above our cultural and historical conditioning."¹³ This project aims to bring about cultural changes by seeing both the church and residents of the project area both come to Christ and experience spiritual growth within themselves.

¹³ David N. Entwistle, *Integrative Approaches to Psychology and Christianity: An Introduction to Worldview Issues, Philosophical Foundations and Models of Integration* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2010), 132.

Culture drives our desires, and it dictates how one interacts with others. Culture delineates what is acceptable and what is offensive. However, culture also changes. Albert Mohler proposes that culture often changes quicker than that with which people may be comfortable. What was critically important to one generation may lack attraction when viewed by that generation's children.¹⁴ Culture, while needing to be defined, must also be understood as fluid. The most regular part of life is that everything naturally changes.

Concerning this ministry project, the term “addicted culture” will encompass several traits this project intends to help. The first trait is the isolative nature of the people. Those living in the 7th and Pine area appeared to distrust outsiders during previous interactions and maintained an arm's length relationship. This observed suspicion is possibly due to the residents expecting to experience the widespread prejudices and presumptions regarding those who rely on government assistance programs. Appendices I and L reveal a palpable attitude seen in addicts, “You cannot know me and my issues and probably do not care anyway.”

Second, addicted culture includes a propensity toward substance use and addiction of homeless persons and persons who are poor or challenged. As previously mentioned, addiction and substance abuse are rampant in American society and tend to be more prevalent in lower economic groups.¹⁵ The existence of this condition is not the purpose or purview of this project. It is an assumed situation based on the researcher's personal experience working in social service fields and observations made during interactions with residents of the project area.

Lastly, the term “addicted culture” will account for the people's physical and economic needs to which this project seeks to attend. The reality of constant need drives addicted culture.

¹⁴ Albert Mohler, *Culture Shift: The Battle for the Moral Heart of America*. Reprint edition. (Charlotte, N.C.: Multnomah, 2011), xii–xiii.

¹⁵ Karriker-Jaffe, “Neighborhood Socioeconomic Status and Substance Use by U.S. Adults”, 212-213.

Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs maintains that if people's basic needs remain unfulfilled, they will never achieve security and safety.¹⁶

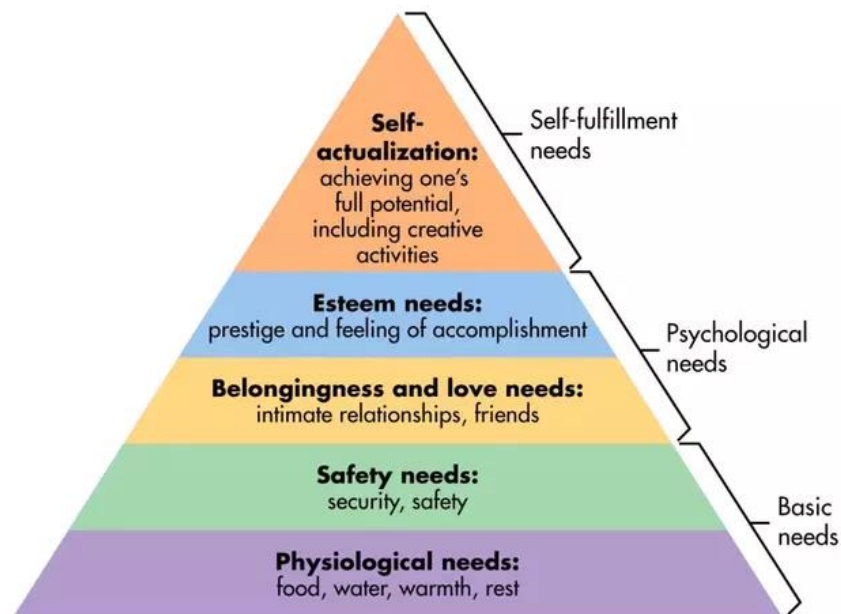


Figure 1: Maslow's Need Pyramid proposes that progression requires achieving a stable source of meeting the previous level's needs.¹⁷

Addicted culture incorporates the dependence on outsiders for basic needs, which leads to a minimized potential for independence. This culture also presents a distrusting mindset, which anticipates outsiders' perceived prejudice with aloofness and emotional distance. Lastly, the primary issues noted within this culture tend to center on need and the emotional, physical and psychological impositions of such a condition.

Addict and Addiction

Farmer succinctly brings to light the reality of the addict. He writes, “If you struggle with addictions, the trap is personal and intense. You may get . . . some temporary reprieve, but you know the tyrant is lurking in the shadows. Today's clean can't wash away yesterday's filth, and it

¹⁶ Abraham. Maslow, “Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs,” *Simply Psychology*. accessed March 28, 2020, <https://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html>.

¹⁷ Ibid.

doesn't guarantee freedom for tomorrow.”¹⁸ Beyond everything else discussed in this thesis project, what mandates reflection and integration is that an addict is a valuable human being with the same potential for success and value as any other. The forthcoming discipleship curriculum will emphasize the critical point that an addict's family loves him as any other person might experience. He costs God the same price as anyone else, the earthly life of Jesus Christ.

While the terms “addict” and “addiction” receive extensive treatment in the literature review, they warrant initial delineation at this point. A critical dispute exists between secular and religious proponents, where one posits addiction as a disease while the other holds it to be the effect of indwelling sin. Defining addiction and understanding it in the context of biblical truth is critical to equipping a congregation to minister in places where addiction is prevalent. More focused treatment of this dispute will occur in the Review of Literature.

Lee describes an addict as one who is in a state of compulsion, obsession or preoccupation with anything that enslaves the person's desires and creates a state of dependence.¹⁹ Lee also asserts that there are numerous assumptions made when one discusses addiction and those afflicted by it.²⁰ Often the first image that enters one's mind when thinking of an addict is culturally driven. In upper-class social circles, young businesspeople may be the quintessential addicts. In more impoverished areas, a less attractive image imposes itself.

In the context of this project, one example stands out for the writer. Late one afternoon, the pastor of WVBC located a young man hiding in the hedge at the church while injecting his left arm with methamphetamine. He is just as human and deserving of respect as any other

¹⁸ Farmer, *Trapped*, Loc 1590.

¹⁹ Jimmy Ray Lee and Dan Strickland, *Living Free: Helping People Discover God's Path to Hope, Faith and Freedom*, 2nd ed. (Chattanooga, TN: Turning Point Ministries, 2008), 8.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

person. He has a father, mother, possibly even siblings and friends. He has hopes and dreams. In all honesty, the only difference between the young addict and the pastor, who found him, is most likely the hope found in a saving relationship with Christ.

While these briefly described images lead to different projections of addiction, they are both accurate representations. Addiction can and does afflict people from every walk of life, and Benz creates a sufficient foundation to propose that no social or economic status immunizes its constituents from addiction.²¹

In summary, to define addict and addiction requires consideration of both the person and the problem. Addiction does not occur without an addicted person. An addict is an intrinsic, eternal value to other people and the God who created her. An addict suffers from psychological and physiological disease characteristics that are products of the person's engagement with things that often become life-controlling issues. In mentioning the life-controlling aspect of addiction, one must note that the addict comes to depend on his life-controlling issue in any number of ways. Physical, psychological, emotional and mental connections make abstinence from the addictive issue significantly complicated. In the simplest of terms, the addict surrenders control, and addiction is what exerts control.

One further caveat is that anything can become a life-controlling issue and lead to some level of similarity to addiction. In this project, the presumptive problem is that of alcohol and drug addiction, and people also suffer from addictions to gambling, pornography, relationships and any litany of issues. Although this project is limited to drug and alcohol abuse and addiction, the hope is that it might prove beneficial in ministering to people with other life-controlling issues.

²¹ Benz, *The Recovery-Minded Church*, 104–5.

Dependence

The concept of dependence also requires being defined. Robert West and Jamie Brown bring a particular point to light. There is a significant overlap in the terms “dependence” and “addiction.” They posit that an understanding of dependency should come from the perspectives of psychological and physical attachment to a substance, activity, person or other life-controlling issues. Dependence is a critical condition for many, and they will experience significant problems if they suddenly cease to use the substances to which they are addicted. The response is known as withdrawal and is the physical or psychological response experienced when an addicted person radically stops using a drug or substance.²² Withdrawal from dependence is potentially severe, and unmanaged physical withdrawal can be life-threatening.

In short, the initial cycle leading to an individual becoming an addict would seem to follow a predictable progression. A person uses a substance, and after the first experimental use, she begins more regular, frequent use of the substance. Following a consistent period of use, the person starts to require increased amounts to maintain what would be considered a state of normality. This requirement for use is called dependence, and it is at this point, the person becomes addicted. While critical to the biological, neurological and physiological processes leading to addiction, dependence remains merely one piece of the addiction issue considering all the intricate parts involved.

Recovery

Arterburn and Stoop contribute considerably to the concept of addiction recovery. They state that an addict who only abstains from using drugs or alcohol has not genuinely addressed

²² Robert West and Jamie Brown. *Theory of Addiction*. 2nd edition. (Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 12.

the central need for internal change and is only one moment away from returning to addiction. This proposal meshes quite nicely with step one of Alcoholics Anonymous, which proffers that an addict is powerless over the issues controlling his life. Additionally, addicts need to recover their lives and all that they have lost.²³ Recovery entails the addict regaining control of his life, not just control of the addiction.

The critical point of recovery is the transformation of behavior, both active and reactive. It is at this point where the biblical principle of sanctification comes into play. In Romans 7, the Apostle Paul speaks about the continuing struggle within a Christian. The remaining sinful nature, the flesh, continues to influence the person's actions and thoughts. Simultaneously, the Holy Spirit, residing in the believer, pulls the person and her lifestyle more toward similarity to the life of Jesus. Paul says, in Romans 7, that although the struggle with the impact of sin does diminish, repercussions may remain until the physical death of the believer. For the addict, the battle with dependence and the desire to continue using her substance of choice begins with difficulty, but as time progresses and the person matures, the struggle ebbs.

Another example comes from Helen Dermatis and Marc Galanter. They note the spiritual and religious (S/R) characteristics of recovering addicts, such as belief in a personal God and church attendance frequency. These traits begin to grow and increase following sobriety; they fall into various facets of the chosen recovery program and can indicate significant risk for setbacks.²⁴

²³ Arterburn and Stoop, “*Understanding and Loving a Person with Alcohol or Drug Addiction*,” Loc 1108–19.

²⁴ Helen Dermatis and Marc Galanter, “The Role of Twelve-Step-Related Spirituality in Addiction Recovery.” *Journal of Religion and Health* 55, no. 2 (2016): 517.

Likewise, Chen speaks to the essential nature of certain spiritual principles in recovery and how deceptiveness in an addicted person might cause them to appear as having recovered when, in fact, they have not. Recovery is not only a program and a destination, but it is also a process. Addicts submit themselves to God and begin being sanctified, as mentioned above, through devotion, prayer and meditation on scripture, ultimately leading to a desire to see others achieve similar freedoms.²⁵ Similarly, Pekka Lund contributes that recovery consists of numerous challenges, including temporary and permanent sobriety, conversion experiences, grace and disgrace.²⁶

Lund's work points to a destination where one can claim victory over addiction and find stable recovery. All four of the storylines presented by Lund result in the individual described reaching a point of maintained, permanent sobriety.²⁷ Each story type examined by Lund varies with where the addict achieves permanent sobriety. In the first story, type change does not occur until the person goes through several conversion experiences. The second type has sobriety coming about in two differing phases. The third story type shows the significant achievement being self-acceptance. Lastly, the fourth type finds a complete, radical, sudden change taking place.²⁸

Consequently, recovery is not a place where a person can sit down and relax. Lund makes this point abundantly clear when stating, "In the majority of cases, a sufficient length of time

²⁵ Gila Chen, "Social Support, Spiritual Program and Addiction Recovery," *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 50, no. 3 (2006): 308.

²⁶ Pekka Lund, "Christianity in Narratives of Recovery from Substance Abuse," *Pastoral Psychology; New York* 65, no. 3 (June 2016): 353 and 358.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 365–68.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 353.

must take place after gaining sobriety for a successful recovery.”²⁹ Hebrews 10:14 reads as follows, “For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.”

Perfection is not something that one can achieve on this side of God's presence. Yet, it is the expected trajectory in a Christ-changed life.

In that manner, recovery is a journey and not necessarily a goal. Despite there being a point for many addicted people to attain sobriety, there is the frequent concern that any relapse could result in them returning to a familiar prison. Therefore, recovering individuals are encouraged to maintain a ready watch on themselves and avoid the various temptations in daily life to return to the use of drugs or alcohol. Sam Louie speaks to this specific point when he writes about attachment models and that “relationships and how people are treated are viewed as the origin of addiction.” He continues by stating that one “can learn to create healthy relationships.”³⁰ In this redeveloped support motif, recovering addicts are not consigned to the “once an addict, always an addict” mantra. Just because a former addict avoids what they were prisoner to does not require them to remain in an addicted or dependent state. This writer would question how a recovered alcoholic with over 20 years of sobriety must be mandatorily still an addict when there is no physical, emotional or psychological dependence on alcohol.

Regarding most other maladies experienced by people, there comes a recovery point where the disease is no longer present. An appendectomy relieves appendicitis and various medications and time alleviate the flu. Conquering cancer is possible with modern medical advances. Yet, it seems that medicine holds that the only thing man suffers, other than the sinful

²⁹ Lund, “Christianity in Narratives of Recovery from Substance Abuse,” 365.

³⁰ Sam Louie, “Once an Addict, Always an Addict.” *Psychology Today*, February 5, 2016. accessed January 21, 2021, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/minority-report/201602/once-addict-always-addict>.

nature that keeps hold of the person permanently, is addiction. A cancer survivor does not proclaim to still suffer from cancer, which is likewise possible for the addict.

Concerned Person

Jimmy Lee readily describes a concerned person as anyone having a vested interest in someone else's life and recovery.³¹ This group might consist of friends, relatives, co-workers, any person whose life is touched and intertwined by the life of an addict. The relationship dynamics often dictate the role a concerned person might play in the life of an addict.

Arterburn and Stoop delve at length into the various positions concerned persons occupy in an addict's life. Two roles stand out, enabler and hero. Enablers are most likely parents or at least closely related individuals. The enabler seeks to protect the addict from external harm by often mitigating the addict's accountability for her actions. Usually, the enabler is motivated out of fear that significant harm is coming upon the addict and the shame that the enabler is somehow to blame for the addict's situation.³²

A second role, described in *Understanding and Loving a Person with Alcohol or Drug Addiction*, is the hero. Often this person is the child of the addict. The hero has become a link to success where the family unit looks to find social justification and a step toward equality.³³ It is the hero who climbed out of the trap set by her family's addiction issues and who succeeded in “making something of themselves.”

³¹ Jimmy Ray Lee, *Concerned Persons: Because We Need Each Other*, (Chattanooga, TN: Turning Point Ministries (2008), 2.

³² Arterburn and Stoop, *Understanding and Loving a Person with Alcohol or Drug Addiction*, Loc. 550-674.

³³ *Ibid.*, Loc 640.

Limitations

Location Accessibility

A significant limitation developed around July 2020 regarding gaining access to a building where interactions between the church and residents could occur and Bible studies could happen. WVBC submitted requests to the local police department, asking permission to utilize a small substation located in the middle of the housing development. The process initially looked promising, but the result was that the police department declined permission, stating that if WVBC could use the building, the department would be obligated to let any other group use the facility. As of this writing, the Cookeville Chief of Police, Randy Evans, has not returned any of the pastor's phone calls to discuss the matter.

An alternative location is a small parking lot that is available for use. After discussions with the Highland Residential Program Director, the church received permission to use that area. Just how this parking area can meet this thesis project's needs is uncertain at this time, but options indeed exist. Perhaps using several popup canopies to provide overhead cover in times of inclement weather would suffice. More prayer and planning are needed to remedy this limitation.

The Willingness of Residents to Interact

As previously mentioned, when discussing culture, there is an inclination within the ministry project population to maintain emotional and relational distance from outsiders. Perhaps the most significant issue faced by this thesis project is the wariness of the project area residents. This limitation is, in fact, a potential point for the failure of the ministry project. If people remain unwilling to interact at more than a superficial level, the possibility of seeing them accept the truth of the gospel and the help offered appears minimal.

The premise of this project is that Christ's model of ministry will provide the best opportunity to overcome this culturally driven suspicion. By initially meeting a person's physical needs, the helper begins creating a relationship foundation for establishing rapport and trust. Increasing trust comes through continued interaction, which intentionally makes a space of emotional safety for the residents and the church member, free of judgment and fully willing to accept those being ministered to as they are. The continued ministry should follow the previously discussed hierarchy of need and build a sense of togetherness and belonging, where trust and loving conversation can exist. The anticipation is that this process of developing credibility could take a few weeks of consistent interaction between the church and the community.

Survey Relatability Between Populations

There is concern regarding the reliability of any results from interviews or surveys, considering the community's apprehension toward outsiders. The project methodology will anticipate this problem by not collecting data directly from this group. Mitigating possible deception will occur by speaking to persons from similar backgrounds who are engaged in or have completed recovery.

Having come from a life of addiction and distrust, these individuals would be in an excellent position to share their experiences and aid the church. Their responses can help further the understanding of defensive mechanisms addicted persons utilize. Likewise, they can inform the means of preparing church members for ministry within the culture. Using information from these people to educate church members on the potential for quickly establishing a trusting, helping relationship should improve.

Resource Availability

WVBC has a small budget with minimal funding for resources needed for this ministry project. The foreseeable resources required for the project's ultimate completion revolve around meeting the community's physical needs through all project phases. Primarily, this should be constrained to groceries. Despite having their rent and utilities provided through housing subsidies, residents tend to be restricted by several issues regarding increasing their income. Many receive disability stipend payments, which give around \$700 a month, and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program payments (food stamps) may provide an additional \$300 in aid to a family.

While direct monetary assistance is beyond the abilities and desires of the church, other opportunities do exist. The church has maintained a long-established clothing closet and food pantry, readily supplied by community and private donations. Presently, there is no foreseeable limit to the church's ability to provide clothing. In contrast, the food pantry could immediately support providing two meals per day for around 20 families of four. Construction recently tripled the storage space in the food pantry. The rapid influx of donations following the Baxter, Tennessee tornadoes on March 3, 2020, inundated many local agencies and organizations, and many sought distribution points for their back stock. WVBC finds itself primed for just such an opportunity.

Delimitations

Geocentric Population

The most significant delimitation for this thesis project is the geographic restriction of the ministry project. There is a federally subsidized housing project in Cookeville, Tennessee, with its eastern border being Pine Street. Pine Street travels north, turns west and continues for

approximately one-tenth of a mile. The western boundary of the community consists of the termination of various roads, forming several cul-de-sacs. Also, Cypress Avenue contributes to the west border. The southern limit of the area is 5th Street.

In total, the land area encompassed by this community is barely one-tenth of a square mile and contains slightly less than one mile of roadway. In this zone, approximately 100 single-family residences fit into 48 buildings.



Figure 2: Ministry Project Area

Thesis Statement

Albert Einstein once said, “The world as we have created it is a process of our thinking. It cannot be changed without changing our thinking.” No better proposition describes the needed impact on the community around WVBC and within the church itself. The addiction-affected culture ultimately results from non-transformed minds in desperate need of salvation and a relationship with Christ. Likewise, WVBC must heed where the Apostle Paul challenges us to grow closer to the person of Christ daily in our thoughts and motivations while concurrently

avoiding entanglement with those held by the world in which we live.³⁴ Change is needed on both fronts but must happen first within the church's response to the call of Christ to evangelize.

Only by understanding the hearts and needs of the lost and seeking to minister to those issues can there be any hope of change. The church's present failure to complete Christ's calling to minister to the world around it only encourages further entrenchment of addictive lifestyles. This Ministry Project proposes that if WVBC in Cookeville, Tennessee, addressed the addicted culture surrounding the church, the results may significantly impact the entire city. Reaching one community and one group of people can provide motivation and hope to connect with others. Additionally, preparing for missional outreach to people trapped by substance abuse and addiction will better equip those church members for outreach to other groups that may be less than appealing to society in general.

³⁴ Romans 12:2.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The literature regarding the impact, treatment and cause of alcohol and drug addiction is a rich vein that delivers its contents to those inclined to explore it. However, there is a chasm in the existing scholarly literature regarding church-based direct outreach ministries to people suffering from addiction. Presumably, this is due to so many of these ministries being grassroots efforts to fit individual local needs at a specific place and time in history. What can be gleaned from the literature relates more to addiction itself, its causes, costs, treatments and extended prognosis relating to more formal medically guided treatment programs. The following pages will review current and past works regarding addiction, the addict's recovery and the church's involvement in ministering to these persons.

The Conundrum of Addiction

Stephen Arterburn and David Stoop demonstrate the long history of conflict over defining addiction when they cite Thomas Trotter, who stated in 1804 that “what was called 'drunkenness' was a disease produced by remote causes and led to disorders in the person's health.”¹ In attempting any ministerial efforts regarding addiction recovery, one of the first issues that require attention is developing a definition of addiction itself. As previously noted, addiction is the problem controlling the life of an addict. Whether that person is addicted to pills, food, television, or a bad relationship is irrelevant. Addiction often results in the addict feeling powerless over her life-controlling issue.

Tim Clinton and Ron Hawkins provide a concise overview of addiction. According to them, addiction is a person's dependence on a substance where he loses the desire to resist the

¹ Arterburn and Stoop, *Understanding and Loving a Person with Alcohol or Drug Addiction*, 289.

cravings for what controls his life. Also, they add that addiction is an everyday struggle to cope with life while simultaneously dealing with the ramifications of one's physical, mental and emotional dependence. The crux is that substance use continues regardless of the negative impacts it creates.² The addict seems to find temporary relief from the physical or psychological battle by surrendering and using addictive substances. Quite often, the failure to win this struggle results in “behavior that is habitual and difficult or seemingly impossible to control.”³ Frequently an addict responds by denying that a problem even exists.⁴ The causes of addiction are numerous and may include “emotional, relational, physical, cognitive, behavioral and spiritual [influences].”⁵

While much material exists regarding medical and peer-based recovery, little exists regarding more locally-oriented recovery ministries. Therefore, attention regarding addiction and the previous applicable work in the field is still warranted.

The Incurable Disease vs. Recoverable Condition Problem

Although many in the addiction recovery field perpetuate the incurable disease model of addiction, it should be problematic for Christians since favoring this view discounts the biblical tenets of personal responsibility and hope for change.⁶ It is this point to which this writer takes exception. The focus will be that addiction is not an incurable disease in the following few lines, as many propose. Despite the view that addiction shows many disease characteristics and

² Tim Clinton and Ron Hawkins, *The Quick Reference Guide to Biblical Counseling*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2009), 19.

³ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁶ Mark Shaw, *The Heart of Addiction*, (Bemidji, MN: Focus Publishing, 2008), Loc. 560.

responds to certain pharmaceuticals, it is not a disease. The idea that addiction is a disease can make recovery seem unattainable, further disempowering the addict.

However, concession must occur that particular diseases and mental/emotional conditions provide certain persons with a propensity to substance use and, ultimately, addiction. When resulting from self-medication, addiction to substances such as methamphetamine, heroin, cocaine and alcohol are, in fact, additional symptoms of a disease and not the disease itself. Especially regarding addiction resulting from self-medication, addressing the underlying issues gives hope that recovery from the addiction may occur.

Perhaps the most glaring issue within the disease model of addiction is the presentation of addiction as incurable and perpetual in the addict's life. Ghadirian and Salehian point to how social and mental issues strongly influence the development and progression of addiction. They describe diseases as having mainly biological influences.⁷ Wayne Hall, et al., reference Leshner's 1997 work, which, although conceding that “drug use leading to addiction was initially voluntary,” continued to advocate proclaiming that addiction is a disease. Supporting their theory, they referred to the biochemical changes observed within the brains of animals when they were addicted to various substances.⁸

David Sack posits that addiction is a disease because it possesses three specific characteristics. First, he states that frequently experienced relapses and behavioral changes indicate disease. He also holds that genetic inclination impacts addiction in the same manner as

⁷ Abdu'l-Missagh Ghadirian and Shadi Salehian, “Is Spirituality Effective in Addiction Recovery and Prevention?” *The Journal of Baha’i Studies* 28, no. 4 (2018):70.

⁸ Wayne Hall, Adrian Carter and Cynthia Forlini, “The Brain Disease Model of Addiction: Is It Supported by the Evidence and Has It Delivered on Its Promises?,” *The Lancet Psychiatry* 2, no. 1 (January 2015): 105.

other medical conditions. Lastly, Sack labels addiction as a disease because the effects of abuse and cravings are treatable through various medications.⁹

The fact that addiction can be treated and managed through pharmaceutical and medical interventions seems to perpetuate the model of addiction as an incurable disease. However, a simple challenge presents that any ingested substance will impact the human body due to natural metabolic actions. For example, if a person consumes excessive amounts of food, they naturally respond by accumulating fat. But obesity itself is not defined as a disease. While this writer readily concedes that diseases and conditions can result in obesity, obesity due to over-indulgence is a reversible condition and not an incurable disease. This concept implicates that addiction, which involves introducing various substances into the human body with accompanying negative impacts, is likewise not an untreatable disease.

Hall, et al., also address that science has identified most neural pathways impacted by addiction, allowing improved treatment. Again, because addiction is treatable like a disease does not necessarily mandate that it is a disease.¹⁰ This issue further adds to the above line of thought. It seems unreasonable to deem any physiological, mental, emotional or psychological condition an illness on the sole ground that modern medicine can provide treatment. This thought continued to absurdity would allow a simple unprovoked headache to be a disease because taking medication can alleviate the discomfort.

Further impacting the credibility of the incurable disease model of addiction is the financial motivation for its proliferation. Again, Hall, et al., are pivotal, as they speak openly

⁹ David Sack, "Addiction Is a Disease and Needs to Be Treated as Such." *New York Times*, February 11, 2014. accessed February 21, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2014/02/10/what-is-addiction/addiction-is-a-disease-and-needs-to-be-treated-as-such>.

¹⁰ Hall, Carter and Forlini, "The Brain Disease Model of Addiction," 105.

regarding this motivation. They state, “Proponents of the BDMA (brain disease model of addiction) have argued that (the model) will help to deliver more effective medical treatments for addiction with the cost covered by health insurance, making treatment more accessible for people with addictions.”¹¹ While the motivation of seeing people benefit from treatment is laudable, there is significant danger in branding these people as incurable for continued financial benefit.

Along with Johnathan Benz, Mark Shaw adds to the conversation by addressing people's compulsion to use addictive substances despite knowing the harm it will cause.¹² For Shaw and Benz, addiction presents itself as a cyclical condition of an individual's choices, often perpetuated by societal influences. This conclusion incorporates the most vexing issue for addicts seeking recovery, that changing themselves is not enough. Recovering addicts often demonstrate a limited ability to resist the urge to use their substance of choice when confronted by the same social pressures experienced before gaining their sobriety.

This diminished capacity for refusal is not due to any disease process as often presented. Instead, it owes its existence to three external influences. First, the substance has a mind-controlling and mood-altering effect that is often initially desirable. The second is the seemingly irresistible power of addiction, which the addict is trying to escape and lastly is the person's continued exposure to unchanged influences.¹³ All three forces work together against the addict.

Looking to alternate positions, if addiction is a condition, to which choice and other pressures have led the addict, there is substantial hope that complete recovery and a productive life are possible. Shaw contributes to this hopefulness, stating addiction viewed as a disease is a

¹¹ Hall, Carter and Forlini, “The Brain Disease Model of Addiction,” 105.

¹² Shaw, *The Heart of Addiction*, 560; Benz, *The Recovery-Minded Church*, 69.

¹³ Arterburn and Stoop, *Understanding and Loving a Person with Alcohol or Drug Addiction*, Loc. 1156.

lie advocated even within the church.¹⁴ Honesty regarding all issues is mandatory to gain headway in the lives and communities impacted by addiction.

Benz advocates that there is no benefit to addicts in labeling their sinful behavior strictly as sin. Instead, he supports that addicts need to understand their sinfulness with the help of the Holy Spirit.¹⁵ While it is true that conviction is a result of a person's submission to the prodding of the Holy Spirit, the totality of scripture reveals that God also uses people to speak truth into others' lives. Benz further proposes that “addiction is a brain disease,” as attested by medical and scientific professionals.¹⁶ In perhaps his most significant leap, Benz objects to any proposal that abstinence may successfully treat addiction. He states that discussing treating addiction by methods incorporating abstinence is not helpful since abstinence is impossible.¹⁷

With Benz's position in mind, a person must be truthful in his relationships in order for his love to be genuine. Defining addiction must take place in complete and loving truth. One of the issues involving relationships with an addict is that people are concerned about hurting the addict's feelings, which results in less than honest evaluations of the problems, therefore incorporating a side-stepping of honest and loving communication.

When a disease prognosis is that a patient has a 20% chance of surviving three years, telling them to expect a full recovery is not beneficial. Yes, there is a 20% chance of surviving three years, but that also means an 80% probability that the person will pass away within the next three years. Similarly, defining addiction as an obligatory condition may create an emotional

¹⁴ Shaw, *The Heart of Addiction*, 397.

¹⁵ Benz, *The Recovery-Minded Church*, 53.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 105.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 106.

state where the person likely submits and sinks deeper into their addictive behavior. Models of addiction as a disease are beneficial only if one hopes that the condition is not incurable.

There are significant issues at stake in determining the root cause of addiction. Some propose addiction is a genetically influenced disease over which the infected person has no control. If that is the case, we should pity the addict as having an incurable illness, which will likely shorten her life. Shaw proposes that no hope exists for the addict because the addiction mandates his nature. This view suggests that an addict's condition is due to no personal responsibility on her part. The condition is genetically predetermined and unavoidable regardless of individual actions. Such a concept, therefore, frees the addict from liability. Taken to the extreme, this line of thought may simultaneously blame God for the person's addiction since God creates all persons with the genetic makeup that will affect each one throughout their life. Therefore, if addiction is an unavoidable genetically determined condition and God created the addict, the natural conclusion would be that God is responsible for her state.

Alternatively, if addiction results from poorly made decisions and actions, possibly coopted with a genetic predisposition for addictive behaviors, the responsibility then at least partly falls to the addict. A biblical worldview holds that God creates each person, yet the sinfulness inherited from Adam pollutes the goodness of that creation (Romans 5:12-21). God then is not responsible for the addict's condition. The sinful nature of humanity and the desire to fill the spiritual emptiness it creates in a person can and often does lead to grasping for solutions and solace in the numbing effects of addictive substances. Yet still, God amazingly provides the means of release from addiction in the salvific results of Christ's sacrifice.¹⁸

¹⁸ Shaw, *The Heart of Addiction*, 575.

Linda Mercadante presents a minor compromise by offering addiction as a “spiritual disease.”¹⁹ Utilizing a theological perspective, Mercadante proposes that the person's separation from God is instrumental in addiction. This proposal requires a focus on both healing and holiness.²⁰ This focus leads many to see addiction no longer as explicitly either a disease or a “failure of willpower (sin).”²¹ Mercadante's stated hope is that her nuance of addiction as a spiritual disease might eliminate the tension between the prevailing views and allow for greater collaboration in treatment models.

Additionally, and leaning toward Benz, she mentions the effect of “genetic determinism” arising from the scientific insistence that genetic predisposition is sufficient to account for a person's addiction. Again, genetic determinism may eliminate personal accountability. As previously noted, being presented with the idea that his addiction is due to genetic determinism can perpetuate the addict's captivity to whatever substance might hold sway over them.²²

In contrast, Bryce Pardo and Peter Reuter comment that, “The addictive personality is no longer an acceptable concept. Instead, the emphasis is on some genetic factors and external factors, such as deprivation, lack of legitimate opportunity and access.”²³ They note that, “The National Institute on Drug Abuse promotes the idea that addiction is a brain disease, yet most users, even frequent users, desist without treatment.”²⁴ Shaw likewise provides considerable opposition to the addiction as a disease model and addresses the idea proposed by many that an

¹⁹ Linda Mercadante, “Sin and Addiction: Conceptual Enemies or Fellow Travelers?,” *Religions* 6, no. 2 (2015), 615, accessed January 20, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel6020614>.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 615.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*, 621.

²³ Bryce Pardo and Peter Reuter, “Narcotics and Drug Abuse,” *Criminology & Public Policy* 17, no. 2 (May 2018), 425, accessed January 20, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-9133.12363>.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 425.

illness has attacked the addict, much like a virus invades and brings sickness. He holds that by interjecting this viral causation into an addict's mentality and coupling it with the incurable disease model, she will naturally feel doomed to battle “this cancer-like illness for the rest of (his/her) lives.” Again, the disease model appears to offer minimal hope of complete permanent recovery for the addict.²⁵

One of the strongest arguments against the incurable disease model comes from Sally Satel and Scott Lilienfeld. Their 2014 work reconsidered data from the observed effects when the US military implemented a zero-tolerance policy for American troops' drug use in Vietnam. The policy mandated that soldiers pass drug screens before being allowed to return home. These observations suggest that addiction is a conquerable state of being instead of an incurable disease. Satel and Lilienfeld report that most soldiers stopped using drugs immediately and were negative on their subsequent drug screens.

Furthermore, once these combat veterans returned home, they reportedly abandoned their use of opiates.²⁶ In later follow-up polling, the same soldiers reported only a 5% relapse after ten months and brief relapses by only 12% in the next three years.²⁷ The contribution of Satel and Lilienfeld's material to this DMIN project relates exclusively to the proposition that there is hope for recovery from addiction. As a retired combat veteran, this writer fully understands the gravity of addiction and dependence within the veteran population, which frequently begins as a means of dealing with the psychological and emotional wounds endured by servicemen and women.

²⁵ Shaw, *The Heart of Addiction*, 415.

²⁶ Sally Sattel and Scott Lilienfeld, “Addiction and the Brain-Disease Fallacy,” *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, (2014), 141.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

Sattel and Lilienfield continue to provide hope as they propose that ceasing to use addictive substances is “the rule, not the exception.”²⁸ In their summation, Sally Sattel and Scott Lilienfield cite the early Epidemiological Catchment Area Studies, which sampled over 19,000 people from numerous Community Mental Health Catchment Areas across the country. Among the population surveyed were persons who were addicted to drugs before age 24. Of these participants, more than half reported no drug-related symptoms in the prior twelve months. Follow-up surveys of this same group, by age 37, found roughly 75% reported no drug symptoms during the previous year.²⁹

When considering the vast chasm between viewing addiction as an incurable disease versus seeing addiction as a spiritual problem for which the addict holds at least some responsibility, congruence will most likely not occur soon regarding addiction’s exact nature. Both sides bring valuable information to the argument. While flawed in the proposal that addiction is not curable, the incurable disease model brings many viable treatment options and significant physiological understanding to bear in the battle against addiction. Similarly, the stance that addiction is only an extension of the fallen, sinful nature fails to recognize people’s idiosyncrasies. Considering that absolutes are infrequent in life, the starkness of both arguments should immediately point anyone desiring to minister to those caught in addiction to seek methods involving compromise.

Addiction Recovery

Moving along in the literature, another topic that deserves attention regards defining and describing recovery from addiction. L. A. Jason, et al., indicates that recovery, as it is

²⁸ Sattel and Lillienfield, “Addiction and the Brain-Disease Fallacy,” 4.

²⁹ Ibid.

understood, involves more than just abstaining from addictive things.³⁰ Jimmy Ray Lee and Dan Strickland add clarity by noting that recovery most often requires an external motivation to one degree or another. They propose that addicts need assistance from others in ascertaining their “blind spots.” Lee and Strickland continue by noting that recovery must precede truthful thinking.³¹

The reality of addiction recovery mandates two seemingly opposed lanes of thought. First is the previously addressed definition of recovery as a process and not necessarily a goal. The second is quantitatively defining when an addict has recovered. Most programs based on the 12-step model present, either directly or indirectly, that an addict can never heal completely and promote the theory that there remains a lifelong recovery process once one attains abstinence. For example, Alcoholics Anonymous’s first step states, “We are powerless over alcohol, and our lives have become unmanageable.” Citing this simple statement in the life of an addict is sufficient to keep the addict in bondage as none of the following eleven steps advocate for absolute freedom from addiction.

Sam Louie addresses this issue in his *Psychology Today* article. By first, pointing out how this idea of perpetual captivity to addiction can result in some people questioning whether they should strive for sobriety. He asks, “Why is it even mentioned if it’s only going to discourage people in recovery?”³² Louie points to the disease model, previously addressed, as the impetus for significant issues in an addict’s potential to recover. He writes that the problem is that this idea communicates that “an addict will always be at the same risk for a relapse as when

³⁰ L. A. Jason, A. A. Mericle, D. L. Polcin and W. L. White, “The Role of Recovery Residences in Promoting Long-Term Addiction Recovery,” *American Journal of Community Psychology* 52, no. 3 (2013): 410, accessed January 15, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-013-9602-6>.

³¹ Lee and Strickland, *Living Free*, 29.

³² Louie, “Once an Addict, Always an Addict.”

he entered treatment.” Louie further points out that noteworthy contributors to success in recovery are the supportive relationships that the addict establishes. These relationships can shore up the addict in a moment when stress and weakness come against him.

William White helps clarify the second concern. He cites numerous sources and summarizes that recovery typically stabilizes four or five years after beginning the process.³³ However, to claim an addicted person is recovered based on the number of days or years of abstinence is to forget the central point that the recovery process involves rebuilding one’s life. Would a person be satisfied to move into an unfinished new home just because he has waited six months? Like building a house, recovery is more about progress than time.

The heart of this project rests on the proposals of Stephen Arterburn, who equates recovery with discipleship.³⁴ Discipleship is the execution of the command of Jesus to His disciples in Matthew 28:20, “teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you.” More mechanically, discipleship is a bidirectional process whereby one who has progressed further in obedience to Christ leads a less developed person. Similarly, the less mature person follows the more spiritually experienced mentor. Discipleship is, by nature, a replicative process. Recovery embodies the same concept that those more advanced in their recovery would mentor those newer to their sobriety, thereby sharing experiences and being a supportive resource. This concept sits squarely with the previous discussion regarding Peer-Based Recovery Support Systems (P-BRSS).

³³ William L. White, “Nonclinical Addiction Recovery Support Services: History, Rationale, Models, Potentials, and Pitfalls,” *Alcoholism Treatment Quarterly* 28, no. 3 (2010): 261, accessed February 20, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07347324.2010.488527>.

³⁴ Arterburn and Stoop, *Understanding and Loving a Person with Alcohol or Drug Addiction*, Loc 1073.

Furthermore, recovery likens itself to discipleship in the inherent need to slow down and become intentional about changing one's surroundings and gaining even a new peer group.³⁵ Additionally, the addict's improved ability to manage previously avoided emotions suggests that the person is advancing in recovery. As observed in the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, the healing process of recovery must incorporate facing pain, shame and distrust. Therefore, recovery demands a letting down of defenses.³⁶

Major Problems with Alcohol and Drug Addiction

Addiction impacts all levels of society, individuals, families, neighborhoods and nations.³⁷ Arterburn and Stoop propose, "Every addiction is all-encompassing."³⁸ In other words, addiction is a problem that impacts the whole person. Addiction involves physical dependence and imposes faulty thought processes whereby the addict will justify his substance use. Likewise, addicts often use drugs to "escape from the frequently self-perpetuated failures and flaws of life," which reveals the emotional realm where addiction finds its most profound hold.³⁹ Most importantly, addiction is a spiritual issue, where an addict worships or devotes himself to his drug of choice.⁴⁰

The issues generated by addiction are disturbing. Jaeggli estimates that, annually, 100,000 Americans die from alcohol-related problems. He further notes that alcohol contributes

³⁵ Arterburn and Stoop, Loc 1149-58.

³⁶ Ibid., Loc 1168.

³⁷ Jason et al., "The Role of Recovery Residences in Promoting Long-Term Addiction Recovery," *American Journal of Community Psychology* 52, no. 3 (2013): 406.

³⁸ Arterburn and Stoop, *Understanding and Loving a Person with Alcohol or Drug Addiction*, 694.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

to 33% of suicides, 50% of homicides, 39% of traffic fatalities, and 48 to 68% of fire deaths.⁴¹

Gene Heyman points to the critical need for recovery assistance when he writes, “A dope fiend is a man in total need of dope. His need knows no limit or control because he would be in a state of total sickness and not in a position to act in any other way. Dope fiends are sick people who cannot act other than they do. A rabid dog cannot choose but to bite.”⁴² While Heyman’s imagery may appear disturbing, the lives of addicts demonstrate his point daily.

Alcohol and drug use are beyond prevalent in modern American society, and accompanying them is an enormous health cost. Jaeggli proposes that alcoholism is the greatest substance-abuse epidemic in America today.” Additionally, he states that statistics show a high percentage of violent crimes involve alcohol.⁴³ Benz estimates that “30% of the population struggle with some form of addiction.”⁴⁴ To these points, Pardo and Reuter contribute, “Many research study findings reveal that drug users are more criminally active when using drugs than when abstinent, no matter how the abstinence is achieved.”⁴⁵ They justifiably conclude that “drug use causes crime....”⁴⁶ The focus must also be on understanding why abstinence is so challenging to attain and maintain. Unlike the hope seen in the returning veterans previously

⁴¹ Randy Jaeggli, *Christians and Alcohol: A Scriptural Case for Abstinence*. (Greenville, SC: JourneyForth, 2014), 121.

⁴² Gene Heyman, *Addiction: A Disorder of Choice*, Kindle ed., (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), Loc 659.

⁴³ Jaeggli, xi.

⁴⁴ Benz, *The Recovery-Minded Church*, 13.

⁴⁵ Pardo and Reuter, “Narcotics and Drug Abuse,” 426

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

mentioned, relapse rates hover between 40 to 60% within the first 90 days following release from treatment.⁴⁷

Additionally, emphasizing the difference in the modern populations studied and the veterans of Vietnam, those considered today frequently return to the same environment they desperately needed to leave, indicating a potential relationship between relapse and societal influences. To emphasize the issue, Jeff Perry confesses,

I realized that I was headed down a path to destruction, so I began a very unsuccessful string of attempts to rid my life of alcohol and other substances. I hated what I had become- Out of control and defeated. I felt that I could not live without it. It hurt to be without it, so I kept coming back for more, always hoping that my life would take a turn for the better and the pain would go away.⁴⁸

Perhaps the best description of the issues that inhibit recovery comes from Benz. He writes about what he refers to as the “Gollum Effect.” An addict is a person who has become so captivated by the life-controlling issue that he morphs into something he was not. The comparison is that an addict resembles the Gollum character from *The Lord of the Rings*. Before being enslaved by his “precious” ring, Gollum was a man and subsequently transformed into an inhuman being.

Similarly, the addict often becomes repulsive and hideous to those observing at a distance. Still, when the gap closes and a connection occurs, it becomes evident that a human soul is trapped and tortured by addiction.⁴⁹ Addicts can lose themselves to the extreme that they may not remember or relate to their life before addiction.

⁴⁷ *Principles of Drug Addiction Treatment: A Research-Based Guide*. 3rd ed. National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2018. Accessed September 6, 2021, <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/principles-drug-addiction-treatment-research-based-guide-third-edition/frequently-asked-questions/how-effective-drug-addiction-treatment>.

⁴⁸ Mike Cleveland and Jeff Perry, *New Wine: A Biblical Approach to Substance Abuse*, (Focus Publishing, 2014), 7.

⁴⁹ Benz, *The Recovery-Minded Church*, 24.

In the same way, heroin addicts describe an intensely pleasurable sensation immediately after injection, which gives momentary relief from agitation and depression. As the addict's use becomes consistent and dependence intensifies, the pleasure falls away, so more and more the addict uses heroin.⁵⁰ What began as a recreational endeavor evolves quickly into an addiction with no escape in sight. The more times an addict uses, the more the addict must use to achieve the same high and ultimately feel normal. A vicious cycle develops as an addict uses more to achieve the same high; he becomes more dependent on his drug of choice. Heyman offers a glimpse into this nightmarish Ferris wheel. One man he spoke with stated, "It's my relaxer, my shot for the day . . . so I can feel normal. Getting high is the norm for me. I just get normal."⁵¹ For this man, heroin no longer provides its highs. His heroin use is now solely to cure the horrible effects of withdrawing from the drug. Heyman inserts his thoughts that, "An addict is someone for whom sobriety is a tenuous and temporary state . . ."⁵²

Recovery Ministries and the Church

Numerous examples of church-based recovery ministries exist, and many find their foundation in the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. At the same time, multiple churches and organizations design recovery ministries for their specific circumstances. In reviewing the various ministries, a pattern might prove applicable to the intended ministry of WVBC.

White discusses Peer-Based Recovery Support Services (P-BRSS), which reflect the overall purpose of a church-based program. P-BRSS finds its foundation in a trifecta of contributing causes. First, peer-based recovery opposes the "professionalization,

⁵⁰ Richard Needle, Elizabeth Lambert and Susan Coyle, "Drug Abuse and Infectious Disease" In *Prevention and Societal Impact of Drug and Alcohol Abuse*, (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 1999), 192-196.

⁵¹ Heyman, *Addiction: A Disorder of Choice*, Loc 702.

⁵² *Ibid.*, Loc 883.

bureaucratization and commercialization of addiction treatment as a social institution.”⁵³ Second, P-BRSS focuses on engaging with addicts before formal treatment, maintaining a relationship during treatment, ensuring the recovering addict connects with community resources for support and follow-up monitoring.⁵⁴ Peer-based services portray a concerted effort to address significant problems seen in the standard professionalized addiction treatment model.

White finds that personal experience and the ability to use it to help others aids in motivating peer-based counselors to increase effectiveness.⁵⁵ A distinct advantage to peer-led ministries is the credibility and empathy that can quickly result from the similarity of experiences. Benz points out that a recovery-minded congregation will look to addicts not as being beneath them but will find ways to relate to shared life experiences.⁵⁶ Christians must go beyond the motif of others and self and arrive at a place where self includes others. The church should recognize that addicts are not an enemy, and instead, they are a mission field ready for the harvest.

Along the same theme of understanding those to whom the church seeks to minister, Benz adds a critical observation that echoes previous thoughts contained in this writing. The primary concern in developing helping relationships with addicts is finding ways to learn from those in recovery and experiencing God’s grace through their lives.⁵⁷ The most critical aspect of the proposed ministry is developing genuine, viable relationships with those the church seeks to

⁵³ White, “Nonclinical Addiction Recovery Support Services: History, Rationale, Models, Potentials, and Pitfalls,” 259.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 269.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 262.

⁵⁶ Benz, *The Recovery-Minded Church*, 55.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 89–90.

reach. Pessimism and distrust are as much part of the addiction-infused culture as the misused and abused substances.

Theological Foundations

Level Ground for Addiction

Benz's observation that no one sets out intending to become an addict continues to resonate with vigor. That fact lays the groundwork for establishing the absolute urgency of reaching those trapped by "life-controlling issues."⁵⁸ The critical issue is that addiction, like sin itself, knows no boundaries, and therefore, rich and poor alike are susceptible and fall victim to addiction. Considering the impetus of God's creation was the introduction of order over chaos, it naturally stands that where disorder now exists, it originates from the removal of God's direct personal relationship resulting from man's initial sin (Genesis 3:15).

Addiction, like sin, afflicts without compunction. All persons may not be addicts, but the reality is that all persons can fall into addiction, given the right stimulus. Jimmy Ray Lee points out that humanity's common denominator is the struggle against one's sinful nature. Pointing to Hebrews 12:1-2, Lee suggests that since sin "so easily ensnares us," the trudge of life is to resist sin's calling. It is this struggle that is the shared quality of every person.⁵⁹ In Romans 3:9, the Apostle Paul reminds Roman believers that the curse of sin falls on the foreign Greeks and Gentiles along with Jews equally. In this, he accounts for the sinfulness of all humanity.

While one might marvel at this equality of opportunity for addiction across vast social chasms, it merely stands to reason, considering Romans 3:23, "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." As far back in scripture as Genesis chapter 4, the scriptural reality is that all

⁵⁸ Lee and Strickland, *Living Free*, 5.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 17-21.

people are sinful and depraved. “So, God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth” (Gen 6:12). The Apostle Paul adds to the argument of the equality of sin in Romans 5:18, as he states that every person is infected with a sinful nature, which resulted from Adam’s disobedience.

Perhaps there is no better example of this level ground for addiction and influence than Noah and his public disgrace. When scripture introduces Noah in Genesis 6:8, the Bible clearly shows that Noah is starkly different from his contemporaries. Noah “found grace in the eyes of the Lord.” Scripture describes him as one who worshipped, feared and revered God. The Lord carries Noah and his family through the next 100 years of constructing the ark of their deliverance. God keeps Noah in His remembrance and provides for safety while the waters cover the planet.⁶⁰

Once things subside, though, Noah engages in problematic behavior. Genesis 9 describes Noah’s life after the flood and records that he became a farmer, planted a vineyard, made wine and got so drunk that he was unaware he had lain naked for all to see. While there is no scriptural evidence that Noah became dependent or addicted to his libations, his fall into drunkenness does support the assertion that even the most devout among humankind is subject to the grasp of over-indulgence. Any person is susceptible to the siren’s call of life-controlling substances at any point.

In similar tones, scripture repeatedly echoes God’s caution regarding the use of substances and the submission to worldly things along with their potential for controlling the individual. Jaeggli points out consistently in his work that the consumption of modern alcohol, when compared contextually with the consumption of fermented drinks in scripture, cannot stand

⁶⁰ Genesis 8:1.

the litmus test of producing holiness in the believer.⁶¹ Jaeggli examines not just the consumed beverages but also the cultural context where the consumption occurs. He argues that the scriptural call against drunkenness should equate to modern Christians practicing abstinence. Similarly, scripture consistently admonishes the use of any intoxicating substance either through explicit condemnation or the demonstration that such use does not bring about godliness in the believer.

The necessary point is that since people are sinful in their very nature (Romans 3:10-18; 3:21-23), all human beings are prone to moral, physical, emotional and numerous other types of flaws. Perhaps one issue is the presumed moral judgment when including sin in the conversation regarding addiction. Mark McMinn defines sin as an absence of obedience to God's will, which incorporates both thought and action, but is an inner nature that, at times, resembles perpetuated illness.⁶² The failure in decoding if addiction is sin or sickness is in recognizing that it is, in fact, both. Neither side is gaining ground in the battle by insisting that theirs is the only accurate answer. Interestingly, the realization of addiction's dual nature, as both sin and sickness, seems limited to those who view the addict as intrinsically valuable and worthy of the same love that God commands to all humankind (Rom 5:8).

Level Ground for Grace

A common saying around churches is that "the ground is level at the foot of the cross." The inference from this is the equality with which God views every person He has created. Job cries out for equal mercy when in Job 31:15, he exclaims, "Did not He who made me in the womb make them? Did not the same One fashion us in the womb?" Likewise, God addresses

⁶¹ Jaeggli, *Christians and Alcohol: A Scriptural Case for Abstinence*, Loc 2140.

⁶² McMinn, *Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling*, Loc 2549–52.

Jeremiah, stating, “Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you. . . .”⁶³ Most likely, the best example of God’s universal love and provision for man is in the words of Christ, “He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matt. 5:45).

The central point of the Bible is that God desires for all humanity to witness Him and to come to know Him. God chose to have a unique relationship with the descendants of a specific man, Abraham. However, God intended to use this special relationship to reveal Himself to other people groups with whom the Israelites would interact and not set the Jews apart as better than other groups. Again, the single plotline that runs from Genesis to Revelation is that God loves and desires a relationship with humanity. His desire is not just for certain men but rather for all humanity, for all who will call on the name of Jesus Christ (Rom 10:13).

Scripture is adamant that God does not desire the condemnation of people. To this point, the Apostle Peter writes, “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead, he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”⁶⁴ A point that warrants inclusion is that God’s design is for man to have an eternal relationship with Him, as seen in the initial chapters of Scripture. This relationship would have presumably continued had it not been for Adam’s initiation of sin, which brought about the fall and the curse of Genesis 3.

Perhaps the most significant commentary regarding the inclusiveness of God’s message comes from the lips of Jesus Christ in John chapter 3. “Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in Him.”⁶⁵ John’s continuing commentary removes any doubt about God’s intention to save

⁶³ Jeremiah 1:5.

⁶⁴ 2 Peter 3:9, NIV.

⁶⁵ John 3:14-15.

everyone who will place faith in Christ. Verses 16 through 18 present that regardless of man being born in a sinful and condemned state, apart from Christ and desperately needing repentance and reconciliation, God showed His love by sending Jesus to die for humanity's sins. Further, the name and person of Jesus Christ is the proverbial line in the sand. Faith in Him, resulting in salvation, is freely available to all through the grace God has given (Eph. 2: 8-10). Condemnation, the natural state of man, remains on everyone who refuses to surrender in faith to Christ (John 3:16-20).

Redemption is Available to All and is Affected upon All who Believe

With the above facts firmly established in God's Word, one cannot deny that God has opened His mercy and made it available to everyone through the grace found in the person, sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus. Likewise, the all-inclusiveness of the gospel is that salvation is offered even to the addict. A common misnomer in society is that specific individuals have exceeded the limits of God's forgiveness. For human beings, the tendency is to view others while considering oneself as better, and this personal judgment of others as better or worse finds no biblical foundation.

As flawed, fatally sinful beings, humanity is not in a position to determine who is or is not worthy of salvation. Scripture shows that every person is, in fact, not worthy. Romans 3:10-12 brings clarity to the issue as Paul cites the Psalms, "There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one." Continuing along this vein is Romans 3:22-23, "For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." The complete infiltration of sinfulness into every person's heart came from the temptation and the subsequently fallen nature that subverted Adam. Romans 5:12 points to

this fact, “Just as through one man sin entered the world and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.”

From Adam's fall in Genesis 3, humanity has become infected with the terminal illness of sinfulness. There has been only one person in the entirety of history who did not deal with this horrible condition, Jesus Christ. Genesis 3:15 records God's words to the serpent as God dealt with the three players in the infiltration of sin into creation, Adam, Eve and Satan. God said prophetically, “And I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.” In Genesis 3, the serpent is understood as Satan considering the curse pointing to his destruction along with Revelation 12:9 and 20:2 which specifically refer to Satan as “the serpent of old.”

An interesting point that must come forward here involves the complete context of the various attacks mentioned above. Lewis points to the variance between the superior and inferior regarding the parts under attack, which are “The (head) superior part ... his heel, the inferior part.”⁶⁶ In pointing to the contrast, Lewis shows that the Seed delivers a more severe wound upon the serpent, and the inference is that the bruising of the head results in destruction. In contrast, the bruising of the heel, while significant, is a recoverable wound. In other words, with Christ bruising Satan's head, Jesus kills the influence Satan has against humankind and establishes the possibility of freedom for them from sinfulness and the separation from God associated with the inherent sinful heart from which each one suffers.

As one reads scripture, it becomes apparent that Jesus was never a second choice or an alternative plan. Instead, God's plan for Satan's defeat and humanity's liberation was in Jesus

⁶⁶ H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., *Genesis*, The Pulpit Commentary (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 66.

from before the beginning of time. Millard Erickson speaks extensively about the intent and purpose of God. He writes, “God’s plan is from all eternity... the psalmist spoke of God’s having planned all of our days before there were any of them and that Isaiah spoke of God’s having planned it long ago.”⁶⁷ Man’s redemption through Christ was God’s intention from the beginning. God’s creation was perfect, but Adam chose to disobey the single command God had issued due to Satan's influence. It was here that the rebellious and disobedient heart came to exist. However, the plan had always been for Jesus to provide a way to salvation.

With these points in mind, a return is necessary to the question, can an addict be saved. The answer itself hangs on another question regarding God’s plan for salvation. That being, is there some sin that man can commit that is unforgivable? On initial examination, scripture seems to indicate that there is, in fact, an unpardonable sin. In chapter 12 of his Gospel, the Apostle Matthew writes that Christ stated, “Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come” (Matt 12:31-32). Likewise, Mark and Luke reflect similar comments by Jesus in Mark 3:28-30 and Luke 12:10.

When one considers this passage, it appears that a particular sin exists, which renders a person incapable of redemption. Exploring this question is critical as it bears significant weight on the condition of the addict. The natural first step in this examination is determining whom God intends to save through His redemptive plan. John 3:16 is a well-known verse and speaks right to this question, “For God so loved the world that He sent His one and only Son, that

⁶⁷ Millard Erickson. *Christian Theology*. Kindle ed., (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2013), 317–36.

whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” The Greek word *κοσμος* is translated as “world” and holds greater importance than might be initially perceived. William Mounce provides insight: “Even with the sense of ‘world,’ there are a number of nuances within this idea, *κοσμος* indicates the created universe (Acts 17:24), yet at other times, the sphere of human life and humanity itself (Matt. 4:8; Mark 8:36; John 3:19; 2 Cor. 5:19).”⁶⁸ *Κοσμος* then in John 3:16 would refer to the latter as the context is clearly dealing with persons and not merely the created things. In referring to people, John records the words of Jesus as being inclusive of all humanity.

Examining the second issue in John 3:16 would clarify the statement, “whoever believes in Him.” Frederick Danker points out that “whoever” must be understood as all of humanity. He defines this idea as “totality with focus on its components, each, every and any.”⁶⁹ Therefore, a simple paraphrase reveals the nuances, “For God so loved all of humanity that He sent Jesus Christ so that anyone who believes in Him will not perish but will have eternal life.” The revelation is considerable. God has made way for humanity's salvation from its sinful state, and this salvation becomes active in the life of everyone who believes in Jesus.

Perhaps the weightiest discovery in John 3:16 is not that God desires to redeem people but that He desires to save all people. 2 Peter 3:9 (NIV) was cited and can bring considerable light to the present discussion. “The Lord is not slow . . . he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” This verse answers the critical question about exactly which people God wants to save. Simply stated, He desires the salvation of

⁶⁸ William Mounce, *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 1194.

⁶⁹ Frederick Danker, ed. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 782.

everyone. Coupled with the discussion of John 3:16, the conclusion must be that God desires a personal relationship with everyone who has ever lived and will ever live. He made way for that to happen through Jesus of Nazareth. However, scripture is also clear that while salvation is available, it is not automatic. 1 Corinthians 2:14 points out the limitation imposed on the natural man because of his sinful condition. “But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them because they are spiritually discerned.”

John 3:17-18 reveals that the default condition of man, after the fall, is one of condemnation. “For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned, but he who does not believe is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” Every person is born into condemnation because of the natural condition that they “(have) not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God.” Acts 4:12 adds to this discussion stating, “There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” Scripture is adamant that reconciliation between God and man happens only through Jesus. Paul says that a person can do nothing, which would obligate God to save him (Ephesians 2:8-10). As previously established, God has done everything needed for redemption because humanity could never accomplish it for itself. Humankind is unpardonable from birth and is sinful at its very core. The natural state of man is one of condemnation, and the result of faith in Christ is to be set free from that condition.

By eliminating people’s ability to achieve their salvation, redemption thus becomes dependent on Jesus, who alone can produce God’s mandated grace and faith (Eph 2:8-10). Therefore, addressing the previously mentioned irredeemable sin must occur from this

soteriological perspective. How can there be an irredeemable sin if salvation is by grace through faith? It would stand that such a sin would exclude its perpetrator from a position to receive God's grace.

According to John's previously discussed commentary on the words of Jesus in John 3:17-19, a person not accepting Jesus Christ as God's Messiah leaves that one in a natural, condemned state. While blasphemy is generally considered an outward gross act of cursing or speaking against someone or something, it appears that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit should also include the silent refusal to believe that God sent His Son to die for the sins of humanity. The unpardonable sin then entails remaining in the natural sinful condition that condemns a person from birth. Therefore, refusing to receive God's offered grace is to blaspheme against God's Holy Spirit by stating, in one's heart, that God is a liar and therefore His Word is not worth being considered and followed. In short, the only unpardonable sin is the blatant refusal to accept Christ as Lord and Savior and to surrender one's life to Him.

Freedom in Christ

Freedom from addiction and complete recovery is achievable. When Christ sets an addict free from the bondage of their addiction, that person is no longer an addict enslaved to her habitual, compulsive behavior. She is liberated and empowered to live in the continuing sanctification of her submission to Christ. Benz writes the perfect conclusory statement, "Addiction recovery is a one-of-a-kind opportunity for a whole community of wayward children to be transformed by the grace of a wildly-in-love-with-you God."⁷⁰

A former addict who has found freedom in the salvation Christ offers has received deliverance from his addiction. Yet, like every other sinful thought or behavior, those addictive

⁷⁰ Benz, *The Recovery-Minded Church*, 12.

desires must come under captivity (2 Cor 10:5). As previously mentioned, the process of recovery is not a place where a person can sit down and relax. The author of Hebrews discusses God's justification of Christians, "For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified."⁷¹ Perfection is not something that one can achieve on this side of the glorification of God's presence. In that manner, recovery is a process, as much as a goal. Sanctification includes conquering the inclination toward addiction and sin, and in that alone is a process that will continue to the day an addict breathes his last breath. However, there is a stark contrast to the disease model mentioned previously. In Christ, a person can find victory over sin and addiction, but as Paul speaks in Romans chapter 7, sanctification, or living in that victory, is a continual process.

Conquering addiction must happen through the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit. When an addict places faith in Christ, she gains the spiritual victory which God has promised. The mantra of once an addict, always an addict, implies that while Christ's sacrifice was sufficient to forgive all sin and redeem all people who surrender in faith, it was not adequate to deliver the alcoholic or the addict. Such a stand is dangerous, as it robs Christ of His proclaimed power in our lives and seeks to make God a liar. Recovery is just as possible as the redemption that must precede it.

A Labor of Love

God's desire is for the salvation of humankind. Therefore, the next logical item to address is how He intends to inform people of His plan and the hope it holds. Most would appropriately look to Matthew 28:18-20 and the Great Commission, with Jesus commanding His followers to

⁷¹ Larry Crabb, *Effective Biblical Counseling: A Model for Helping Caring Christians Become Capable Counselors*, Kindle ed., (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 566.

go into all the world and to share the message of God's mercy. Likewise, Acts 1:8 assigns Christians to evangelize the people available to them both near and far. Peter also issues a command that speaks powerfully to ministering to those caught in addiction. 1 Peter 3:15 reads, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." Peter's intent is not to rebuke and berate people regarding their sins, rather he promotes that addressing sin in love is preferred. However, Peter talks about lost people seeing the hope of eternal life and a relationship with Christ in God's people. Just as God intended for Israel to demonstrate to those around them, believers are to show the hope of Jesus Christ.

Keeping Peter in mind, the apparent issue then is location. A traditional thought in church circles is that people must leave where they are comfortable and come to the church for salvation. Whether coming to the building on Sunday morning or to another ministry opportunity, the requirement is that they must come to receive salvation. When Peter stated that lost persons should see the hope in us, he unmistakably had the methods of Jesus Christ in mind. Based on the accounts of His methods, Christ's approach did not mandate people to come physically to Him. Christ broke down the barrier of people leaving where they are content. He went to them.

No more vividly is this concept observed than in John chapter 4 with a broken woman's story and her mid-day trip to get water. The critical nature of Jesus going to people comes out in verse four, where a seemingly insignificant yet critically important commentary statement occurs, "But He needed to go through Samaria." Charles Swindoll explains that these seven words would have been a severe insult to any Jewish reader. There was significant racial tension between Jews and Samaritans to the point that, "to avoid 'contamination,' most Jews traveling

between Galilee and Judea chose to . . . go around Samaria to the east rather than journey straight through. So, to say, ‘It was necessary to pass through Samaria,’ suggests some need other than geographical.”⁷² Scripture reveals this need to go to Samaria was a God-ordained appointment with an adulterous woman who could not participate in her community’s social life because of her sin.

Like this woman, numerous persons are hiding from society and God. They think their sin has made them irredeemable. As discussed previously, the distrusting nature of the group to whom this project seeks to minister is evidence of the same circumstances affecting the Samaritan adulteress. Often, it is an exercise in futility to berate someone regarding their flaws and failures. The intimate awareness of their issues, coupled with the fear and assumption of society’s perceptions, says internally to addicted persons that they are unfit, unworthy and unwelcome. However, the actions of Christ are the answer to reaching these sin entrenched souls.

He intentionally went to find people desperate for healing and redemption, even if these were not their immediate priorities. He led a ragtag group of social outcasts into Samaria, the land of social outcasts, to minister to a social outcast. Interestingly, this sinful Samaritan woman is the first individual to whom Jesus explicitly reveals Himself in the fullness of His nature and mission as Messiah (John 4:25-26). Time and time again, Christ went to those He sought to save. At no point did He establish operations in the temple or synagogue and insist that the lost make the first move and come to Him.

Jesus’ ministry model does not appear in the existing Recovery Ministries of Putnam County, Tennessee, as none of the groups intentionally go to the communities where addiction is

⁷² Charles Swindoll, *Insights on John*, Olive Tree ed. (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House), John 4:4.

rampant. By following the theological foundations seen in the ministry of Jesus Christ, this thesis project intends to prepare the church to go to the “Samaria” closest to WVBC with the express intent of loving, ministering, meeting needs and being honest about the hope of Jesus Christ.

Theoretical Foundations

The presumptive note for this thesis project is that by following the example of Christ, members of WVBC can effectively engage those persons trapped within the confines of an addiction-impacted culture. Utilizing direct ministry through meeting physical needs and going to those the project desires to reach should minister more effectively to those persons. There is no assumption that this project is exclusive and novel. However, this writer found no literature that deals specifically with initiating recovery ministries through personal contact between church members and those who live where the interaction occurs. As explained in greater detail below, the critical point is following the model of Christ in His ministry, as He intentionally went to those He intended to reach.

Unlike other recovery ministries, this thesis project focuses on the primary method and location of contact between the church and those they seek to reach. All recorded encounters in scripture where Christ ministers to individuals and communities begin with Him in those communities where the people live. As previously discussed, John 4 shows Jesus intentionally going to Samaria, where He ministers to an adulterous woman and, eventually, Sychar’s entire population (John 4:1-42). Mark chapter 5 describes Christ arriving in the land of the Gadarenes where He encounters a man possessed by demons and immediately exorcises them from the man who then sits in conversation with Jesus in his right mind (Mark 5:1-20). This project’s foundational thought is that by initiating contact and ministry where the people live, there will be the potential for significant ministerial impact that has previously not occurred. The hope is that

following Jesus' example and meeting people where they are trusting relationships will develop, leading to people coming to faith in Christ and forming discipleship-oriented study groups to focus on the freedom Christ brings to those who follow Him.

The failure of prior ministry programs to make robust relational connections has necessitated rethinking how those programs functioned. Typically, the efforts of WVBC involved canvassing the project area with invitations to various functions such as cookouts or Vacation Bible Schools. Participation was encouraging during the events, yet follow-up ministry efforts failed to result in people participating in more structured church events. As previously mentioned, this project's fundamental assumption is that moving the church's point of connection into the community will result in more relational links to the people.

While logistics still need to be worked out regarding how the church can establish a presence in the community, the necessity is that WVBC consistently should be ministering and available, but not enabling, to those living in the project area. By taking the repeated example of Christ seriously and going to those needing the gospel, WVBC hopes to break down the isolative barriers and establish safe, trusting relationships where loving and truthful conversations about addiction, sin and redemption may occur.

Along these lines is the counseling concept of building rapport with people. Nearly all texts dealing with biblical or pastoral counseling mechanics address the critical point of rapport or relationship building between counselor and counselee.⁷³ Larry Crabb points out, "Without establishing a rapport and relationship in which genuine acceptance is communicated, authoritarian correction will produce either rebellion or pressured conformity."⁷⁴

⁷³ Clinton and Hawkins, *The Quick Reference Guide to Biblical Counseling*, 216; Crabb, *Effective Biblical Counseling*, Loc. 567.

⁷⁴ Crabb, *Effective Biblical Counseling*, Loc. 567.

Frank Dattilio and Arthur Freeman give a straightforward introduction to establishing a helping relationship between individuals.

The first stage is the development of a relationship with the patient and a building of rapport. This also follows in line with the cognitive model's notion of collaboration. The patient must feel comfortable enough to allow a free flow of information about the crisis in which he/she is currently involved. The therapist's behavior is instrumental in developing this rapport. The therapist has to be able to convey a nonjudgmental attitude to the patient and a feeling of interest and concern in the patient's problem.⁷⁵

It is that nonjudgmental mindset that this researcher believes will be critical. As previously advocated, the model of Christ is essential to meeting the spiritual needs of addicted persons. Returning to John 4, Jesus never offers critique or commentary on the Samaritan woman's domestic situation. Likewise, in John 8:10-11, Jesus asks a woman caught in the act of adultery, "'Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?' She said, 'No one, Lord.' And Jesus said to her, 'Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.'" If ever there was a place for harsh rebuke, it is here. This woman stands face to face with the Son of God and is guilty of violating the Father's seventh commandment in Exodus 20:14. However, what the woman receives is not severe judgment and harsh reproach. She experiences grace and love. Notice that Jesus does not excuse or allow the woman's sin. He addresses it, but He does not destroy her emotionally and instead opens doors for further ministry.

As WVBC prepares to minister to those who are addicted and whose lives are in turmoil, the first thing that must be dealt with internally is what Paul speaks to as he stated "neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers . . . will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed . . . in the name of the Lord Jesus."⁷⁶ As Christians minister,

⁷⁵ Frank Dattilio and Arthur Freeman, *Cognitive-Behavioral Strategies in Crisis Intervention*, 11–12.

⁷⁶ 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

it must always be with the mind and heart set that the only difference between themselves and those they seek to aid is the applied grace of God to their lives.

Crabb writes about the needed approach in establishing a helping relationship. He states, “Rebuke and confrontation have a real and often necessary place in counseling but must always occur in the context of true acceptance.”⁷⁷ He notes that any relationship that immediately focuses on criticizing a person's present condition will never allow cooperation from the one needing help. While it is presently uncertain, this researcher believes that the pending survey results will indicate that persons in an addicted culture expect outsiders to look down on them. They are, therefore, naturally emotionally distant and aloof. Breaking through these defenses mandates building rapport and helping relationships through genuinely caring about the person needing assistance.

This concept of meeting people where they are melds incredibly well with the previous discussion of level ground at the foot of the cross. The one real common point within humanity is the sinful nature and condition with which people are born and their inherent need for God. Believers must remember that except for God’s grace and mercy, they would be in the same spiritual state as the addict across the street.

⁷⁷ Crabb, *Effective Biblical Counseling*, Loc. 566.

Chapter 3

Methodology

In defining the proposed methodology for this project, identifying the end state is paramount. As stated in the thesis, if WVBC addressed the addicted culture in the church's vicinity, the results may significantly impact the entire city. This project focuses on reaching a point where WVBC is involved in a productive outreach ministry within the project area. Reaching a point of fruitful ministry mandates a multiphase model. As stated earlier, this current project will address the first phase, preparing the West View Baptist Church congregation to minister to those within the groups and areas of concern.

Preparing the Congregation

The spiritual maturity issue at WVBC, discussed under Assumptions, deserves further coverage as the church's spiritual condition is intricately tied to this project's potential to succeed or fail. A survey tool, Appendix C, was developed and administered among the members of West View Baptist and was made available to other local Southern Baptist Churches. Its results, Appendix D, will aid in drafting a curriculum to prepare the church for the missional outreach intended as the ultimate goal of this project and even beyond this writing.

That was Then; This is Now

A substantial part of preparing the congregation must address the church's changes over the years. A large part of the congregation's difficulty revolves around the disappointment experienced over a decade ago when most members left during, or immediately following, a significant building expansion project. Meaningful friendships were lost when one family would decide to move to another place of worship and seemingly “abandon” those they had for years

called family. This hurt has perpetuated for decades, and only in the last five years has the loss of members stopped with a slight increase beginning to occur.

A recurrent theme in the sermons of 2020 has been, “That was Then; This is Now.” In these, the past finds a proper context revealing that our perspective should not focus on the previous challenges of WVBC but on where God is leading today. Allowing the still open emotional wounds to air out and encouraging confession, both internally and to those toward whom a member may hold animosity, the church is moving slowly into a new pasture.

My Brother is not My Enemy

As mentioned above, there has been discord between some church members and a few attendees of its outreach ministries. This division presents a second needed emphasis within the teaching and preaching ministry, and within this project’s ultimate curriculum. It is the absolute responsibility of believers to love each other (John 13:35) and the lost by clearly demonstrating the hope of Christ (1 Peter 3:15).

The church patently is obligated to engage in missional outreach. Jesus defines the church's purpose as preaching the gospel and discipling those who respond to it in faith (Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 13:10, John 17:18-23). In Acts 1:8, Christ defines the progression of gospel outreach as being from the near to the distant. He tells the believers in Jerusalem to preach first in Jerusalem and then progress to the earth's outermost parts.

With that in mind, WVBC should first minister internally, ensuring spiritual maturity within the congregation (Prov 27:17, Eph 4:12-16) and then to the neighborhoods surrounding the church (Matt 28:18-20). These communities may hold presently unknown brothers and sisters in Christ to whom the congregation can minister. The urgency that propels this ministry project

is created by knowing that people near WVBC are dying apart from Christ. Biblically, the church must reach out to those people.

Intervention Design

The Difference is in the Details

There have been multiple mission efforts by WVBC to reach the residents of the project area. Likewise, the subsequent lack of those ministries to achieve the desired result of seeing lives changed for Christ weighs heavily on the church's membership, as demonstrated during the Wednesday night meeting discussed previously. For years, this writer has held that the demonstration of insanity is doing the same thing repeatedly while expecting a different result. Therefore, it would seem prudent to stop repeating the same process and look for a better way.

Asking the Questions

One consistent point of every outreach ministry at WVBC has been the call for people to come to the church to participate in an event. A perfect example is the invitation issued every year for people to bring their children to Vacation Bible School. Another is the invitation to come to the church for a cookout or to receive clothing or food. The hidden message is that their location is insufficient, and they need to go to another place.

Christ never mandated people to come to where He was. Instead, His ministry centered on going to where they were. Yes, He did call a select few to follow Him and learn from Him beyond the local context but, His ministry's foundation was in going. Perhaps the best example is in the fact that He came to earth. He descended from heaven, assumed humanity's limitations, and met the world spiritually and physically to minister. Considering this, perhaps the problem has not been the events but rather the stigma created by requiring people to leave where they feel safe and enter an alien context, all in the name of helping them.

The cultural gap between the members of WVBC and the residents in the project area to be overcome will require a level of understanding presently not in place. It will be impossible to seek information from those the project desires to reach due to the distance present in previous attempts at ministering.

The closest population that could offer the needed insight would be people from similar circumstances and cultures that are willing to minister to other people with related issues. As an aboriginal tribe member might serve as a guide or translator for early missionaries, these persons could provide the needed insight to help WVBC members learn more about those they seek to reach. One such group, the residents of Adult and Teen Challenge of the Upper Cumberland, are women engaged in personal recovery from addiction, and WVBC has a current working relationship with this program. The second source of information regarding cultural insights into the world of substance abuse and addiction is Freedom Ministries, a group of men who meet weekly to support each other in their recovery and sobriety. The hope is that insight and understanding instrumental to the project might be gained by connecting with and seeking these groups' insights.

Determining the Best Course

Following the administration of surveys, interviews, and meetings with the groups mentioned, planning can occur to consider all knowledge gained from those interactions, which will hopefully prepare WVBC for initial productive contact with people living in the project area. Another critical point in this planning phase is that input must come from as many persons as possible with a vested interest in the ministry project's success. These would include the executive director and leadership of Adult and Teen Challenge, the director of the local rescue mission, pastors of local churches with currently active recovery ministries and specific local

community members. In seeking input from a vast array of groups, the intent is to avoid previously made mistakes and implement learned best practices.

Implementation of the Intervention Design

Going to Jerusalem

While much of the planning for this prospectus occurs with a marked understanding already in place, at this point, planning must be extensively theoretical and hypothetical. One specific thing is that there will be a means of initial contact and outreach from church members within the project area to begin initiating conversations and working to establish relationships in the community. Through those relationships, the intention is to create opportunities to share the gospel and make the hope of Christ in action observable within those church members who are part of the ministry program.

Hopefully, the initial contacts will be block-party-type events in the project area. The intention is to move as quickly as possible to a point where more structured interactions centered on Bible study and conversation can occur. Through these personal relationships and times of sharing the gospel, the intention is to see people experience God's grace and salvation. Through continued contact with and discipleship among residents in the project area, the hope is to create an active recovery ministry in the project area.

Chapter 4

Results

Survey Results from Appendix C: Church Member Surveys

Twenty-one respondents participated in the survey, and 17 of those answered all questions in the survey. Of those completing the tool, 15 indicated attending an evangelical church, while two persons did not. For clarity, the survey defined the term evangelical church as one “that stresses the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ, personal conversion experiences, Scripture as the sole basis for faith and active evangelism.”

A concerning result from the survey was that nearly 25% of respondents believe there is a sin so egregious that God cannot or will not offer forgiveness. Chapter 2 of this writing addressed this concern at length. Yet, an explanation of its inclusion within the curriculum bears mentioning again at this juncture.

In the definition of evangelicalism above, a critical note is that God is wholly willing and desires to minister grace, mercy and forgiveness upon all who come to Christ in faith. Romans 10:13 is vibrantly clear, “For ‘whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.’” Christians stepping into any mission field must know unequivocally that God alone is the One who forgives. The church's role is by no means to determine anyone's state of salvation, as that territory belongs solely to the Trinity and the individual's response to the gospel. The church's role is to follow the command of Christ in Matthew 28:18-20 and allow the Holy Spirit, the Son and the Father to accomplish their part as the gospel is declared and shines light into darkened hearts. God ministers His grace and mercy in ways that humanity can never understand. As dealt with earlier in this writing, the only sin beyond forgiveness is the insistence of unbelief. When a

person submits to Christ, calls on God for His mercy and grace, and surrenders their life to Him, that person receives forgiveness in its totality.

Reassuringly, all respondents stated that they believe missions and outreach ministry are either very or extremely important to the church accomplishing its purpose. Within the context of time, culture and society, the church is responsible for sharing the message of salvation. Were it not for this single tenet, the Church would have long ago ceased to exist. The Apostle Paul held so tightly to the idea that all humankind should hear the gospel and experience salvation that he was willing to be martyred to further the message of Christ. Likewise, all the Apostles, with the single exception of John, were martyred for the gospel.

Regarding proselytism, a particular example provides exceptional clarity. One half of the performing duo known as Penn and Teller, Penn Jillette, is a staunchly avowed atheist. Despite his specific belief system, Mr. Jillette has a fascinating take on evangelism. In an article from the Baptist Press dated February 12, 2009, Erin Roach recounts a video posted to YouTube wherein Jillette stated flatly, “he doesn’t respect people who don’t proselytize.”¹ Jillette stated flatly:

If you believe that there’s a heaven and hell and people could be going to hell or not get(ing) eternal life or whatever and you think that its not really worth telling them this because it would make it socially awkward... How much do you have to hate somebody to not proselytize? How much do you have to hate somebody to believe that everlasting life is possible and not tell them that? If I believed beyond a shadow of a doubt that a truck was coming at you and you didn’t believe it, and that truck was bearing down on you, there’s a certain point where I tackle you. And this is more important than that.²

Jillette goes on to admit that an encounter with a person he describes as “a very polite, sane Christian” who gave him a Bible once did not change his belief “that there is no God.” It seems that a staunch atheist may have a better appreciation for the seriousness of the church's labor than

¹ Erin Roach, “ATHEISM: Penn Jillette Urges Evangelism,” *Baptist Press*, February 12, 2009. accessed March 13, 2021, <https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/atheism-penn-jillette-urges-evangelism>.

² Ibid.

some who are in the church. The question which must ultimately drive the heart of every missions-oriented endeavor is what Jillette poses, “How much do you have to hate somebody to believe that everlasting life is possible and not tell them that?”

Responders offered a wide range of responses in answering whether they felt prepared to engage in missions and outreach ministry involving those dealing with addiction and substance abuse. Roughly 87% feel less than moderately prepared for missions work to a population with substance abuse issues. In that alone is the need for a curriculum to teach missional outreach and incorporate cultural understanding. This dual focus intends to prepare workers for specificity in applying the general principles they have learned.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
A great deal	0.00%	0
A lot	12.50%	2
A moderate amount	25.00%	4
A little	37.50%	6
None at all	25.00%	4
TOTAL		16

Figure 3. How well equipped do you believe yourself to be for missions and outreach ministry involving those dealing with addiction and substance abuse?

Surprisingly, in answering Question 14, whether respondents would be willing to participate in a class on missions work to addicted persons, 58% responded affirmatively, or only ten people. Regarding this answer, there is a significant concern for why so many persons would answer negatively. Two respondents indicated they did not have an evangelically oriented church affiliation which would naturally lean away from a missional focus. However, 13 respondents indicated previous experience in mission work. When coupled with the result that only ten would participate, it may suggest that this ministry's drug abuse and addiction orientation does not appeal to some people.

The fact that God does not call or equip all believers in the same way, must remain in mind. 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 states,

There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all. . . But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

The beauty of the church is the diversity of the people. While many may not feel called to a particular ministry, the Pastor or minister's responsibility is to take those who are ready and prepare them for work in the field where God is calling them.

Survey Results from Appendix H: Recovering Persons Survey

The initial intention of the Recovering Persons Survey's was to find possible reasons for assuming that persons living in the project area intentionally avoided connecting with church members during previous outreach ministries. This writer believes that if it were possible to identify causative forces for avoidance, greater connectivity could happen in future endeavors. Unfortunately, it would appear that the intended purpose for this tool failed. However, the survey does seem to offer important information that will benefit this project's new focus of developing a curriculum for training the church to engage persons with substance abuse and addiction issues.

A few unanticipated cultural issues came into play in the responses when considering the atypical view of a home dominated by addiction and substance use—first, the indicated involvement of both parents by 33% of respondents. Additionally, 38% indicated that their father was not involved in their childhood or adolescence. This writer, perhaps unreasonably, expected the occurrence of both parents in the home to be significantly lower.

The project assumes that most of those with addiction and substance abuse issues grew up with a history of low spiritual or church involvement. Respondents' answers confirmed this assumption, as fully 55% of survey respondents had spiritual backgrounds that were either

minimal or nonexistent. This lack of spiritual involvement will be a critical point to make within the training curriculum. Those the church seeks to minister to have possibly had fleeting or non-existent participation with the church. Which understandably may lead to significant hesitation in developing healthy relationships with church members.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Attended church regularly (5 or more times per month)	16.67%	3
Attended Sunday services regularly (at least 3 Sundays per month)	5.56%	1
Attended church occasionally (1 to 3 services per month)	0.00%	0
Attended church sporadically (2 to 5 services in 6 months)	16.67%	3
Attended church very infrequently (maybe on holidays such as Easter and around Christmas)	38.89%	7
Did not attend church	16.67%	3
Other	5.56%	1
TOTAL		18

Figure 4: Childhood spiritual involvement

Another issue arose while reviewing the survey results regarding the geographic and cultural traits of the project area residents. The writer assumed that a substantial portion of those responding to the survey would have come from equivalent communities, primarily subsidized housing projects. Instead, 50% report residing in suburban neighborhoods while 33% hailed from rural areas. Not a single respondent indicated having lived in a subsidized housing community like the project area. While this may have eliminated direct correlation to the project area residents as was hoped for, it corresponds more to the nature of residential regions in Tennessee's Upper Cumberland region. There are much fewer housing projects as compared to rural and suburban communities.

Another interesting result from the survey involved alcohol and drug use before age 18, wherein every respondent indicated some level of pre-adult use of drugs or alcohol. The overall majority, 50%, claimed recreational use, while the other categories, daily, moderate and frequent usage, were equal at 16.67%. Whether this would permit extrapolating that pre-adult usage is an indication of post-adult use is beyond this project's intentions. However, this 100% correlation is considered a significant predictor of future substance abuse in adolescents who engage in substance use.

Along the same lines, 55% of respondents indicated they did not believe themselves addicted to alcohol or drugs in their adolescent years. Conversely, the remainder of the participants, 45%, did feel they were addicted. Consideration of this information points to the apparent danger of cultural influences in alcohol and substance abuse. As cited by Pears, Capaldi and Owen, “substance abuse appears to be highly transmissible. There is a threefold risk for alcohol abuse and a two-fold risk for substance abuse among relatives of alcoholics.”³ When thinking along missional lines, the impetus becomes readily apparent. If the church fails in its responsibility to minister to population groups where drug abuse and addiction dominate, the children of those persons are more likely to continue to repeat the cycle of use, abuse and addiction.

When asked about their use of alcohol or drugs during the twelve months before seeking treatment, 78% of respondents indicated daily use, and 83% identified themselves as addicted. Even with the high numbers seen in the report of adolescent activity, these responses are still alarming. Extrapolation cannot be assumed explicitly as direct. However, an increase of 61% of

³ K. C. Pears, D. M. Capaldi and L. D. Owen, “Substance Use Risk Across Three Generations: The Roles of Parent Discipline Practices and Inhibitory Control,” *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors: Journal of the Society of Psychologists in Addictive Behaviors* 21, no. 3 (September 2007): 373–86, accessed January 20, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0893-164X.21.3.373>.

the same participants moved from recreational use in adolescence to everyday use as adults. Similarly, a 38% increase in adolescent users identifying as addicts in adulthood helps to resonate the urgent need for equipping the church to reach these persons with the gospel's hope.

The most significant enlightenment from this survey came from the last two questions. Firstly, Respondents offered advice or suggestions to church members seeking to reach those persons in similar conditions respondents experienced regarding addiction and substance abuse. The heart of those in need is heard clearly in these responses. A comparison is appropriate to Jesus' conversation in John 5 when He asks a lame man, "Do you want to be made well?" While the man's direct response is not an emphatic "yes," he confirms he does want to be healed. As these responses are critical to this project, they are included in their entirety in Appendix I.

Survey Results from Appendix K: Rescue Mission Resident Survey

An interesting situation arose during the research phase of this project. The local Rescue Mission contacted this writer regarding allowing the Mission Director, Bruce Bailey, to speak at WVBC during a Sunday worship service. Mr. Bailey hoped to begin engaging local congregations in the ministries of the Rescue Mission and happened to mention that part of the program involved assisting residents with addiction issues. In sharing about the intentions of this project, this writer secured permission to conduct another survey, this one focusing on Rescue Mission residents and their experiences and insight.

After consultation with the faculty advisor, the writer developed a much shorter and more focused survey. Staff at the Rescue Mission asked residents to complete the brief survey and collected completed forms permitting complete anonymity between participants and the project's writer.

The survey yielded auspicious information. Nineteen persons participated, and 68% indicated that their parents used drugs or alcohol when the participants were children. Of those whose parents used drugs or alcohol, 44% of participants stated they believed their parents were addicted. In congruence with their parental examples, 79% of those participating admitted using drugs or alcohol before age 18. Those persons further stated that they predominantly preferred one or more of the following, alcohol, marijuana or methamphetamine. Less represented were cocaine, LSD, speed and opiates.

Regarding the frequency of their use of substances before adulthood, 50% indicated daily or chronic use, with 53% describing themselves as addicted before age 18. When asked about their drug use during the last twelve months, 50% stated they had used drugs or alcohol in that time frame. Furthermore, the respondents produced a nearly identical list of substances as those indicated in their pre-adult use of drugs or alcohol. The discovery of a critical point occurred when comparing these two data sets. Twenty percent indicated pre-adult use of methamphetamine, which contrasted sharply with reported use of methamphetamine in the last twelve months as admitted by 50% of those responding. With more than double stating usage of this highly addictive and destructive substance, this statistic points to the critical nature of ministering to addicted populations.

Further understanding arose when gauging receptiveness to four community agencies, Law Enforcement, Community Groups, School Personnel and Churches. Out of the possible 19 responses for each group and considering engagement at one of three levels, receptive, cautious or avoidant, ten persons stated they were avoidant or cautious. Four of those responding avoidant indicated Law Enforcement, and one replied Community Groups. Of those who said they were cautious, four were regarding Community Groups, and one was toward Law Enforcement. When

asked to explain their avoidance or caution, respondents pointed to negative encounters with the two categories, such as periods of incarceration or an inclination toward isolation. Considering Churches, the vast majority, 94%, stated they were receptive to church groups while only one person said they were cautious of churches. As stated in previous chapters, this data is not congruent with the experience of WVBC in its earlier outreach efforts to addicted populations.

As with the previous participant groups, expectations were high for the potential responses to the final question regarding participants' thoughts of how a church group could best engage with persons who deal with addiction or substance abuse. Of the 19 people participating, only ten (10) replied to the last question, but again responses were comparable to previous surveys. Fully 70% provided answers such as “be genuine” or “try to understand,” or “let them know you care.” Two responses resonated loudly, the first being, “I think having the relationship first is important, and it gains their trust and will make helping with their recovery a little easier.” The second individual contributed bluntly, “I don’t know, I just know drugs are bad.”

Overall Assessment from Research Tools

Several points stand out when considering all the responses. First, to engage in missional outreach toward addicted and drug-abusing persons, there must be a genuine concern for the addict and his spiritual condition. Calling back on the thoughts of Penn Jillette, how much does a person have to hate another individual not to want to see them experience salvation?⁴ Sadly, at its core, that is what transpires when lost people are intentionally neglected by those who are supposed to love as God loves. Knowing that there is a sinner in need of redemption should be sufficient motivation for evangelizing those suffering from addiction and substance abuse.

⁴ Roach, “ATHEISM: Penn Jillette Urges Evangelism,” *Baptist Press*.

Second, the church's responsibility is to meaningfully engage those it intends to see reached for the gospel. In the scriptural accounts of Jesus' earthly ministry, there is a recurring theme in His practice of going to those He sought to reach. Jesus gives the church the undeniable example of going to the lost and broken and bringing hope to them. An interesting point comes out in one of the most pointed verses that Jesus spoke on the subject of the purpose of the church. Matthew 28:19-20 reads, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always...." The Greek participle πορευθέντες translates as an imperative and as such has the force of a command which is non-negotiable. The clear expectation of Jesus is that His followers will go to the utmost ends of the world to see the gospel shared with all people. The verb means "to move from one place to another, with the possible implication of continuity and distance."⁵ Another way of stating what Christ says would be, "As you are going, make disciples...." The absolute necessity is that the church not sit and demand that the lost come to a building or site, but that those who have the message of eternal life should actively seek out those in need of that message.

⁵ David Abernathy, *An Exegetical Summary of Matthew 17–28*, Exegetical Summaries (Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2015), 269.

Chapter 5

Project Methodology Revisited

Over the past two years, this Doctor of Ministry Project has evolved significantly. As the incorporated changes were critical, a brief pause is needed to address the actual course taken. Initially, this project intended to culminate with an active outreach ministry to engage in missional engagement with the residents of the geographic area of focus, a housing project within one-half mile of West View Baptist Church in Cookeville, Tennessee. WVBC has attempted to minister to the residents on numerous occasions throughout the last two decades, with no observable success. All of these engagements centered around events happening at WVBC, including, but not limited to, Community Meals, special services and Vacation Bible Schools. Personal invitations, prayer walking, canvassing, door hangers and numerous other methods were incorporated, resulting in some participation but never producing lasting relationships.

During these outreach ministries, a critical issue that came to light was the significant cultural distance between church members and area residents. This distance appeared to revolve around resident's assumptions of how church members perceived the residents, possibly due to their active or history of addiction or substance abuse. During interactions, what came out was very much an air of “you cannot know me or like me.” This problem led the writer of this project to seek ways to minister to the residents of the project area more effectively.

Initially, the intention was to engage in more outreach activities within the project area instead of asking residents to leave where they are comfortable and come to the church building to participate in events and activities. This plan was hampered when COVID-19 came on the scene in Tennessee in mid-spring 2020. The restrictions placed on gatherings and the hesitancy

of nearly all people to engage with in-person ministries precluded beginning any new outreach ministries. The local limits required redirecting the project's focus toward preparing the congregation for the eventual return to normal life and missional outreach activities. This redirection resulted in developing a discipleship-based curriculum focused on addressing specific issues involved in outreach to people with addiction and substance abuse issues. Pertinent information was collected by surveying three separate groups in the local community. These groups included individuals who were either actively participating in recovery programs or residing at a rescue mission that incorporates a recovery component to their Life Recovery Program or who had achieved and maintained sobriety for a significant time. The results of these inquiries appear in Chapter 4 of this writing and Appendices B through L.

Following the development of the curriculum, a six-week discipleship study occurred at WVBC covering the material. This course dealt with numerous topics, including God's desire to save, the fact that every person needs redemption, cultural considerations of addicted individuals and populations focusing on trust, rapport, relationship building and commitment to the long-term need for discipling people through the recovery process. Twelve church members participated in the discipleship program, while nine of those people also completed a post-training survey seeking feedback on the curriculum and training effectiveness.

Discipleship Training Sessions

Beginning on August 22, 2021, and concluding on September 26, 2021, members of WVBC combined all Sunday School classes to work through the Missional Outreach Curriculum, *Walking in Samaria*, developed for this ministry project. Classes were attended consistently by twelve adults, with a few of the youth group teenagers attending sporadically.

Week One--Who needs God?

During the introduction of the first session, this writer performed a rapid and informal survey asking the attendees two questions. First, whether or not they felt prepared to engage in missional outreach and with twelve adults in attendance, four showed that they felt moderately prepared. Second, the class answered how ready they were to engage in missional outreach to persons with addiction and substance abuse issues. No attendees indicated they felt prepared at all to engage in missions work to that specific group.

Material for the first week addressed participants' fears and anxieties centered on Missional Outreach to those dealing with addiction and substance abuse. Emphasis was placed on the need for Christians to be willing to get outside their comfort zone to engage people in need of hearing the gospel and experiencing God's grace and love.

The discussion revolved around the value of human life from the perspective of God, the effect failure has on the psyche to demoralize the individual and the impact of differences on assumptions and unintentional prejudices. The main emphasis of Week One was to assist church members in seeing persons with addiction and substance abuse issues through the perspective of God and understanding the intrinsic value of all human life.

Week Two-- How do people meet God?

In the second week, the emphasis was on God's explicit plan to use Christians as a means to introduce nonbelievers to Him through intentional evangelism and as a result of living in pursuit of sanctification and resting in the surety of hope and faith. This week centered on passages from Exodus 4:2-5, 2 Peter 3:9 and 1 Peter 3:15. One question posed to the class was, "Why does God save us?", the intent was to help people understand that God's purpose in

salvation is not just to rescue the individual but that others might come to faith through that single person.

In Exodus 4:1-17, God speaks to Moses and commands him to do certain miraculous works in the presence of the Egyptians and Israelites that “they may believe that the LORD God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you.” For this same reason, God called Abram from the Chaldeans to make him into a nation and testify to the presence of the power of God in their lives that the world might see in them the hope available to all humanity. The writer extrapolates that this is the same intention God has for His people in the modern world. Peter argues that in observing God’s impact in believers' lives, people might see what is missing in their own lives and “ask about the reason for the hope (1 Peter 3:15)” that Christians display.

Week Three-- Samaria and the world of addiction and substance abuse

In this week, the writer intends to help class participants understand some of the idiosyncrasies of the cultural impacts of addiction and substance abuse. Beginning with the unavoidable discomfort associated with ministering to a group of people as vastly different from themselves as those this ministry project hopes to reach for Christ, the curriculum promotes discussion of the fears and anxieties that impact those in attendance.

As a biblical example, the curriculum points to Jonah and his severe reluctance to follow God’s command to minister to Nineveh, precipitated by the reluctant prophet’s prejudice toward the foreign nation. By highlighting God’s intention to bring the Ninevites to repentance, this writer hoped to impress on participants the critical point that the command of Christ in Matthew 28:18-20 implores believers to reach out to all those they have access to that the message of redemption and grace might pierce the hearts of some.

An additional point worthy of mention from this week's discussion is the fact that addicts and substance abusers did not achieve that place in their lives through an intentional decision on their part. The writer stated explicitly, "No person ever woke up and decided that they would become a drug addict." By helping class participants understand that the same weakness and sinful nature within the addict, which led to his condition, is present within themselves. The defining difference between Christian and addict is solely God's grace, which the Christian did not deserve in the first place.

The discussion concluded with a mention of the innate human desire for control and the addict's attempts to control uncontrollable circumstances through the use of illegal substances or the misuse of various medications. The discussion also addressed that each of us desires control over issues in our lives. Throughout the week's class time, the hope was to enable church members to understand those dealing with addiction and substance abuse and empathize with their struggles.

Week Four-- Who is better? Who is worse?

This week's lesson focused on Luke 18:10-13, the prayer of the Pharisee and the tax collector, along with Mark 2:13-17 and the story of Christ dining at the house of Levi. The emphasis was on the desperate need of all people for a relationship with God through faith in Christ. Highlighted was that the Pharisees in the stories were just as much in need of forgiveness and grace as the sinners. With a level stand before God for every individual, this writer felt that aiding the class to recognize the urgency for evangelism within the cultural context of addiction is critical. Conquering the human mentality of self as opposed to others is necessary for any intentional effort to share the gospel through missional outreach. Christians must begin to view

themselves not as privileged but rather as responsible to others to lay down any biases and prejudices for the eternal salvation of those they are enabled to reach.

Week Five-- Being a bridge

This week's discussion centered on creating genuine connections through intentional relationship building. Discussion centered on four characteristics that this writer feels are critical to establishing an honest deliberate relationship. Transparency, consistency, dependability, and accountability within personal relationships lead to more valuable connections and, therefore, increase engagement. When the extent of missional outreach is limited to inviting people to attend events that require them to leave where they are comfortable, there is no opportunity for developing the type of relationships that foster these four characteristics.

Week Six-- Staying the course

In the final week, only three days had actual material to cover during the training class period. This last week focused on the realities of missional outreach to populations involved with addiction and substance abuse. Namely that relapse is prevalent among individuals trying to regain their sobriety. Emphasis was given to the fact that church members are not responsible for the decision of another person to succumb to temptations and reimmerse themselves from what they are attempting to free themselves.

Additionally, options for helping people understand that failure is part of growth and that every endeavor will require some degree of failure before success happens. Furthermore, transparency was revisited from Week Five to provide context for helping bring people out of periods of disappointment and failure. The reality is that each Christian experiences failure in their walk with Christ as sin reinserts itself into previously conquered areas. In the words of Paul from Romans 7:15, "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.” Just as believers experience failures in their spiritual walk and move forward having learned more about themselves and better committed to a life of holiness, those pursuing sobriety will come out of periods of relapse stronger so long as they accept the opportunity to grow through the failure.

Conclusion

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, nine of the twelve West View Baptist church members who participated in the training program stated that they felt better prepared to engage in general outreach and outreach focused on ministering to populations suffering from addiction and substance abuse. This writer believes that the goals of this project, as modified due to COVID-19 considerations, were achieved considering that in the first week of the course, all participants stated that they did not believe themselves prepared to engage with groups suffering from addiction and substance abuse. Similarly, only four participants said they felt ready for missional outreach in general. Having all nine respondents to the post-training evaluation state they felt prepared for both outreach opportunities seem to justify claiming success for this project.

However, there is still significant work to be done as this project has only set the stage for additional labor in the area surrounding WVBC. Plans are underway for the church to begin putting into practice the things they have learned. As soon as significant progress is made, with the COVID-19 threat to allow church members to feel safe while engaging in community ministry, the original plans of this project will begin. Outreach events will start within the project area to help establish relationships between church members and community residents. These events will include church-provided meals and mobile food pantry and clothing closet opportunities for area residents to receive assistance without leaving where they are comfortable.

Hopefully, these opportunities will progress to the point where local bible studies can begin aiding people to see and experience the hope that comes only through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. In a perfect world, the most significant achievement would be planting a church within this community to provide outreach opportunities as residents leave and move into the area.

Further work is also possible by modifying the developed curriculum to effectively minister to other populations that may be difficult to reach. These might include the more rural groups within the Upper Cumberland region that are untrusting of outsiders or even people incarcerated within local jails or prisons. Ultimately this work might find application for any church experiencing difficulties similar to what WVBC has experienced in fulfilling its part of the Great Commission.

Appendix A: Proposal to Change Emphasis of the Doctoral Project

Reason for the Needed Change

With the rapid changes in American society created by the COVID-19 pandemic, it has become necessary to rethink a current end state for my DMIN project, Using Intentional Relationship Building and Community Presence to Minister to an Addicted Population in Cookeville, TN. The primary concern mandating a different conclusion is the potential danger to residents of the project area and West View Baptist Church members.

Over the last ten months, there has been an alarming number of positive COVID-19 cases in Putnam County. Since March of 2020, in a county with a population of 80,245,⁶ there have been 9,730 cases with 131 deaths.⁷ December 18 through 31 saw a case count of 1,184 persons with an average new case influx of 105.4 per day.⁸ This significant sudden increase in positive cases is alarming to local officials and healthcare professionals.

On December 20, 2020, Governor Bill Lee issued Executive Order 70, establishing Tennessee's social gatherings restrictions. The order directs Tennesseans to maintain at least six (6) feet of separation from persons outside their household and not, in any event, be in a group of ten (10) or more persons in an indoor public place for social gatherings. Although the order does not restrict the exercise of freedom of religion, it does state, “places of worship are strongly encouraged to continue to utilize virtual or online services.”⁹

⁶ “United States Census Bureau Quick Facts: Putnam County, TN.”

⁷ “Putnam County Tennessee Covid Statistics,” accessed January 10, 2021.
https://www.google.com/search?q=Putnam+County+TN+Covid+19+statistics&rlz=1C1CHBF_enUS932US932&oq=Putnam+County+TN+Covid+19+statistics&aqs=chrome..69i57.14876j1j15&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8.

⁸ “Covid Data for Putnam County.”

⁹ Lee, “Tennessee Executive Order 70.”

The current situation in Putnam County has significantly impacted the motivation of church members to conduct face-to-face outreach events. It also appears to have reduced the receptiveness of persons residing in the project area to the point where there is substantial concern about the feasibility of reaching an end state where the facets of this Ministry Project find application within the ministry project area. These barriers to the completion of this project insist upon the following proposed changes.

Proposed Changes to the Project

The primary change would be the actual end state of the project. As currently planned, the end state would be where the church has actively conducted in-person outreach and ministry to the project area residents. The first 8-week study focusing on addiction and recovery would be completed if the initial plans were possible. Also, participant feedback would be available for consideration. The overarching hope is that residents will come to faith in Jesus Christ and be engaged in recovery from their life-controlling issues through this outreach ministry.

The proposed end state will see the church equipped for mission ministries relating to a persons' cultural issues in recovering from addiction and substance abuse. For the project progression, this new end state would have the congregation first examine their concerns, fears and comfort issues with reaching out to a population so different from themselves. The vast difference between the project area residents and the congregation members mandates an understanding of the needs and issues experienced by project area residents to be incorporated by the church members engaged in the ministry.

The survey, which IRB has previously approved for administration within local recovery groups, will facilitate gathering information to create a discipleship course internal to West View Baptist Church. The development will begin of an additional questionnaire for administration to

the congregation at West View Baptist Church and, if permissible, within a few other local Southern Baptist congregations to determine what needs exist related to missions' outreach readiness within the context of substance abuse and addiction.

In short, the new goal for this ministry project is the development of a discipleship curriculum to prepare church members for outreach ministry to persons with substance abuse and addiction issues. The curriculum development will consider both surveys coupled with various existing addiction and recovery program curricula. Evaluation of the program's impact occurs through a follow-up questionnaire administered to those who participate in the discipleship course related to whether they believe themselves better equipped for an outreach ministry akin to that intended in the original thesis project.

The intention is to continue moving toward realizing the outreach ministry envisioned initially in the project. By taking time to pause at the juncture of training the church, this writer believes the course of action will create a better-prepared group to begin the work once the current pandemic situation alleviates.

Appendix B: Informed Consent for Participation- Church Member Survey

Title of the Project: A Discipleship Curriculum for Training the Church: Using Intentional Relationship Building and Community Presence to Minister to an Addicted Population in Cookeville, TN

Principal Investigator: James B. Simpson, M. A., M. Div., Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be 18 years old and (1) be currently enrolled and actively participating in an addiction or substance abuse recovery program or (2) have successfully completed an addiction or substance abuse recovery program within the last year and be maintaining your sobriety.

Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to participate in this research project.

What is the study about, and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to aid in planning an outreach ministry for a local church to minister to those in a nearby community who deal with various addictions and substance abuse issues. This study is intended to determine what real or perceived barriers might be present between the church's people and the community's residents and the church's needs for preparation to perform this outreach.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

Participation in this study would only involve honestly and completely answering a provided questionnaire taking no more than twenty (20) minutes to accomplish.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include the potential to open opportunities to minister to people affected by addiction and substance abuse issues.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

No personally identifiable information will be gathered in the course of this study.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or the addiction or substance abuse program in which you are currently enrolled. If you decide not to participate, you are free not to answer any question or withdraw at any time before submitting the survey without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please inform the researcher that you wish to discontinue your participation and not submit your study materials.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is **James Simpson**. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, **Dr. Galen K. Johnson**, at [REDACTED].

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu

Your Consent

Before agreeing to be part of the research, please be sure you understand the study's purpose. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. If you have any questions about the survey later, you can contact the researcher/study team using the above information.

Appendix C: Church Member Survey Content

Questionnaire Instructions

Please provide complete answers, giving as much detail as possible. Please do not give any identifiable information (name, nickname, address, phone number, social security number or other identifiable information) for yourself or any other person you address in your answers.

Whenever a question asks for a scaled answer, 'on a scale of 1 to 10', 1 (one) will always be the most negative response while 10 (ten) will be the most positive response.

Online completion is available at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BK8QJB5>

1. Are you currently an active member of what can be described as an evangelical church? Britannica defines an evangelical church as one that “stress the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ, personal conversion experiences, Scripture as the sole basis for faith and active evangelism.” Yes No
2. In your understanding of the Bible, is there a sin so bad which God cannot forgive? Yes No
3. Have you ever been personally involved in mission work or outreach ministry intended to reach a group of people with the gospel of Jesus Christ? Yes No
4. If you answered Yes to question 3, what did you enjoy the most about the experience?
5. On a scale of 1 to 10. With 1 (one) being not important and 10 (ten) being crucially important, how important do you believe missions and outreach ministry are to the church accomplishing its purpose?
6. When you think about missions and outreach of the church, what activities come to mind?

7. What thoughts first enter your mind when you think of the terms “addict” or “addiction”?
8. Have you or a close family member or friend experienced addiction or substance abuse? Yes No

Questions 9 and 10 only apply if you answered YES to question 8.

9. Answer this question only if you or a close family member or friend experienced addiction or substance abuse. With 1 (one) being not hopeful and 10 (ten) being certain recovery would occur, how hopeful are or were you that recovery was possible?
10. On a scale of 1 to 10. With 1 (one) being not prepared at all and 10 (ten)being completely confident and ready to participate, how well equipped do you believe yourself to be for missions and outreach ministry involving those dealing with addiction and substance abuse?

Answer either number 12 or number 13

11. If you do not feel prepared for missions and outreach ministry involving substance abuse and addiction, what three things do you believe would help you feel prepared?
12. If you do feel prepared for missions and outreach ministry involving substance abuse and addiction, what three things do you believe make you the most prepared?
13. Would you be willing to participate in a discipleship course lasting between 8 and 10 weeks to prepare yourself to better engage in missions and outreach ministry involving substance abuse and addiction? Yes No
14. What topics do you believe would be most beneficial for a curriculum such as this?

Appendix D: Church Member Survey Responses

1. Are you currently an active member of what can be described as an evangelical church? Britannica defines an evangelical church as “churches which stress the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ, personal conversion experiences, Scripture as the sole basis for faith and active evangelism.” Yes 15 No 2
2. In your understanding of the Bible, is there a sin so bad which God cannot forgive? Yes 4 No 13
3. Have you ever been personally involved in mission work or outreach ministry intended to reach a group of people with the gospel of Jesus Christ? Yes 13 No 4
4. If you answered Yes to question 3, what did you enjoy the most about the experience?
 - a. Working with children.
 - b. Helping people Just meeting other people and helping them understand about God's plan of salvation.
 - c. Seeing a life change for the better and knowing that what we do really is important and makes a difference
 - d. Teaching Appalachian kids about Jesus. Share Christ with young children through music.
 - e. Joy to see God at work.
 - f. Bringing people to Christ
 - g. Seeing people come to Christ. It also helped me to appreciate what Christ has done for me.
 - h. Being able to help other Christians in need.
 - i. Helping others in time of need
 - j. Seeing people saved
5. On a scale of 1 to 10. With 1 (one) being not important and 10 (ten) being crucially important, how important do you believe missions and outreach ministry are to the church accomplishing its purpose?

a. Extremely important	7
b. Very important	5
c. Somewhat important	0
d. Not so important	0
e. Not at all important	0
6. When you think about missions and outreach of the church, what activities come to mind?
 - a. Helping people in need with whatever they have going on may that be rebuilding people's homes that have been involved in a natural disaster or simply sharing the gospel with somebody
 - b. community outreach and help
 - c. Being able to share Jesus with the lost, feeding the hungry and helping the homeless, Helping people in the community with needs they may have such as work at their home or in their yard, counseling for different addictions someone may have, food for children, meals on wheels
 - d. Person to person witnessing.
 - e. Feeding the hungry, singing and working in the community

- f. Soul-winning in the community, at work and in daily lives, involvement in or supporting summer camps, food and clothing ministries, shut-ins, home and abroad missionaries. To name a few.
 - g. Foreign and local spreading the message of Jesus
 - h. Door to door, VBS, music, cookouts,
 - i. Teaching and giving comfort/aid
 - j. mission trips, VBS, meeting physical needs
 - k. Vacation Bible School
 - l. Community events and 3rd world country trips
 - m. Going outside the church. Providing “church” activities in less intimidating scenarios.
 - n. VBS, food pantry, emotional support
 - o. Invitation to a church to hear the gospel.
 - p. Visiting, community activities
 - q. Soul-winning
7. What thoughts first enter your mind when you think of the terms “addict” or “addiction”?
- a. Drugs and alcohol
 - b. A terrible problem that most people want to be free from
 - c. Hurting, feeling helpless, someone wanting to do better but maybe don’t have the support or services they need
 - d. Someone who has a problem with drugs or alcohol.
 - e. Wasted life
 - f. Alcohol and drugs are the popular ones that come to mind. A controlling factor in one's life that is a detriment to oneself and others around them. The person needs help beyond their own strength and power. They need Christ and Christ-centered help along with empathy and compassion.
 - g. Needing A personal relationship with Christ is the only way they will make it
 - h. That the person is in need of drugs to cope.
 - i. Someone that needs help
 - j. drugs, despair, crime, trapped, victim
 - k. Someone who can’t live without something
 - l. Drugs
 - m. Drugs and alcohol
 - n. How drugs and alcohol can ruin a person or family.
 - o. Gluttony
 - p. Someone controlled by some form of substance in their life
 - q. Drugs, sin, hope
8. Have you or a close family member or friend experienced addiction or substance abuse? Yes 12 No 5

Questions 9 and 10 only apply if you answered YES to question 8.

9. Answer this question only if you or a close family member or friend experienced addiction or substance abuse. With 1 (one) being not hopeful and 10 (ten) being sure recovery would occur, how optimistic are or were you that recovery was possible?
- a. Very hopeful 5
 - b. Hopeful 5
 - c. Not hopeful 1
 - d. Absolutely not hopeful 1
10. On a scale of 1 to 10. With 1 (one) being not prepared at all and 10 (ten) being completely confident and ready to participate, how well equipped do you believe yourself to be for missions and outreach ministry involving those dealing with addiction and substance abuse?
- a. A great deal 0
 - b. A lot 2
 - c. A moderate amount 4
 - d. A little 6
 - e. None at all 4

Answer either number 12 or number 13

11. If you do not feel prepared for missions and outreach ministry involving substance abuse and addiction, what three things do you believe would help you feel prepared?_
- a. Personal weapon, self-defense class, and always go with a group and never solicit personal information about myself.
 - b. Not sure
 - c. Training & education for the specific addiction
 - d. I think I need to know more about how an addict feels and how the addiction affects their life. I need training on how to minister to the individual. 3.
Understand how drugs and alcohol affect the person and how you would minister to them different than one who does not have an addiction problem
 - e. Patience, compassion and a better understanding of just how people can let something get so much control over them
 - f. Better understanding of “their story of life,” what brought them there.
Training Committed.
 - g. Knowledge, steadfastness, empathy
 - h. Information Training
 - i. More education, prayer, experience
 - j. Tangible aid, resource referrals, sound wisdom
 - k. Focus, time, patience
 - l. A plan (not scripted but something laid out) Info about abuse (have no background or experiences with people close to me dealing with abuse)
Support
 - m. A greater maturity in Christ’s teachings. The patience of Job. Less me.
 - n. Prayer study and more prayers
 - o. comfort zone

12. If you feel prepared for missions and outreach ministry involving substance abuse and addiction, what three things do you believe make you the most prepared?
- Having “never been in their shoes, I feel that cannot relate like others could. That being said, somebody is able to reach someone.
 - Christ in me 2)? 3)?
 - A love of people. The understanding of addiction. Knowing God can use all of us no matter what.
 - The church leadership and guidance. Less me.
 - na
13. Would you be willing to participate in a discipleship course lasting between 8 and 10 weeks to prepare yourself to better engage in missions and outreach ministry involving substance abuse and addiction? Yes 10 No 7
14. What topics do you believe would be most beneficial for a curriculum such as this?
- How to confront an addict wisely so that you don't put your life and your family's life at risk. How to be relatable
 - Don't know
 - Understanding addiction Understanding the needs of persons with addictions Understanding the best ways to minister to addicts.
 - How to recognize the signs and what the Bible has to say about it
 - I am not familiar enough with the various resources. But maybe their environmental (home, life) factors; Their spiritual outlook, Aftercare and follow-up.
 - Getting over the fear of addiction
 - Supporting loved ones dealing with someone's abuse.
 - Be able to see the person as a child of God that needs help.
 - I haven't looked into this yet. I will need more time to pray about this.
 - Importance of missions,

Appendix E: Sample Permission Letter to Organizations/Agencies

September 4, 2020

Pastor Tim McLauchlin
Executive Director
Adult and Teen Challenge of the Upper Cumberland
200 Freedom Lane, Livingston, TN 38570

Pastor McLauchlin,

As a student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Ministry degree. The purpose of my study is to aid in developing an effective outreach program focused on reaching people with substance abuse issues who reside in concentrated communities where substance abuse is culturally prevalent, such as housing projects. The primary model for this program will emphasize the ministry model of Jesus Christ as He intentionally went into the geographic and cultural locations of the people He sought to reach.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research at Adult and Teen Challenge of the Upper Cumberland.

Participants will complete a brief questionnaire about their background and historical attitudes toward groups or persons seeking to assist them. It should take approximately 15 minutes to complete the survey. Participants will receive informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, respond by email to [REDACTED].

Sincerely,

James Simpson, M. Div.
[REDACTED]

Appendix F: Sample recruitment letter- Recovery Participant

September 4, 2020

Dear Potential Participant:

As a student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Ministry degree. The purpose of my study is to aid in developing an effective outreach program, focused on reaching people with substance abuse issues who reside in communities where substance abuse is prevalent, such as housing projects. The methodology for this program will emphasize the ministry model of Jesus Christ as He intentionally went into the geographic and cultural locations of the people He sought to reach. I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be 18 years of age or older and either

(a) enrolled and actively participating in a formal recovery program or

(b) have completed such a program within the last 12 months and maintaining their sobriety.

Participants will complete a brief questionnaire about their background and historical attitudes toward groups or persons seeking to assist them. It should take approximately 15 minutes to complete the survey, participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal identifying information is required.

Survey administration may occur in the following ways:

(a) Participants may complete the anonymous questionnaire through the internet at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/YML2KG2>

(b) Participants may complete anonymous paper questionnaires.

A Consent document is attached to this letter. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If the survey is completed online, the consent document will be included for review before participating in the survey. After reading the consent form, please click the “Continue” button to proceed to the survey. Doing so will indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to participate in the survey.

Sincerely,

James Simpson, M. Div.

Encl: Consent Document and Survey

Appendix G: Informed Consent for Participation- Recovery Participant

Title of the Project: A Discipleship Curriculum for Training the Church: Using Intentional Relationship Building and Community Presence to Minister to an Addicted Population in Cookeville, TN

Principal Investigator: James B. Simpson, M. A., M. Div., Liberty University

Invitation to be part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be 18 years old and be currently enrolled and actively participating in an addiction or substance abuse recovery program or have completed an addiction or substance abuse recovery program within the last year and be maintaining your sobriety. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take the time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to participate in this research project.

What is the study about, and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to aid in planning an outreach ministry for a local church to minister to those in a nearby community who deal with various addictions and substance abuse issues. The purpose of this study is to determine what real, or perceived barriers might be present between the church and residents of the community and how to best reach out to the residents of the project area.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Wholly and honestly answer a provided survey which will take no more than twenty (20) minutes to accomplish.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study. Benefits to society include the potential to open opportunities to minister to people affected by addiction and substance abuse issues.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private.

- Participant responses will be anonymous.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision about whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or the addiction or substance abuse program in which you are currently enrolled. If you decide not to participate, you are free not to answer any questions or to withdraw at any time before submitting the survey.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study and not complete the **paper survey**, please inform the researcher that you wish to discontinue your participation and do not submit your study materials. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

If you choose to withdraw from the study and not complete the **online survey**, please exit the survey and close your internet browser. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is **James Simpson**. You may ask any questions you have now. If you are participating online and have any questions at this time, please do not proceed to the survey and contact the researcher for clarification. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, **Dr. Galen K. Johnson**, at [REDACTED].

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu

Your Consent

Before agreeing to be part of the research, please be sure that you understand the study's purpose and goals. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. If you have any questions about the survey later, you can contact the researcher/study team using the above information.

Appendix H: Project Survey- Recovery Participant

A Discipleship Curriculum for Training the Church: Using Intentional Relationship Building and Community Presence to Minister to an Addicted Population in Cookeville, TN

Please read the directions carefully. For multiple-choice sections, feel free to select more than one choice if doing so accurately responds to the question asked. For fill-in-the-blank questions, please provide complete answers, giving as much detail as possible. **Do not provide any identifiable information for yourself or any other person you address in your answers** (name, nickname, address, phone number, social security number or additional identifiable information).

Participation may take place online at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/YML2KG2>

Eligibility Screening: Answering these four questions confirms your eligibility to participate in the study.

1. Are you over 18 years old? Yes No
2. Are you actively participating in a recovery program? Yes No
3. If you are not active in a recovery program, have you completed a program in the last 12 months? Yes No
4. Are you maintaining your sobriety? Yes No

Personal Background: this section concerns your childhood and adolescence before age 18. Please select the best answers from each part. You may choose more than one response if appropriate.

1. Parental Involvement
 - a. Both parents present and active in your childhood
 - b. Father mostly absent
 - c. Mother mostly absent
 - d. Both parents absent
 - e. If both parents were absent, who did you primarily live with?
 - f. If there was a different family arrangement, please describe it here:
2. Economic conditions
 - a. Parents/caretakers gainfully employed
 - b. Parents/caretakers struggled to maintain regular gainful employment
 - c. Parents/caretakers received government assistance in the form of Social Security Disability
 - d. Family relied on public assistance/SNAP (food stamps)/etc.
Other financial arrangement:
3. Spiritual Background
 - a. Attended church regularly (5 or more times per month)
 - b. Attended Sunday services regularly (at least 3 Sundays per month)

- c. Attended church occasionally (1 to 3 services per month)
 - d. Attended church sporadically (2 to 5 services in 6 months)
 - e. Attended church very infrequently (maybe on holidays such as Easter and around Christmas)
 - f. Did not attend church
 - g. Another spiritual background:
4. What best describes the location(s) where you grew up? If needed, select more than one answer.
- a. Suburban apartment complex
 - b. Suburban neighborhood of single-family homes
 - c. Urban apartment complex
 - d. Urban community of single-family homes
 - e. Rural area (farms, homes spaced greater distances)
 - f. Subsidized housing complex or apartment buildings (Public Housing, Housing projects or another similar arrangement)
 - g. Another housing arrangement:
5. Substance use history before age 18? Select all that apply
- a. Recreational/social use
 - b. Moderate use
 - c. Frequent use
 - d. Daily or chronic use
 - e. Would you describe yourself as addicted to any illicit substance or alcohol during your adolescence? Yes No
6. What were the community organizations active in the locations where you grew up?
- a. Churches
 - b. Youth Clubs
 - c. Community Sports
 - d. School programs during the summer months
 - e. Library
 - f. Other
9. How would you describe your family's receptiveness to the following external entities when you were growing up?
- Law Enforcement (Police/Children's Services)
- a. Receptive and trusting
 - b. Respectful but avoidant
 - c. Wary and untrusting
 - d. Other:

Community organizations

- a. Receptive and trusting
- b. Respectful but avoidant
- c. Wary and untrusting
- d. Other:

Churches/Religious organizations

- a. Receptive and trusting
- b. Respectful but avoidant
- c. Wary and untrusting
- d. Other:

School Personnel

- a. Receptive and trusting
- b. Respectful but avoidant
- c. Wary and untrusting
- d. Other:

10. Please describe why your family had the attitudes/responses to outside entities that you have indicated.

The following questions concern your status in the 12 months BEFORE you entered your most recent participation in a recovery program.

11. Where did you live?

- a. By yourself
- b. With roommates/friends or acquaintances
- c. With family
- d. Circle the most appropriate: Rented/Owned/Other
- e. Circle the most relevant: House/Apartment/Mobile Home/Other
- f. Resided in government-subsidized housing
- g. Homeless
- h. Other:

12. Financial situation.

- a. Social Security disability
- b. Regular full-time employment
- c. Regular part-time employment
- d. Sporadic full-time employment
- e. Sporadic part-time employment
- f. Day labor
- g. Relied on aid from local community organizations such as churches.
- h. Relied on aid from family, friends, acquaintances
- i. Asking for money from strangers

13. Substance use history: the 12 months before enrolling in your current recovery program. Select all that apply
- a. Recreational/social use
 - b. Moderate use
 - c. Frequent use
 - d. Daily or chronic use
 - e. Would you describe yourself as addicted to any illicit substance or alcohol during your adolescence? Yes No

14. How would you describe your receptiveness to the following external entities in the 12 months before enrolling in your recovery program?

Law Enforcement (Police/Children's Services)

- a. Receptive and trusting
- b. Respectful but avoidant
- c. Wary and untrusting
- d. Other

Community organizations

- a. Receptive and trusting
- b. Respectful but avoidant
- c. Wary and untrusting
- d. Other

Churches/Religious organizations

- a. Receptive and trusting
- b. Respectful but avoidant
- c. Wary and untrusting
- d. Other

School Personnel

- a. Receptive and trusting
- b. Respectful but avoidant
- c. Wary and untrusting
- d. Other

Please describe why you had the attitudes/responses to outside entities that you have indicated.

Final Question

As a person who has experienced recovery and freedom from addiction, you have a unique and valuable set of experiences that can provide a significant insight needed to help others minister to those dealing with addiction and substance abuse.

This project involves two very different groups.

- First, people who are actively using or addicted to various drugs or alcohol and who reside in communities where such lifestyles are commonplace and,
- Second, Members of a local church who desire to minister to the first group hoping to help them achieve sobriety and peace in their lives.

Therefore, this study's most crucial consideration is whether an actual or perceived cultural division exists between the two groups, characterized by distrust and avoidance. If it exists, how can it best be overcome? Please answer this final question with that in mind.

What advice or suggestions would you offer to help the church members establish trusting, genuine relationships with people suffering from addiction?

How could a group like this have successfully reached out to help you when you were actively addicted?

Thank you so much for taking the time to participate in this project,

James Simpson, M. Div.

Appendix I: Project Survey- Recovery Participant Answers

Personal Background: this section concerns your childhood and adolescence before age 18. Please select the best answers from each part. You may choose more than one response if appropriate.

1. Parental Involvement
 - a. Both parents present and active in your childhood 6
 - b. Father mostly absent 7
 - c. Mother mostly absent 4
 - d. Both parents absent 0
 - e. Other 4

2. Economic conditions
 - a. Parents/caretaker gainfully employed 4
 - b. Parents/caretaker struggled to maintain regular gainful employment 13
 - c. Parents/caretaker received government assistance in the form of Social Security Disability 0
 - d. Family relied on public assistance/SNAP (food stamps)/etc. 1
 - e. Other financial arrangement: 1

3. Spiritual Background
 - a. Attended church regularly (5 or more times per month) 3
 - b. Attended Sunday services regularly (at least 3 Sundays per month) 1
 - c. Attended church occasionally (1 to 3 services per month) 0
 - d. Attended church sporadically (2 to 5 services in 6 months) 3
 - e. Attended church very infrequently (maybe on holidays such as Easter and around Christmas) 7
 - f. Did not attend church 3
 - g. Another spiritual background 1

4. What best describes the location(s) where you grew up? If needed, select more than one answer.
 - a. Suburban apartment complex 1
 - b. Suburban neighborhood of single-family homes 9
 - c. Urban apartment complex 6
 - d. Urban community of single-family homes 2
 - e. Rural area (farms, homes spaced greater distances) 9
 - f. Subsidized housing complex or apartment buildings (Public Housing, Housing projects or another similar arrangement) 0
 - g. Another housing arrangement 2

5. Substance use history before age 18? Select all that apply
 - a. Recreational/social use 9
 - b. Moderate use 3
 - c. Frequent use 3

- d. Daily or chronic use 0
6. Would you describe yourself as addicted to any illicit substance or alcohol during your adolescence? Yes 8 No 10
7. What were the community organizations active in the locations where you grew up?
- a. Churches 12
 - b. Youth Clubs 7
 - c. Community Sports 11
 - d. School programs during the summer months 5
 - e. Library 2
 - f. None 3
11. How would you describe your family's receptiveness to the following external entities when you were growing up?
- Law Enforcement (Police/Children's Services)
- a. Receptive and trusting 10
 - b. Respectful but avoidant 6
 - c. Wary and untrusting 2
- Community organizations
- a. Receptive and trusting 9
 - b. Respectful but avoidant 9
 - c. Wary and untrusting 0
- Churches/Religious organizations
- a. Receptive and trusting 8
 - b. Respectful but avoidant 10
 - c. Wary and untrusting 0
- School Personnel
- a. Receptive and trusting 12
 - b. Respectful but avoidant 4
 - c. Wary and untrusting 2
12. Please describe why your family had the attitudes/responses to outside entities that you have indicated.
- a. When I was growing up folks were nice to other folks in a higher standard stood on that and were good
 - b. Upper-middle-class community share everyone had same values
 - c. That's how Mom was raised
 - d. Unsure
 - e. History of addiction, drunkenness, fornication, various generational curses
 - f. Didn't grow up or around church. Single father home who worked all the time.

- g. My family has always been respectful to authority and have never been in trouble with the law.
- h. I guess they were just not into being around all the people that them things may have involved, and they tried to keep chaos out of the home as much as possible they were very supportive of my schooling event and things but never any of the other things of the community I'm not 100% on why that may be other than to keep us kids out of the worldly chaos
- i. Because my community is willing to help out anyone that needs help.
- j. Father worked closely with law enforcement, and mother did as well school personnel they were untrusting and wary due to lies told to family or untrusting staff members
- k. They didn't believe in God. We never attended church because he was irrelevant in our home.
- l. My dad taught us to always respect others.
- m. They were always worried someone was going to be in their business.
- n. My family didn't trust me because I lied every chance I got
- o. Probably because they didn't want to get caught doing the things they were doing.
- p. Parents were always respectful of position people held. However, did not want them interfering in day to day affairs of family and life.
- q. My dad was in prison for 7.5 years, and my mom worked non-stop to make ends meet, not having time for anything else.
- r. Our home life was not the greatest, and tried to avoid outside conflict or intervention

The following questions concern your status in the 12 months BEFORE you entered your most recent participation in a recovery program.

15. Where did you live?
- a. By yourself 6
 - b. With roommates/friends or acquaintances 3
 - c. With family 6
 - d. Rented 2
 - e. Owned 0
 - f. House 2
 - g. Apartment 0
 - h. Mobile Home 0
 - i. Other 0
 - j. Resided in government-subsidized housing 0
 - k. Homeless 5
16. Financial situation.
- a. Social Security disability 1
 - b. Regular full-time employment 8
 - c. Regular part-time employment 1
 - d. Sporadic full-time employment 2
 - e. Sporadic part-time employment 1

f. Day labor	3
g. Relied on aid from local community organizations such as churches.	1
h. Relied on aid from family, friends, acquaintances	6
i. Asking for money from strangers	3
17. Substance use history: the 12 months before enrolling in your current recovery program. Select all that apply	
a. Recreational/social use	2
b. Moderate use	1
c. Frequent use	1
d. Daily or chronic use	14
18. How would you describe your receptiveness to the following external entities in the 12 months before enrolling in your recovery program?	
Law Enforcement (Police/Children's Services)	
a. Receptive and trusting	2
b. Respectful but avoidant	5
c. Wary and untrusting	11
Community organizations	
a. Receptive and trusting	5
b. Respectful but avoidant	6
c. Wary and untrusting	6
Churches/Religious organizations	
a. Receptive and trusting	7
b. Respectful but avoidant	6
c. Wary and untrusting	5

Please describe why you had the attitudes/responses to outside entities that you have indicated.

1. Scared and alone
2. Wanted to be left alone but not hostile towards any
3. Too many cops killing black men 2
4. Depends on the church. Some I felt judgment from mostly COC
5. More trusting since got saved
6. Watched my mother go through addiction all through my childhood.
7. I have been taught to respect my authorities, and I have never been in trouble with the law.
8. I had the attitude I did toward everything because I was in full addiction and didn't want others to know about it, including my family, I tried to be very private about the things I was doing because I didn't want to hurt anyone in the middle of my mess
9. Because I believe that the schools will help out

10. With the ones listed as respectful but avoidant primarily due to I did not have to deal with them much, but when I did, I tried less to and those weary and untrusting I come from a large city and larger cities are harder to trust anyone especially those in charge.
11. I avoided things because I knew I was doing wrong and didn't want to be told what I was doing was wrong.
12. I was on drugs and did not trust any.
13. Because I knew I was in a mess.
14. I was untrusted in every area
15. I knew that the churches here would help with food. So, in my mind, in my heart, I knew I could trust them. Of course, I avoided the law because of my criminal charges at the time. As for community organizations, I didn't know of any.
16. Did not trust or the motives of anyone. Thought most were just out for themselves.
17. Had a hard time trusting the police because I had been set up a few times before going to Teen Challenge. A local church is the one that help pay for me to go to Teen Challenge.
18. Had no use for these organizations

Final Question

As a person who has experienced recovery and freedom from addiction, you have a unique and valuable set of experiences that can provide a significant insight needed to help others minister to those dealing with addiction and substance abuse.

This project involves two very different groups.

- First, people who are actively using or addicted to various drugs or alcohol and who reside in communities where such lifestyles are commonplace and,
- Second, Members of a local church who desire to minister to the first group hoping to help them achieve sobriety and peace in their lives.

Therefore, this study's most crucial consideration is whether an actual or perceived cultural division exists between the two groups, characterized by distrust and avoidance. If it exists, how can it best be overcome? Please answer this final question with that in mind.

What advice or suggestions would you offer to help the church members establish trusting, genuine relationships with people suffering from addiction?

1. Grace patience and do not judge or be stuck up.
2. Interest in people must be genuine. If people feel you see them as a mission field, they assume you are not interested in them.
3. Do not be judgmental. Pray for and with them. A person has to truly get clean.
4. Recovery through love and not judgement. Most of us become addicted through pain. Would prefer all of recovery not to be as painful.
5. Be inclusive of all people, have childcare.
6. Do not judge a book by its cover. Love no matter what. Serve.

7. Do not start off by telling them that their choices are sins. They need to know that eventually, but it is not something that is going to be beneficial right away. Help them to understand that they are not the only ones suffering from addiction and that there is not a classification for those who are most likely to become an addict. Anyone can become an addict. They also need to know that they are never too far gone. No matter what they have done or how long they have been an addict. They always have a chance to succeed. Lastly, teach them about Jesus. Let them know that they are loved.
8. My first thing would be is to not push yourself on an addict. The last thing an addict wants is someone pushing themselves on them. Take your time in getting close to that person, take baby steps. Let them feel that you are safe and you are not just another person that is there to hurt them or tear them down by what you know about them.
9. That the churches will help anyone in need.
10. Continue to show your unconditional love for them and raise them up with words of encouragement without tearing them down. We have already been torn down enough.
11. Having people who come from the same type of controlling issue, allows a sense of trust to come in naturally. Someone who has not experienced similar stations I do not feel like connect well or understand where I am coming from,
12. Receive them with openness, which I know the church does. The addict has to be ready to take the step.
13. They can offer their time. Mostly when I was in my mess and I went to community churches and organizations I just wanted what they had to offer but no one ever offered me their time. I believe I would have taken it.
14. I knew one thing when I was in addiction, that was to survive. Of course, I wanted a different way of life, but how? I went to a church for help. But they were not equipped to help others with employment. Having an understanding of a person in addiction is difficult if you have never experienced it first-hand. I was lost running from myself. I know you cannot just trust anyone. But for someone who was lost, to know that someone was there and cared for them. Would have been different. A phone call, a way to help getting you a job. To help better your life, even if you did not have children. Homeless addicts need help too. It is just a different kind of help.
15. They must be honest and open about themselves. Must be living what they want to give and share. People in addiction can sense a fake person or motive.
16. Addiction is a choice, do not get me wrong, but we do not just wake up wanting to be an addict. As an addict, we are looking to satisfy that need that we are trying to fulfill with all the wrong things. Before Christ, we do not understand that void we are trying to fill can only be satisfied by one thing and that's Jesus Christ. We make bad choices and do some stupid things, but we are good people just in need of a heart change.
17. Show you truly care and are not trying to get a heavenly notch in your belt. Offer people your love not your opinion.

How could a group like this have successfully reached out to help you when you were actively addicted?

1. NA
2. Genuine concern must come before programs. Accept people as they are. Walk beside them till they trust you. Over time you can minister.
3. NA

4. Give people someone to talk to that has been through it
5. Be inclusive of all people, have childcare
6. Not judge me for what I had done.
7. I do not think I was receptive to hearing anything at that time.
8. Honestly, I was on social media a lot and I would have really loved to see more things on there about getting help or even in the probation offices. Posters to let people know there is help out there. Even in a jail cell something that tells them about programs or people that are there to help them. Because so many don't know because there is nothing there for them to see there is help. Even in a grocery store maybe a poster showing a picture then details on who and where there may be help out there. Something that pops to get our attention. I feel like so many want help, but don't know where to turn to get that help because they are afraid or unknowing. Posting it wherever you can would be a great way to just even get the word out there. Honestly if I would have seen this in all the places, we could have put them it would have stuck out to me a long time ago
9. Praying for me
10. By having them come out to the streets hanging out but persistence not just one time or two. Showing up daily, like someone actually caring about (what) I was going through
11. It is not until you are ready. I do not think anyone could make a difference until I came to the end of myself.
12. Counseled with the addict and being there when I had nowhere to sleep.
13. Being persistent to engage with me more. I may not have taken them up on it the first couple of times but one thing I have learned is we cannot just “know” we have to “Do” and do and do.
14. Getting the “cold shoulder” or being looked down upon is hard when you are just needing someone to be there for you
15. Resources for work, housing, UCHRA. To provide a way to and from meetings. Judge free. It takes time. More advertising for community organizations.
16. It happened. I met a group of people who honestly wanted nothing more than to show me the love of God and were willing to walk it out in front of me expecting and wanting nothing in return. The Bible says love never fails and if it is truly God would love with no hidden agendas or motives being shared people may not understand it may even fight it or run from it. However, God’s love will touch them.
17. I had a church group reach out to me and help me. They invited me to church, encouraged me and pushed me to be and do better. And they still are helping me even after I graduated Teen Challenge program and working as staff. Good people make a big difference. If people truly cared and did not judge I may have been willing to listen and participate.

Appendix J: Informed Consent for Participation- Rescue Mission Participant

Title of the Project: A Discipleship Curriculum for Training the Church:

Using Intentional Relationship Building and Community Presence to Minister to an Addicted Population in Cookeville, TN

Principal Investigator: James B. Simpson, M. A., M. Div., Liberty University

Invitation to be part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. You must be 18 years old and currently residing at or participating in a recovery program at the Cookeville Rescue Mission. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take the time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to participate in this research project.

What is the study about, and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to aid in planning an outreach ministry for a local church to minister to people in a nearby community who struggle with addiction and substance abuse issues. This survey seeks to determine what real or perceived barriers might be present between church members and community residents and how to eliminate those barriers best.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to participate in this study, you should completely and honestly answer the provided survey, which will take no more than ten (10) minutes to accomplish.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Benefits to society include the potential to open opportunities to minister to people affected by addiction and substance abuse issues.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

Participation is entirely anonymous. The records of this study will be kept private, and staff from the Cookeville Rescue Mission will not have access to any completed survey paper copies.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision about whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or any addiction or substance abuse program in which you are currently or may later be enrolled. If you decide not to participate, you are free not to answer any questions or withdraw at any time before submitting the survey.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study and not complete the **paper survey**, please do not turn in your response sheets. It is your property to dispose of as you wish.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is **James Simpson**. You may ask any questions you have before completing the survey. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact James Simpson at [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, **Dr. Galen K. Johnson**, at [REDACTED].

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu

Your Consent

Before agreeing to be part of the research, please be sure that you understand the study's purpose and goals. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. If you have any questions about the survey later, you can contact the researcher/study team using the above information

Appendix K: Project Survey- Rescue Mission Resident Participant

Please read the directions carefully. For multiple-choice sections, feel free to select more than one choice if needed. For fill-in-the-blank questions, please provide complete answers, giving as much detail as possible. Do not provide any identifiable information for yourself or any other person you address in your answers (name, nickname, address, phone number, social security number or additional identifiable information).

1. Did your parents engage in drug and/or alcohol use when you were growing up?

Yes No

If you answered yes, on average, how would you describe their use of drugs or alcohol?

- e. Recreational 1-2 times per month
- f. Moderate 1 time per week
- g. Frequent 2-3 times per week
- h. Daily or chronic use

2. Would you describe your parents as addicted to any illicit substance or alcohol during your childhood? Yes No

3. Did you engage in drug and/or alcohol use when you were growing up (before age 18)?

Yes No

What was your drug of choice?

If you answered yes, on average, how would you describe your use of drugs or alcohol?

- a. Recreational 1-2 times per month
- b. Moderate 1 time per week
- c. Frequent 2-3 times per week
- d. Daily or chronic use

4. Would you describe yourself as addicted to any illicit substance or alcohol during your childhood? Yes No

5. In the last 12 months, have you engaged in the use of alcohol or drugs? YES NO

What is/was your drug of choice?

If you answered yes, on average, how would you describe your use of drugs or alcohol?

- 1. Recreational 1-2 times per month
- 2. Moderate 1 time per week
- 3. Frequent 2-3 times per week
- 4. Daily or chronic use

6. Would you describe yourself as addicted to any illicit substance or alcohol at this time in your life? Yes No

7. How would you describe your receptiveness to the following community organizations?

(Circle each

- a. Law Enforcement- Receptive Cautious Avoidant

b.	Community groups	Receptive	Cautious	Avoidant
c.	School personnel	Receptive	Cautious	Avoidant
d.	Churches	Receptive	Cautious	Avoidant

If you answered Cautious or Avoidant, please describe why. Have you had traumatic experiences with the group? What history do you have with a group that would lead to your caution or avoidance?

8. This project involves two very different groups.
- People who are actively using or addicted to various drugs or alcohol and who reside in communities where such lifestyles are commonplace and,
 - Members of a local church who desire to minister to those people and who hope to help them achieve sobriety and peace in their lives.

This study's most crucial consideration is whether an actual or perceived cultural division exists between the two groups, characterized by distrust and avoidance. If it exists, how can it best be overcome? Please answer this final question with that in mind.

What advice or suggestions would you offer to help Church members establish trusting, genuine relationships with people suffering from addiction or substance abuse?

Thank you so much for taking the time to participate in this project,

James Simpson, M.Div.

Appendix L: Project Survey- Rescue Mission Resident Participant Answers

1. Did your parents engage in drug and/or alcohol use when you were growing up?
13-68% Yes 6-32% No

2. If you answered yes, on average, how would you describe their use of drugs or alcohol?

Recreational 1-2 times per month	1
Moderate 1 time per week	1
Frequent 2-3 times per week	5
Daily or chronic use of alcohol/marijuana/prescription medications	5

3. Would you describe your parents as addicted to any illicit substance or alcohol during your childhood? 8-44% Yes 10-55% No

4. Did you engage in drug and/or alcohol use when you were growing up (before age 18)?
15-79% Yes 4-21% No

5. What was your drug of choice?
 - i. alcohol
 - ii. alcohol
 - iii. marijuana
 - iv. pot meth cocaine
 - v. pot alcohol
 - vi. meth pot LSD
 - vii. marijuana
 - viii. speed
 - ix. occasional beer
 - x. opiates
 - xi. speed
 - xii. pot, meth, cocaine
 - xiii. pot, alcohol
 - xiv. marijuana, acid, alcohol

6. If you answered yes, on average, how would you describe your use of drugs or alcohol?

Recreational 1-2 times per month	3
Moderate 1 time per week	4
Frequent 2-3 times per week	0
Daily or chronic use	7

7. Would you describe yourself as addicted to any illicit substance or alcohol during your childhood? 10-53% Yes 9-47% No

8. In the last 12 months, have you engaged in the use of alcohol or drugs?
9-50% Yes 9-50% No

9. What is/was your drug of choice?
- i. alcohol
 - ii. meth
 - iii. meth
 - iv. pot
 - v. meth, LSD, heroin
 - vi. marijuana
 - vii. alcohol
 - viii. Meth, Booze
 - ix. Meth
 - x. alcohol
10. If you answered yes, on average, how would you describe your use of drugs or alcohol?
- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Recreational 1-2 times per month | 0 |
| Moderate 1 time per week | 1 |
| Frequent 2-3 times per week | 1 |
| Daily or chronic use | 7 |
11. Would you describe yourself as addicted to any illicit substance or alcohol at this time in your life? 1/5% Yes 18/95% No
12. How would you describe your receptiveness to the following community organizations? (Circle each)
- | | | | |
|-------------------|--------------|------------|------------|
| Law Enforcement- | 12 Receptive | 1 Cautious | 4 Avoidant |
| Community groups- | 10 Receptive | 4 Cautious | 1 Avoidant |
| School personnel- | 11 Receptive | 4 Cautious | 0 Avoidant |
| Churches- | 15 Receptive | 1 Cautious | 0 Avoidant |
13. If you answered Cautious or Avoidant, please describe why. Have you had traumatic experiences with the group? What history do you have with a group that would lead to your caution or avoidance?
- i. been in jail too many times
 - ii. I am avoidant towards law enforcement due to the way they treat you once they have your identification. They tend to try to make you tell on yourself. It is very annoying and a cause for anxiety
 - iii. because I like to stay to myself. I am a one-man wolfpack
 - iv. I went to prison for 2 years and been in and out of jail. I don't understand them community groups.
 - v. TMCHA my mental health
 - vi. I have had bad experiences with law enforcement, but I don't worry now that I'm sober
 - vii. Community groups depend on what they want or offer. I do not have anyone in school
 - viii. was taught to be. Due to past stories by family
 - ix. I was arrested at 13 for DWI. I thought I was doing the right thing. I was asleep in my car. Lack of trust

- x. I do not like crowds at all feel they are unsafe judgmental I'm not in control
14. What advice or suggestions would you offer to help Church members establish trusting, genuine relationships with people suffering from addiction or substance abuse?
- i. Have or set up AA groups
 - ii. I don't know
 - iii. When you are on drugs it never means that you have forgotten about God. Often times my friends and myself feel lost and like no one cares. If they do care its cause they have to. Its their job so to speak.
 - iv. Sta clean, follow the protocol, don't stray off the wagon
 - v. I don't know I just know drugs are bad. life better than any drugs
 - vi. I think having the relationship first is important. It gains their trust and will make helping with their recovery a little easier.
 - vii. Be genuine in your concern and guidance
 - viii. Use peer counselors, folk who've experienced addiction first hand for your outreach.
Be genuine
 - ix. you would have to have been there and know what that person is going through to help them with their problems
 - x. reach out to them
 - xi. Do not try to make yourself better than anyone else. Do not talk down to people. If you have never had a problem like they do, do not tell them you know how they feel. Everyone has their own way of dealing with different things.
 - xii. I have never used and do not know how to answer this
 - xiii. Be open-minded. Do not judge what you do not understand. when someone is under the influence of any type of mind-altering substance, they are not in their right mind but while sober they are good people.
 - xiv. Do not say something and then not do it. It is a trust thing
 - xv. Do be kind and not judgmental. be empathetic toward them. be chest-worthy. Do not say you will do something and not follow through. Be fun in your quest. To help, many just say ' They do not want to be helped,' but they really do.

Appendix M: Discipleship Curriculum

Walking in Samaria:

Missional Discipleship for Reaching Persons Struggling with Addiction and Substance Abuse

Jimmie Simpson, M. A., M. Div.

Walking in Samaria



Missional Discipleship for Reaching People Struggling with Addiction and Substance Abuse

Jimmie Simpson, M. A., M. Div.

Cover photo by

PALÄSTINA und das OSTOJORDANLAND (Julius Hoffmann, Stuttgart, 1925),
Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ruins_of_Samaria.jpg.

Introduction

In any endeavor, it makes the most sense to start at the beginning. The motivation for this project has been a very personal one. My name is Jimmie Simpson, and I was an alcoholic and an addict. In our society, those two words come with a stigma where people often shy away from people with these issues, and as we will see, that is entirely understandable.

The earliest stories of my drinking begin at about age three or four. My father told me once that my mom had gone to the store, leaving him and myself at home. We watched a golf game in the den, and as usual, Dad had a glass of Jack and Coke on his end table. I was sitting in a chair on the other side of the table, and Dad did not notice that his drink was going a lot faster than usual. After my mom came home, I had become whiny, and she picked me up, immediately smelling the alcohol on my breath. Dad said that Mom tore into him about getting “the baby drunk.”

Now let us fast forward about twelve years. Around sixteen, I started taking the opportunity to buy wine coolers and would consume a package of four in a couple of hours sitting in my car or at parties in high school. It was also around this time that I began smoking cigarettes. Mom quickly discovered my smoking but felt guilty because she smoked. She stated that she could not fuss at me for what she also did, and her guilt and ambivalence led to her even buying cigarettes for me.

A quick interjection needs to take place here. My parents divorced when I was seven, and I typically lived with Mom and visited Dad every other weekend. There was a time from about thirteen to sixteen when I did live full time with my dad. My stepmother was a faithful member of the Church of Christ, and my dad began attending that church. I attended the Church of Christ when I was with my dad, and sometimes my mom and I went to a small Missionary Baptist

Church in North Knoxville. At thirteen, I went forward during the invitation and was baptized in the Church of Christ.

My drinking and smoking continued through high school, and upon graduating, I immediately left to accept an appointment to the U.S. Coast Guard Academy. I dropped out of the Academy in short order and went back home, where a month later, I enlisted in the U.S. Navy and left for Boot Camp in Great Lakes, Illinois. Thus began a ten-year tour as a Submarine Navigation Electronics Technician. In my first two years on active duty, I would lose the two most influential women in my life. My maternal grandmother died suddenly in 1989, and just a few days short of a year later, my mother died of cancer in 1990. My father and I had not spoken since I left his home at sixteen. I had three half-brothers who had never lived with me growing up, as they were ten, twelve and fourteen years older than me. It was at this time that I came to know what it felt like to be completely alone.

My drinking continued with abandon, and I received nonjudicial punishment (Captain's Mast) five times in my first six years in the service. Every incident revolved around being late to work because I was drunk, but no one ever asked or even hinted that they cared that I was a heavy drinker. In my later years in the Navy, my drinking increased in frequency to where I was at a bar at least five days a week. I also became introduced to inhalants; specifically, a small bottle one could buy in local gas stations called RUSH. The euphoric feeling magnified when I combined RUSH with whiskey, and I quickly became a "frequent flyer."

Naturally, my alcohol and drug use impacted others. Most notably were two girls I dated in 1994 and 1995. Both became pregnant, and both aborted the children. In 1994, I was the "supportive" boyfriend, and I told her it was her decision and that I would be there for her through it all. I sat in the lobby while someone killed my child in a procedure room down the

hall. In 1995, I was not supportive. We argued about her desire to abort the pregnancy, and ultimately, she did so, which led to us breaking up. I have to say that there is not a day that goes by that I do not regret at my core that I have two children I never held.

My father and I reunited when I was 21. He had since divorced my stepmother and realized that the things she had been accusing me of were false. We never again had a real father-son relationship, and it was more like we just talked occasionally. He visited a few times, and in 1998, when I was trying to decide whether to reenlist, Dad told me to come home and stay with him while I went to college. In May of 1998, I was honorably discharged and moved to Middle Tennessee, where I bought a small home in Cookeville and started school at Tennessee Technological University.

While in college, I became associated with and pledged the Delta Chapter of Alpha Gamma Sigma fraternity, where I met Ronnie Neal and Robin Ashe. I was ten years older than most of the other students. However, the fraternity life fit well with my substance abuse and drinking. In mid-1999, Robin and Ronnie started talking to me about my drinking, and it was through their influence, I began to try to clean myself up. I failed every time, and things progressed until I drank up to a fifth of a gallon of Jack Daniels per day. I started my day with a drink from the bottle on my nightstand and ended my day the same way. I even carried a thermos of liquor everywhere I went. I had become physically dependent on alcohol, and the inhalants kind of disappeared.

Fast forward again to January 23, 2000. I woke up that Sunday morning and told the woman I had picked up at a bar the night before to lock the house when she left, and I went to church. Yes, you read that correctly. I went to church very frequently throughout my life. After all, I was baptized when I was thirteen, and I had my ticket punched to get into heaven. That

morning, everything changed. I regularly attended Jefferson Avenue Church of Christ, and that morning Bro. Mike Benson preached from Ephesians 2:8-10, and the message was titled, “The Cry of a Sin Scarred Soul.” That sermon was the first time I remember ever hearing about God's grace and mercy and that Jesus Christ had accomplished everything needed for my freedom. I had been trying to clean myself up for about eighteen months, to stop drinking, stop cussing, stop sleeping around, to cease everything “bad” that I did, and I failed every time. That morning I found out that the changes and relationship with God I was seeking were not about what I could do to save myself but was about what Jesus had already done. I ran down front at the invitation and told Bro. Mike that I could not do this on my own. I could not fix myself, and that morning, I surrendered my life to God through faith in Jesus Christ. I had walked into that sanctuary still drunk from the night before, but I walked out stone sober, and by God's grace, I have not had a drink for 21 years. I have been married now for 20 years, and my wife and I have a 16-year-old daughter and a six-year-old son, whom we adopted when he was four, after being his foster parents for two years.

I hope that knowing my story helps you to understand why I am passionate about this subject. I once watched a video by Penn Jillette, who is an avowed atheist. In it, he spoke about proselytizing or sharing one's faith. He asked, “How much do you have to hate someone to not tell them about the hope you believe in? If you believe that someone is about to be run over by a truck, how much do you have to hate them to not warn them?” In short, how many people are you comfortable with them dying and going to hell?

In John Chapter 4, Christ takes an unusual detour into Samaria. Despite the most direct route from Galilee to Jerusalem being to travel through Samaria, Jews were hesitant to enter that region. They would travel long ways to avoid being defiled by interaction with Samaritans. In

this story, He takes the most direct route from Jerusalem to Galilee. We soon learn that His purpose in taking that route has much less to do with practicality and more to do with His missional work in the world.

A second and even worse violation of custom happens when Jesus strikes up a conversation with a Samaritan woman. Even today, it is socially unacceptable in Middle Eastern culture for a man to speak to an unrelated woman in public. Even worse yet, this woman has a deplorable reputation among the population of her city, Sychar. She has lived with at least six men and been married to five of them. She admits to living with a man to whom she is not married and being engaged in a sexual relationship with him. Her shame is so significant that she comes in the hottest part of the day to draw water to avoid the other women who arrive early in the morning or late in the evening. Because of Jesus' desire to share the good news of what God is doing, He breaks tradition and taboo and reaches out to this woman whom no other Jew would try to reach. It is this missional heart that I hope the following pages help to develop within you. As Christians, we must be willing and ready to take a proverbial walk in Samaria to see the lost saved and the Kingdom expanded.

The church has a mission to reach out into the world with the hope of the gospel of Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:18-20), and we do not get to pick and choose whom we think is worthy to hear. Our command is to go and to tell everyone who will listen. Going and telling will often require us to engage with people and cultures that are foreign and sometimes scary. The purpose of the next six weeks is to help you learn the urgency of the mission and help you navigate the intricate world of establishing the kind of relationships needed to reach into some of the darkest places where the human soul can reside.

Week 1: Who Needs God?

In this life, people depend on different things for security and stability. Often the things relied on are just as fragile as the person counting on them. One of the best examples is a person depending on his job for financial, emotional, physical and mental security. By going to work every day, someone secures the money needed to pay the rent, put groceries in the home, cover the bills and hopefully leave enough for a bit of fun.

So, what happens when the company moves to another state or even another country? What if the company just closes, as so many did in 2020 during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic? What about the day that a person goes to work to find out he is being laid off or fired? Solomon had a few thoughts on this very thing-- “Vanity of vanities, Vanity of vanities, all is vanity. What profit has a man from all his labor in which he toils under the sun?”¹

“All is vanity and grasping for the wind.”² Solomon is in a prime position to have a very well-informed understanding. 2 Chronicles 9:22-23 reads, “So King Solomon surpassed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom. and all the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart.” He had hundreds of wives and more money than he could ever spend. He was the king of Israel when the nation was the superpower in its region. Yet, the despair in his heart becomes blatant when we read his thoughts in Ecclesiastes. If anyone should have been satisfied and comforted with what the world offers, Solomon was that person. Yet the world was insufficient to comfort him.

Sadly, nothing has changed. We all still search for that thing that fills and completes us, and the world still offers the lie that it can bring peace and hope. Security will happen only when

¹ Ecclesiastes 1:2-3.

² Ecclesiastes 1:14.

people come to a reckoning with Psalms 42:1, “As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God.”

Monday: In His image

Primary Thought:

All people are created specifically and intentionally by God.

Scripture:

Genesis 1:27-28: “So God created man in His own image; in the image of God, He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them....”

2 Peter 3:9: “For God is not slack concerning His promise as some count slackness. But is faithful and just, desiring that none should perish, but all should come to repentance.”

Significant Undercurrents:

God creates every person in His image. We are all made intentionally and specifically by God and with specific attributes which reflect His hand in our lives. People have unique personalities and the desire to associate with others. We are creative and intelligent with contributions that only we can make to society.

Our Creator intimately loves each one of us. John 3:16 and Romans 5:8 reveal two examples of this love. Both verses speak directly to the unfathomable love which God holds for humanity. John talks about the way and the extent God loves us. To paraphrase the beloved Disciple, God loved the world to the degree that He was willing to allow His special unique Son to die that people might be able to experience eternal life. Paul, in Romans, states that God showed His love for us by sending Jesus to die for us even when we did not deserve such extravagant grace.

Biblical Truths:

No one is without purpose. There is no such thing as an accidental person. God speaking to Jeremiah reveals how long He had known each of us, “Before I formed you in the womb I

knew you.”³ Each of us is known by Him in a way that no one else can understand. Just as a potter knows the clay in his hand, its strengths and weaknesses, God knows us. Again, speaking to Jeremiah, He says, “I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper and not to harm you, plans for a future and a hope.”⁴ God is real and loving and has specifically made every man, woman and child.

Competing Propositions:

In society, there are varying classes of persons. These are referred to as the Haves and the Have-Nots, implying different values regarding human lives. The Haves, which some may deem privileged, are more practical to society and therefore more valuable than the Have-Nots or the lower class. Understand, this division impedes the ministry process from both sides and is a reality that requires attention. The Haves look down on the Have-Nots, and the Have-Nots likewise look down on the Haves. There is the intrinsic feeling of what is often described as “other.”

Personal Consequences:

Does the separation between classes fit with the truth that God created every person? How does this reality play out in your life? Do you think you are a Have or a Have-Not? How do you think people who are outside of your social class view you? How does the reality of social class impact your circle of friends, acquaintances, peers or colleagues? When you consider people with addiction and substance abuse issues, how would they be socially ranked compared to yourself?

³ Jeremiah 1:5.

⁴ Jeremiah 29:11.

Journal entry:

Briefly reflect on today's lesson and write a letter to yourself describing how you feel.

Prayer:

Consider how you would want God to transform you, given today's lesson.

Tuesday: With a purpose

Primary Thought:

God creates all people for a purpose.

Scripture:

Genesis 2:8a, 15: “The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden... Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.”

Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV): “For I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans to prosper and not to harm you, plans for a future and a hope.”

Significant Undercurrents:

The most frequent understanding from this passage is that God created man to be fulfilled by work. Even in the perfection of the Garden of Eden, Adam was not expected just to hang out and relax all day. Further than that, though, it is apparent that God planned for and provided for the pinnacle of His creation, humanity. God planted the garden, not for the animals or Himself. Instead, He did so for Adam and his bride. There is even a deeper level of significance, as will be discussed in tomorrow's study.

Biblical Truths:

God wants good for His creation. God has intentions and plans that go beyond our perception or understanding. God is intentional in His planning, and because of that, we can know that He has a goal in mind for each of us.

Competing Propositions:

Darwinian Evolution provides a competing proposal that creation and life are not intentional but are a cosmic accident. Interestingly, in 2016, David Klinghoffer wrote an article addressing the uniqueness of the earth. Citing external research, Klinghoffer states that,

“Statistically speaking, Earth perhaps shouldn’t exist.”⁵ He points to the estimate that there are 700 quintillion or 700 with 18 zeroes following it, planets in the universe and that the uniqueness of Earth to produce human life happens on only one of those.

Think for a minute about engaging in something where the chance of success is one out of 700 quintillion. That would not be a wise endeavor at all. If the Darwinian theory is true, then it overcame more severe odds than are humanly imaginable. On the other hand, if biblical creation is correct, it stands to reason that God could easily overwhelm any odds to effect His desires. The fact that God created explicitly and purposefully should be apparent, and as the pinnacle of that creation, we have purpose and intent in our existence.

Personal Consequences:

All people deal with the issue at one time or another of feeling they are a failure or worthless. How does today's discussion speak to those times in your own life? How do you reconcile that God has intentions and plans for your life, knowing that negative things happen?

Journal Entry:

Think back to one of your most difficult seasons of life and write a short letter to yourself with the value of hindsight. What would you want to ensure you never forget about the events and the outcome?

Prayer:

Considering today's lesson, what prayer would you pray?

⁵ David Klinghoffer, “One in 700 Quintillion: Exoplanet Study Confirms Terran Exceptionalism,” *Evolution News & Science Today*, February 24, 2016, accessed July 21, 2021, https://evolutionnews.org/2016/02/one_in_700_quin/.

Wednesday: How Well Are You Known?

Primary Thought:

God is intimately aware of every struggle you experience.

Scripture:

Psalms 23:4-5: “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.”

Hebrews 4:13: “And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.”

Significant Undercurrents:

As we saw yesterday, God has a plan and an intention for the life of every person. With that truth today, we couple to it the sobering reality that not only does He have a plan, but even more importantly, He knows your past, immediate and future condition. Scripture is clear that no event occurs without His awareness and as we shall see tomorrow His permission. This first week of your study is all about reminding and solidifying for you that God is the God of all humanity and that His purposes and plans are perfect in themselves. As you move through the coming weeks, these truths will be critical as you begin to look not just at your reality but the reality of all humanity, including those struggling with “life-controlling issues”, including addiction and substance abuse.⁶

Biblical Truths:

People can take reassurance that their Creator brought them into existence with purpose and intent. God, who is and was and forever will be (Psalms 102:12), knows every moment in

⁶ Lee, *Living Free: Helping People Discover God's Path to Hope, Faith, and Freedom*, 4.

every person's life. He, therefore, knows every moment in your life, every flaw, every failure, slip and stumble, yet He still wants you.

If God knows you and knows your past, present and future, then there is nothing that you will encounter or do that will surprise or shock Him. This singular point is, at the same time, frightful and freeing. It is frightful that we cannot conceal any portion of ourselves from Him, and it frees us because we know that God still cares for us and desires us despite our flaws and failures.

Competing Propositions:

There are two prevalent societal proposals. We discussed the first yesterday, the theory that all we experience is merely a cosmic accident without rhyme or reason. The second is similarly demoralizing. Many people view God as this all-powerful scorekeeper who sits on His throne, shaking His head in utter disappointment and waiting for the opportunity to bonk them on the head. Instead of addressing this proposition directly here, please be patient as it will become apparent in the coming weeks that nothing could be further from the truth.

Personal Consequences:

What response do you have to the reality that God knows you and your struggles intimately but still wants you?

Journal Entry:

Describe the thoughts and emotions you have when you think about God knowing everything about you, every idea, every feeling and every desire. Nothing is outside His purview.

Prayer:

Take time today in prayer to listen to the One who knows you intimately. Hear God's voice as He proclaims His purpose for your life within His Kingdom.

Thursday: You are wanted

Primary Thought:

Despite knowing you intimately and knowing the faults and failures, you will have, God created you, and He has a unique design and purpose for your life. Even knowing the ugly parts, He wants you.

Scripture:

Isaiah 6:1-5: “In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up and the train of His robe filled the temple. So I said: ‘Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The LORD of hosts.’”

2 Peter 3:9 (NIV): “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead, he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”

Significant Undercurrents:

“How deep the Father's love for us? How vast beyond all measure? That He should give His only Son to make a wretch His treasure.”⁷ Perhaps the most incredible truth to come from God's word is the fact that He has an unbridled, amazing love for all humanity. The church's hymns are replete with cries to the point of His love and desire for us. “Amazing Grace,” one of the most recognized, was penned in 1790 by John Newton, a former slaver and slave. Newton wrote in a letter compiled as part of his memoirs,

That I, one of the most ignorant, the most miserable and the most abandoned of slaves—should be plucked from my forlorn state of slavery in Africa and at length be appointed as minister of the gospel in London, the foremost city in the

⁷ Stuart Townend, “How Deep the Father's Love for Us.” In *Worship Together Songbook*, 4:25, (London: EMI Christian Music Publishing, 1995).

world—that I should there, not only testify of God's grace—but stand up as a singular instance and monument of His grace—that I should be enabled to minister to the world at large through my writings—is a fact I can contemplate with admiration—but never sufficiently estimate.⁸

Newton was perplexed by the fact that God, whom he had sinned against for most of his adult life, would reach down from heaven to secure his rescue from physical peril and would provide the way for his eternal salvation.

The Apostle John speaks directly to the eternal truth of God's love for humanity,

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this, the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.⁹

God loves us, and all that we can see and experience points straight to this truth. We are created for His love, to receive it, to be objects of it and to be the desire of it. If there is one point that should leave us flabbergasted, it is that the God of all that is has us for His chief desire and object of His attention.

Biblical Truths:

The love of God supersedes and surpasses any issue we might have.

Competing Propositions:

There appears to be a contention within society that God is judgmental and vindictive. To many, the perception is that God waits for them to “mess up” so that He might smack them on the head and yell, “Bad boy!” What many think about God is a very lopsided view. Once three blind men set about to describe an elephant. The first felt its ear and proclaimed that an elephant

⁸ John Newton, *The Letters of John Newton*, Kindle. (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2007),
Loc. 21306.

⁹ 1 John 4:7-10.

is “flat and bristly, much like a large fan.” On feeling the elephant’s leg, the second man proclaimed that an elephant is “like a tree, it is solid and sturdy, about five feet tall and twice as big around as a man’s leg.” The last man, holding the elephant’s tail, proclaimed, “No, an elephant is long and slender, like a snake with a furry head.”

Each of these men touched the same animal but, due to a different experience, came away with vastly opposing views as to what they had “seen.” When people experience only judgment and ridicule, they expect that from everyone and ask, “Who could be more judgmental than an all-powerful God who knows us at our core?” God is often presumed based on human interaction, and the perception people have of Him amplifies because of who and what He is.

Personal Consequences:

Does knowing that God does not want to destroy people but desires the salvation of every person speak to your heart? What implications does this bring to the human condition? How does today's topic factor into the purpose of the church and, in turn, every Christian?

Journal entry:

What thoughts came to your mind as you studied today? Take a moment to contemplate the character of God that is necessary for Him to desire a personal, individual relationship with every person.

Prayer:

In the Lord's Prayer, Christ teaches His disciples to pray, “Let Your Kingdom come, let Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”¹⁰ Today in your prayer time, ponder God's will for the salvation of all humanity and seek that He will break your heart for what breaks His.

¹⁰ Matthew 6:10; Luke 11:2-3.

Friday: Everyone is Wanted

Primary Thought:

There is not a single person that does not need a relationship with God. Ultimately what we are searching for in life is the ultimate fulfillment of knowing Him. Sadly, people more often substitute things or other people for Him and find their life very disappointing.

Scripture:

2 Peter 3:9: “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”

Ecclesiastes 3:11: “He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end.”

John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

Romans 3:22-23: “For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”

Significant Undercurrents:

God wants the salvation of all humankind. There is a mindset in society that “God sends people to hell.” The truth of scripture is to the contrary. Contrary to popular belief, God does not send anyone to hell. We are all condemned to hell because of the inherent sinfulness with which we are born. Sin is not just the things we do. It is the symptom of a more profound terminal illness, sinfulness. John 3:17-18, the often-neglected verses following the most cited verse in scripture, John 3:16, states emphatically, “For God did not send His Son into the world to

condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned, but he who does not believe is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” God is a gracious, almost polite entity who never forces Himself on us. While He is mighty enough to bring us into adherence with His expectations and to create humanity of mindless slaves, He does not. Instead, He offers redemption to all who will take it. When one considers Romans 3:22-23, the truth that every person is condemned for their sinfulness and in desperate need of Him becomes indisputable.

Biblical Truths:

Would it not seem that a criminal sentenced to death would jump at an offer of pardon? Yet many more reject the offer than accept. Jesus made it clear that there are two paths we can walk, one which leads to life and another that leads to destruction. Interestingly, He states that more people choose the broad road to ruin rather than the narrow path to life.¹¹

Even though God has done everything to restore everyone who will come to Him through faith in Jesus Christ, the world is full of those who will refuse and remain convicted and condemned.

Competing Propositions:

Society and the world would have us believe, first and foremost, that there is no God, which naturally would discredit every biblical proposition or doctrine.

Society has taken on a subjective perspective where truth is no longer what aligns with reality, but rather truth is determined by what each person holds for themselves. Therefore, society tends to propose that truth is subjective or what is true for one may not be true for all.

¹¹ Matthew 7:13-14; Luke 13:24.

Personal Consequences:

In considering today's material, what group or individuals do you believe should be excluded from hearing the gospel's truth and from being ministered to by God's people? What responsibility should a Christian have in sharing his faith with a non-believer despite how unpleasant they may be to come around? How complete is God's love when considering the totality of His creation, notably the pinnacle of that creation, humankind?

Journal Entry:

Take a moment and write down your thoughts, emotions and concerns regarding today's study.

Prayer:

Lord God, please help me be heartbroken for those that break your heart. Well, up in me an unquenchable thirst for the salvation of every man, woman and child that I can impact. Lord, for those outside my sphere of influence, I pray that they have Your children surrounding them who show Your love to love them. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Week 2: How Do People Meet God?

So, it is apparent that everyone needs God and a relationship with Him. Additionally, He is clear in His Word that He desires a relationship with us and has already taken care of everything needed for our adoption into His family, the Church (Rom 8:16-17; Eph 1:3-6). Romans 1:18-21 communicates to us the general revelation of God through His creation.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world, His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Here, God allows Himself to be known and speaks to the hearts of all people regarding their sinful condition and His desire to be a Father to them.

In addition to general revelation, God also engages in specific or special revelation, which means He removes any excuse or obstacle. John 1:1-5; 10-18 shows how this special revelation occurs in the person of Jesus Christ.

In the beginning, was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him, nothing was made that was made. In Him was life and the life was the light of men. and the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me. And of His fullness, we have all received and grace for grace. For the Law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him."

Jesus of Nazareth was God in the flesh. God interjected Himself directly into human history and provided the bridge that spans the chasm separating Him from us through His Son.

At the outset of His public ministry, Christ aligned Himself with a collection of twelve primary followers who accompanied Him and were privy to parts of His message withheld from the typical crowds. These followers and those whose lives He impacted carried His message of redemption and salvation to the masses. Through their eyewitnesses' testimony, those who did not see Jesus came to know Him in the same powerful way as those who knew him intimately.

In short, how do people meet God? They meet Him through seeing His impact in the life of His followers. This week is all about solidifying the necessity of the involvement of Christians in the ministry of missional outreach with the intent of sharing the gospel and seeing people healed as they come to faith in Christ.

Monday: I Am a Light

Primary Thought:

Christians are saved and brought into a relationship with God not simply to avoid hell but rather to live in His promises of love and redemption among the world, demonstrating the power of His presence in their lives.

Scripture:

1 Peter 3:15: “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.”

Matthew 5:14,16: “You are the light of the world. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”

Genesis 12:2-3: “I will bless you and make your name great, and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you... and in you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

Exodus 4:2-5: “So, he cast (his rod) on the ground, and it became a serpent.... Then the LORD said to Moses, “Reach out your hand and take it by the tail... that they may believe that the LORD God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you.”

Joshua 2:8-11: “I know that the LORD has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you... for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.”

Biblical Truths:

Christians have a responsibility to live, so the hope of Christ and the glory of God are seen within us. From Abraham, God separated one nation with whom He would specially and precisely interact to communicate the truth of who He is to the world. In the Old Testament, this

group was the Israelites and others explicitly permitted into their ranks. It becomes apparent in the New Testament that the promise to Abraham would eventually extend to all those who respond to the offer of salvation.

Competing Propositions:

The typical mindset in society is that each man is an island unto himself and is responsible only for his actions so long as no harm comes to another person. This mindset can be seen in the mantra, “Live and let live.” The idea is that a person should do what he desires just as another should do the same. The significant issue here is when the concept of subjective truth comes into effect. If one is allowed to live according to his own truth, then what consequences occur when his truth conflicts with the truth held by another?

Mike Winger speaks to this argument in his Bible Thinker podcast. He argues that simply claiming something as truth is insufficient. The specific example he mentions is the social construct that individuals who claim a homosexual lifestyle are born with an irresistible bend toward that lifestyle and cannot avoid it. Pastor Winger responds that this argument could be expanded to other behaviors such as murder or pedophilia if held as truth. He proposes an admittedly extreme but applicable example: if a murderer is genetically predisposed to that act, the person should not suffer incarceration for what only came naturally. His point applies to our situation, considering the societal insistence that truth is equivalent to personal preference. There is little validity to what is claimed as truth but not corroborated with irrefutable evidence.¹²

¹² Mike Winger, “Homosexuality: Born Gay? Theology and Science Speak Pt3,” accessed July 5, 2021, <https://Biblethinker.org/homosexuality-pt3-born-gay-theology-and-science-speak/>.

Personal Consequences:

What is your takeaway from today's discussion? How consistent are you at living in a way that draws others to God? A quote contributed to Bara Dada, an Indian philosopher, reads, "Jesus is ideal and wonderful. But you Christians- you are not like Him."¹³ How does this statement resonate with you? If your life were the only commercial for the Church, how many people would want to be part?

Journal Entry:

Take time to jot down your thoughts and any changes you believe should be undertaken in your interaction with others regarding being an ambassador for Christ. Paul reminds us of our position in the world in Ephesians 6:19-20, "That I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak."

Prayer:

Take time to write a prayer that God would use you mightily despite your flaws and that His peace, grace and mercy would cover your dealings with others.

¹³ E. Stanley Jones. *The Christ of the Indian Road*. (New York, NY: Abingdon Press.1953), 114.

Tuesday: Living Billboards

Primary Thought:

When non-Christians see Christians, they inherently want to see God in action.

Scripture:

John 13:34-35: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this, all will know that you are My disciples if you have love for one another.”

1 Peter 4:8: “And above all things have fervent love for one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins.”

Acts 3:6-10: “Then Peter said, ‘Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.’ and he took him by the right hand and lifted him up and immediately, his feet and ankle bones received strength. So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them—walking, leaping and praising God, and all the people saw him walking and praising God. Then they knew that it was he who sat begging alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.”

Acts 2:41, 47b: “Then those who gladly received his word were baptized, and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.... And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”

Acts 4:4: “However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.”

Significant Undercurrents:

Humans are typically an observant race. One person will learn by observing another as he goes through a difficult time and, therefore, comes to understand a productive means of navigating hardship. With Christians, the same is true exponentially. Keeping in mind that God-shaped hole in the heart of everyone, a lost person will watch a believer manage through cancer, poverty, anger and every other variant of difficulty. And that lost person will subconsciously, in her soul, begin to see an answer or a glimmer of hope.

The first-century world in and around Jerusalem was well acquainted with the teachings, miracles and works of Jesus. The population watched intricately those who followed Him to see if what they heard was real. They would have heard Peter's sermon on Pentecost and observed the abuse of the Sanhedrin as Stephen was stoned in the streets and simply accepted his fate, even praising God in his last moments. They saw the results of Peter and John's conversation at the Beautiful Gate and how one who was lame began to walk. It should not be taken lightly that Jesus did the same thing at the Pool of Siloam providing a direct connection between the Apostles and the Savior they proclaimed.

Today's believer needs to come to reckon with the reality that nothing has changed. The world still looks on those who claim faith in Christ in the hope of seeing something different, which has been the key to the spread of God's glory. He favors and works in one person's life while others witness His glory and give themselves over to Him. The statements of Rahab in Joshua 2:9-11 clearly show that God's work in the Israelites significantly impacted those who lived in the city.

Biblical Truths:

While the world should see a difference in believers, this can never be something that the faithful simply work up. Trying harder to be a good example is prideful and useless. What is needed is surrender to God, His will, His intent and a genuine cry of “not my will, but Your will be done.”¹⁴

Competing Propositions:

Society leans much more toward self-dependence as opposed to reliance on God. God tends to be a last resort within the world instead of being the first and only, as He should be. Something that always seems out of place is how people speak of God's place within difficulties. Take a cancer diagnosis, for example. Frequently it is after all human medical options have been exhausted that the family or the person will proclaim, “It's in God's hands now.”

With God, there is never a time when any and every situation is not in His hands. After putting faith in chemotherapy, radiation, diet and other prescribed methods so often, it follows the failure of man's intervention that surrender to God is voiced.

As a personal example, the author's mother-in-law was diagnosed with brain cancer in March 2005 when a glioblastoma ruptured, requiring emergency neural surgery. Following the procedure, the doctor's prognosis was less than encouraging, “We will know more if she wakes up.” Notice it was not when, but “if” she wakes up. She did regain consciousness after three days, and anyone entering her room got to hear immediately, “Let me tell you how God has been good to me.” Even during the treatments of chemo and radiation, Peggy continued to proclaim the goodness of God until April 2006, when she slipped into unresponsiveness as cancer continued to attack her mind. Most encouraging about her story is that the home health nurse

¹⁴ Matthew 26:39-41; Matthew 26:36; Mark 14:32-42; Luke 22:39-46.

who cared for her had returned to attending church, and her family was saved and brought into God's family. All because of how Peggy showed God in her suffering. We should understand that God can never be the last resort in the lives of His children.

Personal Consequences:

Do you depend wholly on God in your life? Is He the only option or the last resort or somewhere in the middle? How do you feel knowing that people are watching you and how you live Christ in front of them?

Journal Entry:

What dependencies need to change in your life? Describe what your life would look like if you did rely entirely upon Him.

Prayer:

Write a short prayer asking God to grow your faith and commit all your present and future cares to Him. Can you genuinely pray, like Jesus, “not my will, but Your will...”?

Wednesday: Others' Need for God Requires Your Need To Show God

Primary Thought:

The life of a Christian revolves around the need to show God to the world. People need to see the love of God in action to know that they can find an escape from the wrath of God through His Son.

Scripture:

John 8:3-5, 7, 8-12: “Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, they said to Him, ‘Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses, in the Law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?’ So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, ‘He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.’ Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, ‘Where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?’ She said, ‘No one, Lord.’ and Jesus said to her, ‘Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.’ Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, ‘I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness but have the light of life.’”

Significant Undercurrents:

There are a few things worthy of note in the story. First, John 7:53-8:2 does not appear in any of the earliest manuscripts, and the earliest appearance of this passage is around 400 A.D.¹⁵ Despite this, no commentator has ever argued against the plausibility of the story conveyed.

¹⁵ George Beasley-Murray, *World Biblical Commentary: John*, Libronix Digital Media. (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1999), p. 143.

George Beasley-Murray notes, “The saying that it preserves is completely in character with what we know of our Lord.”¹⁶

The second interesting point is that adultery naturally requires two participants. Leviticus 20:10 states, “The man who commits adultery with another man's wife, he who commits adultery with his neighbor's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to death.” Here only the woman is brought before Jesus. However, they claim to have caught the woman in the very act of adultery. Therefore, they knew her accomplice's identity, and his sentence should be the same as hers. So where is he?

Lastly, with the total weight of Leviticus bearing down, Jesus would have been perfectly justified in joining the condemnation. After all, He was responsible for and knew the Law better than any of these religious elites. One must remember that contrary to popular belief, sin is not a victimless crime. Regardless of the sin, there are always at least two deeply wounded, the sinner and God. All sinfulness and sin have God as their primary object. Sin is a direct rebellion against Him and the purpose for which He created humankind. Instead of bringing down fire from heaven on this sinful woman, God in the flesh, the entity who was the victim of the man and woman's sin, offers grace and mercy. Despite all of this, it is Jesus who never condemns but instead shows love, mercy and grace.

This woman laid with her face in the ground for her guilt and her humiliation. It was God's people, the religious elite, who condemned her and called for her blood in the street. That is precisely what so many living with addiction feel from and expect from the church. They deal with condemnation so often that they expect nothing less.

¹⁶ Beasley-Murray, *World Biblical Commentary: John*, p. 143.

No person needs to be told that he does wrong and sins. The conviction for sin comes naturally through what many refer to as the conscience. Addicts know that what they engage in is sinful. For the most part, addicts chase their fix in the darkness of seclusion. At least in Cookeville, Tennessee, someone injecting methamphetamine is infrequently witnessed in public. But this activity takes place hundreds of times a day in the shadows. Again, the sinner does not need reminding that he is sinful. Instead, the most critical message a sinner can receive is that God offers mercy, grace and forgiveness free of charge.

This message is seen clearly in this passage. Christ does not have to preach a sermon on the sin of adultery. Instead, He challenges the accusers who, in their position of legality, do not see their sin, of not loving or ministering to this woman and instead compound the guilt she experiences. Jesus' half-brother, James, writes, "For whoever shall keep the whole law and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all."¹⁷ In the Ten Commandments, the first four relate directly to a person's relation and interaction with God, while the remaining six commandments deal with ties to other people. When Jesus said, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," His reference is straight to the point that the Law calls not just for behavior but for love.¹⁸

Biblical Truths:

God works through His people, the Church, and his revelation has closed with the coming of His Son. As Paul discusses in Ephesians 3, God shows Himself to and convicts the sinner by allowing that person to witness His work in the lives of Christians. Each believer is a miracle, a new creation and with that status is the responsibility to minister for God. Christ put it this way, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and

¹⁷ James 2:10.

¹⁸ Matthew 22:39.

of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you...”¹⁹

Competing Propositions:

As stated previously, society and its worldview are in direct opposition to God and His message. Society would hold that this woman's activity injured no one and should be tolerated and accepted.

Personal Consequences:

How does this day's material impact you and your understanding of the Christian responsibility to show Christ? How easy do you think it is not to be repulsed by the blatant sinfulness of humankind and to look on the offenders as potential brothers or sisters in Christ?

Journal Entry:

Take a moment and write down your thoughts and reflections regarding today's study.

Prayer:

Write out a short prayer genuinely asking God to break your heart for what breaks His, namely the brokenness and lostness of those around you.

¹⁹ Matthew 28:19-20.

Thursday: Blessed to be a blessing

Primary Thought:

The purpose of God's blessing is that its recipients would spread that blessing.

Scripture:

Genesis 12:1-3: “Now the LORD had said to Abram: ‘Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great, and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’”

2 Corinthians 1:3-4: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.”

Significant Undercurrents:

As we discussed yesterday, we have an obligation to the world to be salt, light, hope and blessing. In God's people, the lost naturally should see God and His hope. The reason for our transformation is that we might be factors of transformation for others.²⁰ Sin is a trap; it is the natural state of humankind, and apart from a radical change, it is the condition in which people will remain.

A friend once accurately observed, “Sin is a four-letter word, S E L F.” Sin separates us from God, His mercy, His grace and His very presence. Sin focuses on self. It is preoccupied with personal desire and promotion. Sin enmeshes. It entangles us like a fish in a net. The more

²⁰ Romans 12:2.

the sinner struggles, the more caught he often becomes. Sin is limiting. It prevents us from being who and what God intended. Lastly, sin is futile. There is no positive outcome to sin. Regardless of how good it may feel or how no one else suffers from it, sin results in the eternal destruction of the sinner.

Paul speaks most eloquently in Ephesians 1:3-6 about how God blesses us in several places.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.

Also, in Romans 8:38-39, he echoes,

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We experience a relationship to and in Him and peace that exceeds anything the world could offer. We receive adoption into the family of God and the Holy Spirit dwelling within us. The blessing and salvation we receive are not just for our enjoyment. Instead, God gives them to us for the benefit of those who will cross our paths.

Biblical Truths:

God gives us what we need and what He desires. Paul writes in 1 Timothy 6:17, “Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.”

Christ spoke about this in Matthew 5:43-45,

You have heard that it was said, You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute

you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

Competing Propositions:

There is not that much direct competition from society because the world does not hold to the possibility of blessing. Blessing is what comes from another for the recipient's benefit and often entails an unsolicited gift. James posits that the world is in direct opposition to God. So naturally, the world would not tend to look for God in what Christians would call blessings. The world deals on the level of fate and karma, of getting what one deserves. Through Jesus, God mercifully does not give what we earn, which is death and hell; instead, He blesses.

Personal Consequences:

Have you ever thought about the reason for God's blessings in your life? What could you have ever done to deserve the amazing things He has done for you and in your life? If God has a purpose for blessing, would it not coincide with His nature that it would be to benefit beyond just the recipient?

Journal entry:

Paul talks in 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4 about God's blessings being for the benefit of the entire Church. Would it not make sense that this would extend beyond the Church today to the Church tomorrow? Are we not beneficiaries of the blessings administered to and by the first century Church? What are your thoughts regarding your being blessed to be a blessing?

Prayer:

Father God, I pray now for each one who is engaged in this study. I pray, Lord, that You open their eyes to your purpose and for them to know the blessing of salvation they have received. Lord, let us come into the fullness of Christ as servants of humankind in every way,

setting aside ourselves that we might benefit those who so desperately need you that they will see
Your Glory in Your people. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Friday: We cannot sit by and watch people go to hell

Primary Thought:

How many people would you say is an acceptable number to spend eternity in hell?

Scripture:

2 Peter 3:9: “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”

John 4:1-4: “Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John ² (though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples), ³ He left Judea and departed again to Galilee. ⁴ But He needed to go through Samaria.”

Matthew 6:26: “Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?”

Significant Undercurrents:

A very pointed statement that I love comes from the most unlikely of sources. Penn Jillette, an avowed atheist, once spoke about his interaction with a man who handed him a Bible. This man, who adamantly professes not that he does not believe in God but rather that he explicitly believes there is no God, said this, “How much do you have to hate somebody to believe that everlasting life is possible and not tell them that? If I believed beyond a shadow of a doubt that a truck was coming at you and you didn't believe it, and that truck was bearing down on you, there's a certain point where I tackle you. and this is more important than that.”²¹

²¹ Erin Roach, “ATHEISM: Penn Jillette Urges Evangelism” (Baptist Press, February 21, 2009), accessed March 13, 2021, <https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/atheism-penn-jillette-urges-evangelism..>

For someone who believes in God, understanding the critical nature of evangelism is essential. The most dangerous thing in the world today is not an atomic bomb, a terrorist or even a contagious disease. The scariest thing is a professed Christian who neglects to engage in personal evangelism.

Christ came and singled out twelve men into whom He invested Himself. Within three months of His ascension, those twelve numbered possibly over 10,000.²² As evidenced in Acts, Christ's intent was not simply for additive growth where one person only ministers to one person. Instead, He intends for exponential growth where each person ministers the gospel to everyone they can impact. Causing a guilt trip is not the intention of these statements. Instead, their purpose is to stir the heart of each believer who participates in this study. The intent is to communicate the imperative nature of what the Church is supposed to be doing.

Biblical Truths:

1. Christians need to be sharing the gospel with the intent to grow God's fantastic Kingdom.
2. The responsibility does not fall just to the preacher, the pastor or the deacon. Instead, it falls explicitly to every son or daughter of God.
3. Every Christian is enabled to share their faith and to declare Christ.

Competing propositions:

As noted previously, in this case, the opposition is not that there are disagreements as much as there is complete incongruence. The world has no stand regarding the seriousness of the gospel simply because it does not view the gospel as truth. The world defines a person's value based on their potential contribution to society. However, biblically every person is intrinsically valuable to God.

²² Acts 2:41, 4:4.

Personal Consequences:

It should go without even asking that there is no acceptable number of sinners dying and spending eternity in hell for a Christian. However, here is where things get sensitive. How many people in the last year have you led to Christ? How many have you contributed to their salvation? Sadly, the answer to how many is acceptable to spend eternity in hell may appear in those answers.

Journal entry:

Spend a few minutes reflecting on today's lesson and jot down your thoughts and convictions. What do you want to change? How comfortable are you with yourself concerning today's discussion?

Prayer:

What would you ask from God after completing today's study?

Week 3: Samaria, The World of Addiction and Substance Abuse

So far, we have dealt with two significant issues in missional outreach. The things that are understood must become part of the Christian character. First, everyone needs God, and He desires them, and God wants a personal, intimate relationship with every person on this earth. Second, people see God working by observing the lives of Christians. Through this interactive experience, God intends to minister to the lost hearts and secure a hearing for the gospel.

1 Peter 3:15 reads, “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.” When those in need of a relationship with God see Him working in the lives of Christians, there will or should be a natural attractiveness in what they observe. Herein is the problem we will address this week; Christians seem to avoid the places where interactions with the most needful of people might occur. The expectation now is that those in need should come to the church instead of it going to them.

Naturally, people avoid what is other, what is uncomfortable. We avoid what we do not understand. Christians are human, and despite our justification, we struggle with being sanctified and still carry a good deal of our pre-salvation issues. Paul was evident regarding his struggle when he wrote, “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.”²³

This week we will look at another biblical character who had a challenging time going where God sent him. As you study this week and reflect on what God impresses in your heart,

²³ Romans 7:18-19.

know this, “Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.”²⁴

When we follow God's calling and plan, regardless of how difficult things might be, there will always be success in the fact that He will receive glory.

²⁴ Romans 8:37.

Monday: Getting out of our comfort zone

Primary Thought:

The places where God sends and calls us are often not the places we would prefer to be.

Scripture:

Jonah 1:1-3: “Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, ‘Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me.’ But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish.”

Jonah 1:12-16: “And he said to them, ‘Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will become calm for you. For I know that this great tempest is because of me.’ Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to return to land, but they could not, for the sea continued to grow more tempestuous against them. Therefore, they cried out to the LORD and said, ‘We pray, O LORD, please do not let us perish for this man's life and do not charge us with innocent blood; for You, O LORD, have done as it pleased You.’ So, they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly and offered a sacrifice to the LORD and took vows.”

Jonah 3:1-7: “Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, ‘Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city and preach to it the message that I tell you.’ So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the Word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three-day journey in extent. And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day's walk. Then he cried out and said, ‘Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown!’ So, the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them. Then word came to the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and laid aside his

robe, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes. and he caused it to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh”

Jonah 3:10: “Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them and He did not do it.”

Jonah 4:10-11: “But the LORD said, ‘You have had pity on the plant for which you have not labored, nor made it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night. and should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than 120,000 persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left—and much livestock?’”

2 Peter 3:9: “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”

Significant Undercurrents:

The Church is to be the missional arm of God, reaching out into communities and ministering to the lost. While handing out a pamphlet that invites them to church or personally inviting someone to attend is commendable, we should not be satisfied unless we go where we can. We should meet needs and meet people in their places of comfort so they realize that God has not abandoned them but is instead seeking them for salvation.

Biblical Truths:

Jonah had an issue with Nineveh, and he did not want to go there because he had an understandably deep loathing of the Ninevites. John MacArthur notes that Jonah is typically placed, based on context, within the reign of Jeroboam II around 760 B.C. This date would put the events happening within a decade or two before the beginning of the Assyrian capture of

Israel around 740 B.C. The tensions were already present between the nations when God told Jonah to preach repentance to the capital of Assyria in Nineveh.²⁵

Jonah admits to his anger and desire to see Nineveh destroyed when he argues in chapter 4:2, “Ah, LORD, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore, I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm.” Jonah did not want God to rescue Nineveh because he believed they were unworthy of experiencing the intervening hand of God.

As one studies scripture, this same mindset becomes apparent with the religious leaders of Jesus' day. They could not reach out in love to the unwashed, the unclean, the sinners, the Gentiles or other disconnected groups. These people were not permitted to join in worship at the temple or synagogues, and when Jesus came welcoming them and loving them, the religious leaders condemned Him for it.

How much does the universal church of today resemble the Pharisees, Sadducees and priests? Do we welcome those we see as being ‘other’ into our buildings and make them feel like someone genuinely does love them, or do we do them a favor and be polite? Jesus Christ not only met these people where they were, but He spent time with them in their cities and their homes. His outreach was a ministry to countless who had been ignored by those expected to love them.

²⁵ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible: ESV*, Olive Tree Digital Edition, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), Introduction to the Book of Jonah.

Competing propositions:

Interestingly, today's competing proposition finds itself on equal footing with the practices of most within the Church. Like the Church, society has an issue with people whom it deems less than or unworthy. Those who find themselves separated from mainstream society because of conflicts with what might appear as ordinary sensibilities are isolated and left to fend for themselves. They experience exclusion from the normative benefits of societal connections. Homeless persons in Cookeville, Tennessee, reside within camps in stretches of wooded property within the city. Families that are, for whatever reason, unable to support themselves fall off to housing projects. If we could view a demographic map, it would become apparent that there is stark separation within society, whether self-imposed or created for us.

Personal Consequences:

A severe reflection needs to occur when the Church looks like the world, segregated by difference. Intentionally monogenous congregations are an affront to the call of Christ for His people to minister to the world. How can a person claim a transformed relationship with God while shunning and purposefully avoiding the most needful who are within reach?

Have you ever thought about the natural divisions that you accept? The people who you easily mingle with as opposed to those you may struggle even to acknowledge.

The final devotional from last week asked how many people you are all right with them dying and going to hell. The earnest expectation is that you have realized that number must be zero, and you have likewise committed to doing all in your power to reach everyone that you can. Knowing that every man and woman is divinely created and loved should make God's people want to see the lost rescued from their issues.

With those thoughts, the probing question of this week is how willing are you to destroy physical, psychological, cultural and economic barriers that hinder you from ministering to a person in desperate need?

Journal entry:

Take time to think about today's lesson, write out your feelings and respond to those emotions you are experiencing.

Prayer:

Spend time today in earnest prayer that God will begin to equip you to meet needs that break His heart.

Tuesday: Who wants to be an addict? Raise your hand.

Primary Thought:

No person ever set out with the intention to become an addict. Addiction is the product of trying to fill needs with the wrong things. Much like forcing a square peg into a round hole, the pieces tend to break.

Scripture:

Ecclesiastes 3:11: “He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end.”

Psalms 139:14: “I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works and that my soul knows very well.”

Significant Undercurrents:

Interestingly, time and again, throughout scripture, we see what happens in the life of an addict. Solomon, David, Saul and almost every king of Israel or Judah fell victim to the human struggle to meet needs and fill wants with what the world had to offer instead of what God provided. Paul speaks at length in Romans 1:19-23, where he addresses humanity ignoring the general revelation of God and His existence. Instead of seeking God and filling their needs with His provision, people go running headlong after the world gobbling up whatever they find on their way. Paul writes at the end of this passage, “Professing to be wise, they became fools and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.”²⁶

²⁶ Romans 1:22.

Paul discusses in this chapter that God does not force Himself on anyone but instead leaves them over to the things they pursue, which results in every manner of evil and sin. So, what is going on with this situation? Why would someone, knowing that drugs destroy lives, entertain the pursuit of them to the extent of becoming addicted?

While this writer does not attend wholeheartedly to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the idea does contain some very relative truth. Humankind has an innate concern with acquiring what will meet their needs. If a person is hungry, he seeks food. If one is cold, she finds warmth. When alone most people seek the comfort of others. Need is an irresistible force that pulls people along in its clutches. While numerous cultural and admittedly biological factors are involved, addiction results from meeting a need with an inadequate and dangerous substitute to the point that the body and mind become dependent upon the alternate.

While this curriculum focuses on drug addiction and the abuse of drugs, people can become addicted to much less conspicuous things. The numbers exceed quantifying for those who surrender their life to the pursuit of fame, money, sex, status and countless other things. These are just as destructive of lives as methamphetamine and heroin. Yet, the stigma of addiction often passes over these other issues because the person looks put together and normal by society's definition. Additionally, even with the well-documented health impacts of stress and overwork, it is a rare event for someone to die of an overdose on work.

Regardless of the drug, substance or thing, addiction always has consequences, and the most important of these is the flawed thinking that what a small dose could not do a more significant amount might accomplish. Saul Hudson and Jeffrey Isbell write of this in the Guns-N-Roses song "Mr. Brownstone." The song's point is the self-destructive nature that results from the use of heroin (Mr. Brownstone). The chorus states, "I used to do a little, but a little wouldn't

do, so the little got more and more.”²⁷ To this point, Gene Heyman notes that one of those he interacted with when writing *Addiction: A Disorder of Choice* stated, “It’s my relaxer, my shot for the day . . . so I can feel normal. Getting high is the norm for me. I just get normal.”²⁸ For those struggling with addiction, that is their real struggle. Can you imagine your life revolving around anything you had to have every day just to feel normal?

Biblical Truths:

Our primary need as human beings is not food or drink, or even drugs. It is unequivocally God and the relationship that He designed us to have with Him. Anything else is an imposter used by the sinful nature within us to keep us in bondage. God wants us, and He has accomplished everything that we need to know Him.

Competing propositions:

1. The world would have the addict convinced that drugs are the only way for normal to happen and that anything else is inadequate to meet the insatiable need.
2. The world also thrives on maintaining the captivity of the addict. The mental and emotional brainwashing occurs because the addict eventually realizes that nothing else is possible and resigns themselves to their condition.

Personal Consequences:

How has today's topic affected your understanding of addiction? What things in your life do you now realize have an addictive hold on you? What is the one material thing without which your life would be difficult?

²⁷ Jeffrey Isbell and Saul Hudson, *Mr. Brownstone*, (Santa Monica, CA: Geffen Records, 1987.)

²⁸ Gene Heyman, *Addiction: A Disorder of Choice*. Kindle ed., (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), Loc 702.

Journal entry:

Can you relate, if even a little bit, to the condition of those dealing with addiction? This relating is not referring to absolute empathy. Instead, by understanding yourself more, you can begin to put on someone else's shoes for a moment. If your life-controlling issues held sway over you as drugs do for the addict, would you want someone to help?

Prayer:

Pray today for those struggling with the issues of addiction. Not only the addict but family members, children, friends and parents are all affected. Pray today for yourself that God might use you to impact these lives.

Wednesday: How does addiction happen?

Primary Thought:

Addiction is an unhealthy condition in response to a problem that perpetuates itself within the life of the addict.

Scripture:

Matthew 6:32-33: “For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”

Significant Undercurrents:

Today will be a short day as much of what was covered yesterday relates directly to today's topic. Addiction happens when a person engages in using anything to the point that it becomes chronic and uncontrollable. Paul states in 1 Corinthians 6:12 that he will not allow anything to control him despite everything being permissible for him. The control that addiction exerts on the addict results from chemical, physical, psychological and emotional changes in the body and mind of those who fall victim to addiction. Their drug of choice becomes the controlling factor in their lives. What once helped the addict cope with an issue becomes the most significant issue with which he deals.

Earlier, we discussed a primary assumption of this curriculum: no one decides to become an addict. While no one chooses to become an addict, there is still accountability for her choices. Yes, the idea of abstinence is terrifying, and the reality of detox is horrible. Still, any addict on any day can come to reason and decide to stop using and seek help. However, choosing and doing are light years apart, predominantly because of the fear associated with the foreignness of abstinence, the absence of genuine support and other significant issues involved.

One of the most significant obstacles to sobriety is fearing the process that must occur. Along with the primary issues which led to the use, abuse and addiction in the first place, the addict will most likely have accrued a litany of other problems that will be catching up with them. With that said, addiction can hold significant sway on a person. Fear is a tremendous motivator, whether the fear of sobriety and all that accompanies it or the fear of continued addiction both impact the addict's commitment to his sobriety,

Biblical Truths:

1. Seeking to fulfill oneself through worldly devices naturally pulls a person further from God and His desires.
2. The illusion of comfort that the world provides is always more costly than presumed.

Chasing normal and the perceived comfort in it becomes the life focus of the addict.

Competing propositions:

The world would have us believe that alternative coping methods other than God are acceptable and sufficient. The world will never offer God as a solution and instead will continually drive people away from Him. This fact is seen every day in advertisements on television. Think about what you see time and time again. The script is predictable. “If you have a problem, do not worry because there is a pill or a process or some other easy fix available. Just ask your doctor about (insert whatever medication comes to mind).” Interestingly, between 8 and 12% of persons prescribed opioid pain medication end up addicted to what once provided them with relief.²⁹

²⁹ Kevin Vowles, Mindy McEntree, Peter Julnes, Tessa Frohe, John Ney and David van der Goes, “Rates of Opioid Misuse, Abuse, and Addiction in Chronic Pain: A Systematic Review and Data Synthesis., *Pain* 156, no. 4 (April 2015), accessed May 20, 2021, <https://oce-ovid-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/article/00006396-201504000-00003/HTML>.

Personal Consequences:

Like yesterday, what impact does today's material have on your understanding of and feelings toward those dealing with addiction?

Journal entry:

Take time to journal your thoughts relating to today's discussion. Address any issues with which you might be struggling.

Prayer:

Spend time today in prayer seeking wisdom and understanding for the plight of addicts and those impacted by their issues.

Thursday: What happens within the addict?

Primary Thought:

The substance that he uses ultimately controls the addict. In referring to the trap of “hard-core” drugs, Andy Farmer states, “They are life, purpose and meaning to those who are caught in them.”³⁰ During a 1993 interview, Kurt Cobain said, “Like all drugs, after a few months it’s (heroin) just as boring as breathing air. I’ve always lied about it (his drug use) because I don’t want anyone to consider using drugs. It’s just stupid.”³¹

Scripture:

Romans 1:24-25: “Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever.”

Luke 15:13: “And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living.”

Exodus 20:3: “You shall have no other gods before Me.”

Significant Undercurrents:

As was stated earlier, addiction results from filling a need with something that is not beneficial. Ecclesiastes 3:11 reveals that God created humanity with a desire for Himself. In seeking to fill that desperate hunger, people often try to satisfy themselves with things other than what they truly need. These things trap the person, entangling them and grabbing control of their

³⁰ Andy Farmer, *Trapped: Getting Free from People, Patterns and Problems*, (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2016), Loc 1586.

³¹ Kurt Cobain, “Live Interview with Nirvana,” interview by Laurence Romance, August 10, 1993, accessed July 10, 2021, <https://www.livenirvana.com/interviews/9308lr/index.php>.

lives. Unlike the drug addict, the workaholic avoids treatment as a pariah by society. However, the control over his life by his addiction is just as absolute.

Biblical Truths:

The simple fact is that God wants every one of us. He implants us with a longing for Him that we might feel a compulsion to find Him. However, the sinful nature and the ready availability of alternatives provided by human society present an easy fix for the problem.

As was shared in the introduction, the first 30 years of this writer's life revolved around his need for significance, purpose and peace. Loss in his life was an ever-present problem—the loss of his father to divorce and the loss of stability as his mother struggled to make a living were creating fertile ground for the storm to come. Ultimately the losses of the most influential women in his life, his grandmother and mother, set a downward spiral in motion. Alcohol, drugs and sex became his source of relief. In them, he felt he found comfort, but most of all, the substances he ingested numbed the emotional pain.

The first few chapters of Genesis demonstrate this scenario. Genesis 9:20-21 states that “Noah began to be a farmer and he planted a vineyard. Then he drank of the wine and was drunk and became uncovered in his tent.” For whatever reason and regardless of whether Noah had made a habit of this behavior, Noah found some pleasure in the feeling he received from the wine, and at that moment, he became consumed by it to the point he passed out. Noah's actions are a perfect example of the control things can have over the human mind and heart.

The stark biblical reality is that human beings surrender control to foreign things. Whether that control goes to drugs, alcohol, sex, work or God, we do not have the control we think we have. We are built not for autonomy, and our design bends us to depend on God. So often, though, we surrender our dependence on hurtful things.

Competing propositions:

Strangely there is less opposition from the world on this point of doctrine than any other. The world does not dispute our need to depend. Instead, the world capitalizes on this need by providing many substitutes on which we can be dependent. One of the best examples can be found in Jesus' words in Matthew 19:21-22, "'Go, sell what you have and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.' But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions." Even with the one thing he needed standing right there, the young man refused to yield because of material possessions and their hold upon him.

If we are honest with ourselves, we will find this very issue in our own lives. We each have things that hinder total dependence on God, but we refuse to give them up.

Personal Consequences:

What emotions come out when you consider the similarity of an addict desiring control to your desire for power in your own life? Earlier discussion centered around the fact that humanity separates based on difference and similarity. How different are you really from an addict? What need or desire do you have that they do not have?

Journal entry:

Considering today's Personal Consequences, take a moment to write down your thoughts.

Prayer:

Going back to the Lord's Prayer, Christ said we are to ask God to "not lead us into temptation but deliver us from evil." God uses other people to intervene in our lives. He allows people in our path to be instrumental in providing influence in one direction or another. Likewise, in their pain, some people influence others into the abyss of addictive lives. As a

person, you can fill one of several roles. You can ignore the need in a person's life and leave them to their own devices. You can reach out to comfort, console and support them in their circumstances. But as a Christian, there is only one acceptable action, reaching out in the name of God through Christ to minister and love on the person. Pray today that God would shape your heart in this direction.

Friday: Once an addict, But God!

Primary Thought:

Contrary to society's mantra, "Once an addict, always an addict," the deliverance an addict receives from Jesus Christ is not an illusion. Freedom in Christ is true freedom. However, this does not mean that a former addict will never return to using when the pressures of life crash in on them.

Scripture:

John 8:31-32, 36: "Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, 'If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.' Therefore, if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed."

Romans 6:16-18: "Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves, slaves, to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death or of obedience leading to righteousness? But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. and having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness."

Romans 8:37-39: "Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Isaiah 54:17: "No weapon formed against you shall prosper and every tongue which rises against you in judgment You shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is from Me, says the LORD."

2 Corinthians 5:17-19: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself...”

Significant Undercurrents:

The cost of salvation and freedom was the most significant expense God could pay. He freely gave the life of His one and only Son (John 3:16) so that humanity might have freedom from sin and judgment and find reconciliation in a relationship with the Father.

Biblical Truths:

Apart from grace, sinfulness is a permanent state; “He who does not believe is condemned already because he has not believed....”³² Likewise, redemption and salvation are permanent. Humankind can do nothing to earn salvation, and once that miracle is received, it will never be forfeited. Salvation is given by grace and kept by that same grace.

In the same way, freedom from addiction is complete and brought by grace. The fact that addiction is a product of the sinful nature of all people is evident. Honestly, not everyone becomes addicted to drugs, but still, everyone deals with issues that exercise the same control over their lives as addiction. While salvation frees us from our sinfulness, the influence and power of sin remain. Paul speaks in Romans 7:18-19, “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.”

The life of Peter reveals another clear example of the struggle with sin and control. After walking with Jesus for three years, Peter still struggles with arrogance and impetuosity, as we

³² John 3:18-19.

read in John 18:10 and 15-27. He immediately rushes to attack when the mob comes to arrest Christ and is just as quick to deny and curse when accused of being a follower of Christ. Pastor Tim McLauchlin once stated, “When we fail, we run back to our past.”³³ As the Executive Director of Adult and Teen Challenge of the Upper Cumberland, Pastor McLauchlin spoke directly about the struggles people face with life and issues that control those lives, specifically addiction.

Perhaps the most significant struggle involving addiction is not so much withdrawing from the chemical dependence but rather the addict allowing God to redefine his identity. In Ephesians 1:1-10, Paul speaks at length regarding the difference between the believer's position and condition. The position is “in Christ,” it is as a redeemed, adopted child of God. In our condition, we reside in this world with all the influences that ask for our allegiance and dependence.

How can it be that someone who has lived a sober life for 20 years must still be labeled an addict? If a person genuinely knows salvation, is she still sinful? The answer is simply that those identities have been done away with despite the potential remaining. Another way to see this is through the eyes of Criminal Justice rehabilitation. If a prisoner has completed his sentence and any necessary treatment, he is considered reformed and no longer condemned. However, that man still has the potential to re-offend. If our past defines us, we can never move forward. Philippians 3:13-14 reads, “Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

³³ Tim McLauchlin, “Have You Missed It?” Sermon, Cookeville, TN, July 11, 2021. accessed July 11, 2021. <https://fb.watch/v/1FYJrFuv4/>.

Competing propositions:

As mentioned above, the world seeks to define people based on their past. The prison of what we were holds us captive and contains us, limiting where we can go and what we can achieve. The sinful nature even attacks within a person. In her song, “You Say”, Lauren Daigle proclaims what so many people can relate to, “I keep fighting voices in my mind that say I’m not enough, every single lie that tells me I will never measure up. Am I more than just the sum of every high and every low?”³⁴

Personal Consequences:

What defines you? Are you simply the amalgamation of your past, or is every moment a new opportunity? What things would hold you down if you were characterized purely by past actions, behaviors or thoughts?

Journal entry:

Take a few moments to reflect on the difference in your position as a child of God. What promises does that hold for you? What freedoms does God give to you, not because you have earned them but purely because of His grace and mercy?

Lastly, consider what it would be to be limited and identified by the worst moment of your life, as many addicts are.

Prayer:

In reflecting on today’s material, what does your heart cry out to God?

³⁴ Lauren Daigle, Jason Ingram and Paul Mabry, *You Say* (Franklin, TN: Centricity, 2018).

Week 4: Who is better? Who is worse?

A prime example of the vileness of the human heart can be seen clearly in the mentality demonstrated by the religious elite of Jesus' day. Jesus makes a very pointed observation about the arrogance of the Pharisees and other religious leaders in Luke 18:10-13,

Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, "God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess." and the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven but beat his breast, saying, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!"

This passage focuses on the difference between the two men and the attitude that difference perpetuates. As human beings, we tend to concentrate on the differences between us. Earlier, we looked at the idea of difference when we reviewed the Haves and the Have-nots. The same problems prevail here. The Pharisees saw themselves as those who have and tax collectors as those who have not. In reality, though, as Jesus makes clear in his follow-on commentary, it was the tax collector who showed a genuine relationship with God.

The Church needs to tread cautiously when the temptation arises to see others as offensive or broken or less. Romans 3:10-18, 23 and Isaiah 64:6, among other passages, show definitively that the commonality of humanity is that every person is sinful by nature and separated from God without accepting the salvation He offers. What appears as worse is, in all honesty, just different and with God, there is no better or worse but only saved and condemned.

Monday: Trust: What I cannot afford

Primary Thought:

One of the major issues facing those suffering from addiction is a lack of trust. Their history has often taught them that trusting leads to hurt. When asked why he did not seek help from churches and community organizations, one person surveyed for this project stated that his experience had been that trusting others frequently lead to incarceration or loss.

Scripture:

Psalms 118:8: “It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man.”

John 2:24-25: “But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.”

John 13:34-35: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this, all will know that you are My disciples if you have love for one another.”

Significant Undercurrents:

A significant dispute arises when looking at the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:19-24. The two states are opposite to each other. The works of the flesh are self-seeking, while the fruit of the Spirit seeks for the betterment of others. One focuses on winning and conquering, while the other sees submission as critical. One is trustworthy, while the other will quickly violate trust for personal gain.

Biblical Truths:

While our trust must not be in other people for our security, as Christians, we are called upon to be trustworthy in our dealings with others. How can we proclaim a message of faith when in our own lives we display rampant faithlessness? A point that we must return to in this

week is what comes out of 1 Peter 3:15, “Always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.”

This single verse is as much a call to live transformed lives through the power of the Holy Spirit as any other passage of scripture. Notice it is not beating someone over the head with their deficits. It is not simply proclaiming that a better life is possible. Instead, what Peter writes speaks to the genuine conversion that must occur and how it should be evident to all who observe us. In a way, it resonates opposition to the message many of us heard in our youth, “Do as I say, not as I do.” Peter proclaims boldly that Christian lives should be such an example that others want to emulate them.

Trust is critical to this concept! Would you follow someone you did not trust had your best interest at heart? In living on the fringes of society, addicts learn to trust only themselves and steer clear from all others. The paranoid nature that accompanies addiction lends itself to avoidance and distance. As ambassadors for Christ, the first thing required is to demonstrate trustworthiness through consistency and care.

Another way of thinking about trust is that when we trust, we allow ourselves to be vulnerable. Within the context of this curriculum, this point is critical. While addicts are some of the most vulnerable people in society, they are also among the most resilient and resistant. What has led to an addict’s ability to continue living within a subculture of abuse and violence is often her tenacity and refusal to become a victim. The most natural defense available is distance. Psychologists refer to the fight or flight response regarding dangerous situations. Given enough space, physical conflict becomes unnecessary. Whether that space comes through emotional, physical or psychological distance is often irrelevant as any separation resolves the vulnerability.

Competing propositions:

As discussed in today's introduction and lesson, the world preaches a sermon of distrust and avoidance. The assumption from society is that everyone only cares about themselves and will harm others if there is a perceived benefit to the action.

Personal Consequences:

What does trust mean in your life? When have you experienced repercussions from misplacing your trust? When you think of someone trustworthy, what characteristics stand out?

Journal entry:

Reflect for a few minutes on what your life would be like without trust.

Prayer:

What changes do you want God to accomplish within you that others might be willing to place trust in you and your intentions for them?

Tuesday: The next fix and back to normal

Primary Thought:

Continuing with our thinking on difference, the most remarkable difference between the addict and those deemed normal would be what drives the “fix.”

Scripture:

Genesis 6:5: “Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”

1 John 2:16: “For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.”

1 Corinthians 10:12-13: “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man....”

Significant Undercurrents:

How much difference exists between a person giving his life to methamphetamine than one who surrenders herself and her family to a higher paycheck? Is the pornography consumer better than a heroin abuser? In reality, we are all running from one fix to the next, and the primary difference is the danger of the overdose.

My father was an alcoholic, but for me, worse than that, he was a workaholic. As I shared previously, my parents divorced when I was seven, and I began an eleven-year journey as a ping-pong ball. I spent every other weekend at my dad’s house, a few weeks in the summer with him, and two years with him when I was between fourteen and sixteen, but I was never as important as his addictions. He was in a mad rush to get everything done on the weekends to get back to his drafting board to work on another bank. He traveled for work more than he was home in the

summers and left me to the devices of my stepmother and her children. The two years with him ended in us not talking for five years. Work and alcohol controlled his life.

For myself, in the days of my addiction, I got to the point where I could not imagine being more than a few feet from a bottle of Jack Daniel's Whiskey. Despite being inebriated, I was fine so long as my security was close. The common thread for my father and myself was that we both had to feel normal, which required work, liquor or both.

Please understand, nothing written in these pages exists to excuse addiction or to draw sympathy. It is here to help with context and understanding. We all seek normality, security and comfort in life and in one way or another, we each are dependent on something for that peace in our lives. For the addict, peace comes when the drug takes over, and his cares do not matter. Peace comes to the workaholic only when she finishes her project and her conquest has occurred. Comfort and normal only happen when the rush is coursing the adrenaline addict's body. Each of these is vastly different but eerily similar.

Earlier, when we looked at the design of the human heart, we addressed the issue that we have a deep internal need that only God can fill, Ecclesiastes 3:11. But sadly, we invest so much in throwing everything else into the hole that only He can fill. The truth is we are all abnormal because the normal we require insists upon a transcendent presence in our life.

Biblical Truths:

Solomon wrote about the human struggle when he penned Ecclesiastes 1:14, "I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and indeed, all is vanity and grasping for the wind." What should be sufficient is never enough. We chase and catch only to realize that what we were chasing was not what we wanted.

Competing propositions:

The world is quick to offer every solution possible. It equates identity with things and success with more. This pursuit can result in the perception of inadequacy that frequently leads to addiction as a person seeks to deal with failure.

Personal Consequences:

What fix do you chase in your life? What is the thing that defines you?

Journal entry:

Spend some time in self-reflection and ask yourself the thorny question of why the thing you identified above holds such value in your life.

Prayer:

Seek God's heart and desire for your life that will honestly fill the needs you have.

Wednesday: You cannot know me

Primary Thought:

Of all the differences among people, the central one is what we have experienced. We share almost everything else in some fashion with others, but what we experience and how we experience it is unique to each individual. This point leads professional counselors to avoid statements such as, “I understand.” Apart from living through an event in another’s skin, we can never truly understand how her experience affects her.

Scripture:

Jeremiah 1:5: “Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you.”

John 1:48: “Nathanael said to Him, “How do You know me?” Jesus answered and said to him, “Before Philip called you when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.”

1 Samuel 16:7: “For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

Significant Undercurrents:

One of the greatest fears in the heart of humankind is that someone will know a person at their core. If we are honest with each other and ourselves, we must admit that we have things in our lives that bring shame which we hope no one ever finds out. Every person has that small internal closet into which the bad and the embarrassing get shoved, and we pray the door holds. What we fail to acknowledge is that we can never hide from God. He said to the prophet Jeremiah, ““Can anyone hide himself in secret places, So I shall not see him?’ says the LORD; ‘Do I not fill heaven and earth?’ says the LORD.”³⁵

³⁵ Jeremiah 23:24.

We spoke earlier in this study about Jonah. He tried to run from God. Whether he realized he could not hide is not relevant. He ran in the hopes of avoiding what God had told him to do. Jonah knew he was wrong because when the men petition him to pray, he readily admits that he is the reason for their calamity.

A third example from scripture occurs in David's writings. Psalms 139:1 reads, "O LORD, You have searched me and known me." He continues in verses 7-10,

Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, Even there Your hand shall lead me and Your right hand shall hold me.

While each of us wants to hide from others, the reality is that we can never hide from God. He knows everything about us. He knows our failures, our flaws, our joys and our sorrows. Jeremiah 17:9-10 shows us how intimately He knows us, "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; Who can know it? I, the LORD, search the heart. I test the mind." Despite His knowing us better than we know ourselves, He still loves us and desires a relationship with us.

For both the addict and the ordinary person, this point is what causes much consternation. People expect God to be like other people, and they view Him as the One who sits in heaven waiting to crush us for all the bad things we have done. In the world of addiction, that judgment is precisely what its citizens expect from everyone they encounter. More often than not, everyone they know has judged them. Law enforcement has arrested them, judges or juries have sentenced them, their families have abandoned them and the people they see on the street turn to avoid them. The only acceptance they know is from other addicts, and that is the most tenuous of relationships as all it takes is the slightest misunderstanding to sever associations. Remember, as

we discussed yesterday, the most important thing is the next fix, and even if the cost is too much, it will still require payment.

Imagine what hearing and seeing that even though God does know us, He still loves and wants us would mean in a life like that of an addict. To hear how God reached out to you despite everything He knew about you might be a turning point for an addict. Being told that they do not have to change or get better to come to God can make all the difference in the world. Yes, this will require a great deal of humility and vulnerability on your part, but it is worth it when the person you are witnessing is saved right in front of you.

Biblical Truths:

As you can see in today's passages, God knows us intimately. But perhaps the greatest miracle He works is that He still loves us and wants us. John 3:16 shows us that His plan was always to offer up Jesus Christ as an atoning sacrifice for us, despite knowing who we are at our core.

Competing propositions:

As was addressed above, the world's testimony to an addict is that they are not and never will be good enough. Regardless of whether they change, they will always be an addict, which means they will always be one of those who are less than others. The experience of the addict is condemnation and judgment.

Personal Consequences:

Before today's study, how did you think of addicts? Statistically, there is probably someone in your life dealing with one form of addiction or another. What is your opinion of that person? Can you think of any redeemable qualities that would earn an addict redemption? What about yourself? What is there in your life that would make God love and forgive you?

Journal entry:

Take time to cement your thoughts from the Personal Consequences exercise. Writing things down makes them real for us and often helps us begin dealing with those issues. In addition, jot down your response to what you learn about yourself and what changes may need to happen.

Prayer:

In light of what you are learning about yourself and others, what would you pray today?

Thursday: Things are worse, so just take more

Primary Thought:

Coping with the negative in life is an issue that we all must learn how to accomplish.

Scripture:

Proverbs 3:5-6 “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.”

Colossians 3:1-2: “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.”

Matthew 6:25-27: “Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?”

Significant Undercurrents:

The human condition is such that we are constantly dealing with some issue or another. We experience highs when everything is going great, but then a crash into the valley comes, and our circumstances take a radical turn. There is a cyclical function observed in the positive and negative events of life. In the low times or the negative, we can relate to being in a valley or canyon, out of which we must trudge. Likewise, when things are good, we find ourselves on the mountain where we can relax and breathe when we feel the oppression lifted. The key, though, is that in those low moments, people need a healthy coping mechanism. Sadly, an addict’s coping mechanism is most often to use the substance to which they are addicted and the cycle repeats.

One of the greatest lessons available to us is that we cannot control things. Our lives will run their course, and all that we control is our emotional and mental response to the influences we experience. Solomon writes in Ecclesiastes 2:22. “For what has man for all his labor and for the striving of his heart with which he has toiled under the sun?” The one certainty in life is that it will eventually end. While this may sound morbid and very defeatist, in reality, it is very liberating. God tells us that he intends life to be wonderful and enjoyed. Christ stated, “I have come that they may have life and that they may have it more abundantly.”³⁶

Life will have negative times, but those do not have to be as horrendous as we make them. Paul encourages us in 1 Corinthians 10:13, “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.” What we can take from this single verse is so freeing.

First, there is nothing exclusive to us. What we endure is what humanity has dealt with since the fall of Adam. Trials and struggles are part of the human condition because of the impact sin had on all creation. We see this in Genesis 3:17-19 when God says to Adam,

Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil, you shall eat of it All the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face, you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; For dust you are, and to dust, you shall return.

This curse goes beyond just the ground from which our food arises. It infiltrates every aspect of life. Struggle is a common theme from one person to the next.

Second and most importantly, Paul reminds us that God has a purpose for trial and a plan for deliverance, not out of it but rather through it. This encouragement begins with what are

³⁶ John 10:10.

possibly the two most powerful words in scripture, “but God.” Whenever we see these words together, there is one point that we should grasp; He is God, and He alone can deliver. Romans 5:6-8 is perhaps the best example,

For when we were still without strength, in due time, Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet perhaps for a good man, someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Biblical Truths:

We are sinful by nature and condemned to eternity in hell. John 3:16-19 shows this when we understand that God reached down from His throne and provided a way for the deliverance of humankind. In every valley we experience, this same hope rests. There is an opportunity that God provides a path through every struggle if we take advantage of it. This opportunity does not in any way mean that our valleys will be less dark or less painful. It means that God has an intention for your life and that valley is there to bring you to His purpose.

Competing propositions:

The saddest point in this entire curriculum is that people frequently abandon hope amid their struggles. One example on which the research leading to this study relied upon is the often stated statistic that 22 military veterans in the United States commit suicide each day. As a combat veteran, the author can fully relate to the struggles of PTSD and combat exposure. The overwhelming sense of powerlessness and the reoccurring moments of remembrance join forces to convince some that the only real solution must be permanent.

Likewise, the despair of addiction drags its sufferers deeper into its clutches. The world resounds that better is not an option and that the only way to feel better is to take more or drink more. This hold must be broken in the heart and mind of the addict.

Personal Consequences:

How do you cope with difficult times in life? What instances can you look back on and see evidence that God was moving in the times of trial?

Journal entry:

Think back on the worst season of your life. What made it worse than other times? What control did you have over what was happening? Now, imagine that time with no support, no family and no hope. How did that change the situation?

Prayer:

Take time throughout your day to thank God for His love and grace. Ask Him to open your eyes to ways you might share that experience with others.

Friday: No one cares

Primary Thought:

Hopelessness is a major issue in addiction. The overwhelming power and control that substances and things exert over sufferers are unimaginable. In the despair and darkness, the mind and heart become convinced of seclusion and isolation to the point that belief develops centered on aloneness. Those who are addicted come to believe that no one cares about them or their condition.

Scripture:

Matthew 22:39: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

2 Corinthians 1:3-4: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God."

Matthew 12:11-12: "What man is there among you who has one sheep and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep?"

Significant Undercurrents:

There is a fascinating set of circumstances found in scripture. 1 Samuel 22 relates David's story in his flight from Saul and how he hid in the cave of Adullam for a time. Within the same verse, his family heard where he was, and they came to him and stayed with him. Additionally, David ends up with a 400-man army while staying in the cave. It would seem that while things were not perfect for David, he was at least getting along suitably. But the whole

story is not told in 1 Samuel. Psalms 142 also speaks of this point in David's life, but verses 3 and 4 reveal a much darker time.

When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, Then You knew my path. In the way in which I walk, they have secretly set a snare for me. Look on my right hand and see, for there is no one who acknowledges me; Refuge has failed me; No one cares for my soul.

It would seem that during the interlude found in 1 Samuel 22:1, David descended into a dark place emotionally. The one whom God identifies as a man after His own heart feels abandoned and alone. His recorded prayer in the remainder of Psalms 142 speaks of throwing himself on God as his refuge. David knew God, and while depression took hold, it did not conquer him. Sadly, most addicts do not have a relationship with God like what pulled David out of his angst.

This week we have talked about differences. One significant difference is the absence of hope. In feeling and being abandoned, addicts have little or no hope. There is no looking forward to tomorrow or next week. There is just getting through today and its struggles. For many, there is no one that they can call and hear encouragement. Calls go to voicemail or numbers long disconnected. Dissonance has led to distance in their relationships.

One of the responses to a survey used in research for this course stated, "Often my friends and I feel lost and like no one cares. If they do care, it's 'cause they have to. It's their job, so to speak." The struggle of getting the next fix occupies an addict's life so pervasively that those who care and are trying to help appear as the enemy. It is vital to remember that how things are perceived is critical.

The Children's Services Case Worker trying to schedule assessments and provide transportation to treatment is seen as not caring because those things are his job. A pastor who calls for an ambulance when a person using inhalants passes out in the church office is seen as uncaring because the addict comes to the attention of authorities. The minister who calls police

to intervene when a person injects drugs hiding in bushes around the church seems uncaring because he tried to get the addict help. These are a few personal experiences from this writer's time ministering and working with people suffering from addiction. However, the real issue is that those trying to help an addict who will not condone the addict's behavior are dismissed as unloving and uncaring.

Caring takes form in many ways, and often in the introductory phases of reaching out to addicts, it is expected to be based on the addict's terms. Will you give them cash, or will you buy them a meal? It is easy to hand over ten dollars and go on about your day, but what will the addict buy with that money given for food? More often than not, it will go to alcohol, cigarettes or even drugs. In this instance, giving money is not caring. Instead, it is enabling the addict in their addiction, and it is the one action that is not in the best interest of the addict you are trying to help.

Caring is not even getting the person a meal to drop off. Caring, in this example, is taking the person to the closest hamburger place, buying them and yourself lunch and having a meal with them. It is easy to do the "what if" exercise. Well, what if I don't have time or what if I do not have any money. Let me encourage you, do not worry about the "what ifs" until they show up. The main takeaway should be this if you say you care, show that you care.

Jesus' brother, James, says it this way, "Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works."³⁷ Representing the Church comes with specific expectations from those you try to reach. It is critical in ministry to be committed to the long journey and the challenges ahead. Dealing with a difference and overcoming it is just part of the puzzle.

³⁷ James 2:18.

Biblical Truths:

One of the most significant obstacles to caring comes from judging motives and conditions. The Pharisees of Jesus' time were some of, if not the most, judgmental people around. The difference between them and others was what drove them. The parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector found in Luke 18:9-14 shows what it is not to care. The religious man who knew the law and was supposedly committed to caring for the poor and bringing sinners to repent instead beat down the tax collector with what he already knew about himself. The tax collector was convicted, and repentance was happening in his heart despite the attack of the Pharisee. Congruence between proclamation and action is critical. In other words, if you proclaim to be a Christian, then do your best to act like Jesus.

A final example of how caring overcomes difference comes in Jesus' teaching about a good Samaritan. Luke 10:30-37 definitively shows that those who should exercise care for others can fail while those expected to be in opposition can care the most. The priest and the Levite were men of God who served in the temple system. They led worship and performed sacrifices. Of all those in Jesus' day, these are the ones who should stop and care for their fellow Jew. Yet they look away and keep going while it is the half-bred, false worshipping Samaritan that crosses the road, tends the wounds and genuinely shows care and continued concern for the man. What a man appears based on his genealogy or position has nothing to do with who he is at his core.

The injured man, most likely, expected help from his first two visitors, but instead, it came from the most unlikely place. The man's assumption that priests and Levites were good and Samaritans were evil taints his judgment. Likewise, an addict's feeling that no one cares finds strength when his actual needs are ignored by those claiming to desire to provide help.

Competing propositions:

The statement by the survey respondent cited above clearly speaks to the world's contribution to today's topic. "Often, my friends and myself feel lost and like no one cares." The described feeling comes from experiencing abandonment too many times. Having one person walk away does not equal no one caring. But the extrapolation is simple after years of watching people walk away. The world communicates through the ambivalence or malice of people that the addict should not expect any help.

Personal Consequences:

Have you ever felt abandoned? It is so difficult to imagine being completely isolated and thinking that absolutely no one cares. What would be your response to learning that your child was in such a state of despair? Please do not ever forget that every addict is someone's child.

Journal entry:

Write about a time when you needed but could not find help. What emotions did you experience? How long did the situation last, and how did it resolve? Who came to your aid, or did you have to push through on your own?

Prayer:

Father in Heaven, I pray right now for my brother or sister as they go through this study, and I ask that you impress upon their hearts that those they are learning to help are Your children. Remind us continually that the love you have for us is the same love You have for those in addiction. Do not allow complacency or ambivalence to cloud our sight but remove every obstacle that might hamper our understanding of those You bring for us to encounter. Your love is unlimited. Father, please allow us to overflow Your love into those who need it the most. Cause us to care for those that break your heart. In Christ's name, I pray, Amen.

Week 5: Being a Bridge

As this journey continues, the time has come to discuss the more practical aspects of the ministry for which we are preparing. This week we will begin examining the how of reaching out to addicted persons. When asked about how church members can build rapport, one former addict stated, “They must be honest and open about themselves. (They) must be living what they want to give and share. People in addiction can sense a fake person or motive.” This skill, “sensing a fake person,” is not just constrained to the world of addiction. We can all, to one degree or another, pick out when someone is not genuine.

Genuineness in interaction with others involves multiple attitudes and intentional behaviors. This week we will focus on five critical attitudes and behaviors: transparency, consistency, dependability, accountability, and ultimately living together. It may seem that there is a great deal of overlap in this list. However, as we move through each day, you will see the specific nuances involved.

Let me offer one note of encouragement as you move through the material for this week. These topics are indeed against our nature. However, as we have previously discussed, we have a new character and nature in Christ. We have supernatural capabilities through the Holy Spirit, and we possess a new identity free of what we were by the grace of our Heavenly Father. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 goes straight to this subject, “The Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.” To offer comfort requires genuineness. There must be the willingness to open yourself. Pray during this week that God would strengthen you to be as honest with others as you must be with Him.

Monday: Transparency

Primary Thought:

Allowing others to see us for who we are and to know the victories and struggles we have experienced provides a connection to each other to form and mutual understanding to grow.

Scripture:

Matthew 8:2: “And behold, a leper came and worshiped Him, saying, ‘Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.’”

Matthew 5:23-24: “If you bring your gift to the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go your way. First, be reconciled to your brother and then come and offer your gift.”

John 4:25-26: “The woman said to Him, ‘I know that Messiah is coming. When He comes, He will tell us all things.’ Jesus said to her, ‘I who speak to you am He.’”

Significant Undercurrents:

We all build facades in our lives. A protective coping mechanism is limiting the things to which a person exposes himself. However, just as accurate is that we also determine what we reveal of ourselves. For Christians, many have the church face that they slide into on Sunday morning.

Numerous passages of scripture discuss the honesty and openness we need with God, and in that vein, we require that same openness with each other. In Matthew chapter 8, a leper comes before Jesus asks for healing. While leprosy is a public disease, we see the man's transparency to admit his condition in the verse above. In saying that Jesus can make him clean, he acknowledges that he is unclean. An often-missed gloss in passages like this is that his admission is not just regarding his physical issues but likewise includes his need for spiritual cleansing.

Similarly, in Matthew 5, Jesus' call to go to one's brother to be reconciled mandates transparency. It is impossible to seek a reconciliation without acknowledging what led to the division and one's role in the situation. God calls us to a life of transparency.

Finally, we have the example Jesus set for us. The Samaritan woman is the first person recorded in the Gospels to whom Jesus' reveals His true identity. He opens Himself to her and ultimately to the population of Sychar during His three days of ministering there.

Contrary to popular belief, we do not have to have similar experiences to be genuine and empathize with others. One of the respondents described their feelings about having someone from a similar background, "Having people who come from the same type of controlling issue allows a sense of trust to come in naturally. Someone who has not experienced similar (situations) I do not feel like (they will) connect well or understand where I am coming from." Identical experience is not critical. Instead, it is the empathetic response that is critical.

You may not know the struggle of addiction to methamphetamine, but you do understand what it is to feel when life is out of your control. You probably do not have years of broken relationships caused by your actions and dependency, but you probably have experienced negative repercussions from your failures. Remember establishing rapport is not about who is better or who is worse. Ensure that the sinfulness scorecard does not play any part in your interactions.

Communicating your struggles is essential in allowing the protective facade to crumble. The one you minister to can begin to see you as a real person, with real issues, who knows a real God, Who is making a real difference in your life. We covered this point in Week One when we examined that we all are identical at our core, and we are sinful by nature and separated from

God. But He desires and has made possible a saving relationship with Himself through the perfect life, atoning sacrifice and the confirming resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Biblical Truths:

Every person is called to repent in the opportunity for salvation. Peter and Paul repeatedly preach repentance in their communication with the early church. Repentance is turning from one thing to another, typically turning from our sin through empowerment we receive from the Holy Spirit and turning to God.

I would argue that a critical piece that is often not taught is the requirement for transparency. If we turn from something to run to another, we must first identify what we are abandoning. By its nature, this mandates that we deal with our sinfulness and our issues. We are not only open with God. We have to be honest with ourselves.

Transparency with another may seem terrifying, but you have already experienced it if you pursue a vital relationship with Christ. The natural extension is that honesty within your ministry to which 2 Corinthians 2:14 calls you. To provide true comfort, we must share how God has carried us through our struggles. We must be transparent.

Competing propositions:

The world seeks opportunity to judge, and what better chance than when a person is open and vulnerable? People will take occasion to point fingers and accuse. Be ready for that. But rest firmly on the knowledge that,

You are of God, little children and have overcome them because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them. We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this, we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.³⁸

³⁸ 1 John 4:4-6.

Personal Consequences:

How fearful are you of being transparent with people that you do not know? Being exposed and vulnerable is easily terrifying. David provides courage in Psalms 56:3-4 “Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You. In God (I will praise His word), In God I have put my trust; I will not fear. What can flesh do to me?”

Journal entry:

What are some things that you can do to build up your courage in being transparent? Write about one specific time in your life when God delivered you from a significant situation, and sometime this week, share that story with another Christian.

Prayer:

Pray today that God will strengthen you. Seek that He will be your source of hope. Earnestly ask for the transparency to allow others to honestly know you that the comfort you have received would also comfort them.

Tuesday: Consistency

Primary Thought:

This week's introduction mentioned that the traits intertwine with each other. While transparency is critical to genuineness, consistency likewise is essential.

Scripture:

Hebrews 13:8: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever."

1 Corinthians 12:4-6: "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. and there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all."

Galatians 1:6: "I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel...."

Significant Undercurrents:

One of the most problematic issues in life is the rapid changes to which people are exposed. Roderick Toombs, better known by his wrestling moniker Roddy Piper, once stated, "You see, it's simple as this: Just when they think they got the answers, I change the questions."³⁹ Inconsistency leads to frustration and eliminates any opportunity for credibility.

In this writer's family, a common thought running through the generations has been that you say what you mean, and you mean what you say. Credibility is the foundation of trust, and once undermined, trust can never really be the same. This course is centered on the concept that what we have in Christ is critical for delivering addicts from their addictions. What happens then if our credibility fails due to inconsistency?

³⁹ Frank Williams, "Just when they think they got the answers, I change the questions," interview by Roderick Toombs, March 27, 1984, accessed July 17, 2021, <https://www.cagematch.net/?id=93&nr=189>.

To avoid any misunderstanding, we must take a moment to define consistency. Consistency is not about always using the same words. Instead, it is always delivering the same message. Being consistent relies on a level of predictability. If a minister is consistent, then the addict he engages with will know that there is never an acceptable amount of intoxication. Likewise, there would never be a justifiable excuse for relapse. Does relapse happen? Yes, all the time. However, that does not mean that it has to be permitted or condoned when it occurs.

Similarly, we demonstrate consistency in our caring and concern for those we attempt to reach. Everyone has bad days, but those are first off to be the exception. Secondly, your bad day does not allow you to take your frustration out on another person, even if they might have contributed. Third, hope is transcendent of emotion and feelings. In ministering to other people, we are present, not to show what we can accomplish. The focus is to be on “the hope that is in you.”⁴⁰

Perhaps the most significant reason for consistency is that the God we serve is not inconsistent. He is the same always, and that is part of the message which our lives much convey. Being consistent in God’s message and our person lends to the credibility that addicts need to see. When a Christian is inconsistent in their words and actions, it says that God is also unpredictable. For an addict, this translates to thoughts such as, “God loves me today. But what about tomorrow when I have relapsed?” If we communicate that God loves regardless of our deserving His love, which He does, that is what our love must demonstrate.

⁴⁰ 1 Peter 3:15.

Biblical Truths:

When inconsistency occurs in scripture, the perpetrator is always a human being, and the results are never good. We will look briefly at two specific examples, one each from the Old and New Testaments.

Abraham was called out by God, from all humanity, to have a special relationship with Him. Genesis 11:27 sees the introduction of Abram. Abram was a pagan living in what is now the nation of Iraq, and he was not more worthy than any other person. In the first verse of chapter 12 in Genesis, God says to Abram, “Get out of your country...” and the remainder of the Old Testament deals with Abram’s family and their relationship to God and the rest of the world. In Abram, God clearly shows that His focus is less on present perfection and more on the potential relationship as Abram is inherently flawed.

Within ten verses of being introduced to Abram, the inconsistencies between God and Abram appear. The future father of God’s people worries about his safety while weathering a famine in Egypt and tells his wife to say she is his sister. Pharaoh is infatuated with Sarai’s beauty and brings her into his harem to become one of his concubines while presenting Abram with livestock and servants because he was her “brother.” Pharaoh does return Sarai to Abram when Pharaoh’s family begins suffering from various plagues, and he comes to realize that the woman is, in fact, Abram’s wife.

In the New Testament, yet another inconsistency presents itself. One of Jesus’ inner circle delivers Him over to the Jewish leadership. The first few verses of Matthew 10 list twelve men who lived and traveled with Christ during His ministry, and it is here that Judas Iscariot comes on the scene. After an initial introduction, the Gospels mention him only in connection with his betrayal of Jesus. While the story is certainly well known, it is still no less shocking that

one of those who lived with Jesus, ate with Him and traveled with Him for so long displayed such traitorous inconsistency by betraying Jesus. Thanks to John's additional statements regarding the thoughts of the other disciples in John 13:28-30, we can presume that his betrayal of Jesus came as a shock leaving the other disciples confounded. To be more inconsistent would appear difficult. How would a person go from serving God and giving money to the poor to handing over his Rabbi to be killed? That this happened within Jesus' most trusted companions reeks of inconsistency.

Overstating the Christian's responsibility for living life consistent with his position cannot be underestimated. This consistency naturally mandates surrendering to God and His purpose in our lives, especially knowing that, "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked."⁴¹

Competing propositions:

It is incredible that even on the point of consistency, the world is radically inconsistent. A prime example is the idea of truth, which one would expect to require consistency by definition. According to Merriam-Webster, truth is the property of being in accord with fact or reality. Considering that reality is limited to existing things, it would seem that truth should have narrow limits. Fairy tales exist only as stories, so they are not valid. Lies are blatant fabrications or twisting of reality into what is not real and are naturally not truth.

In the introduction to one of his books, Paul Copan begins by saying, "It is absolutely true that most American adults do not believe in absolute truth."⁴² What has taken the place of

⁴¹ Jeremiah 17:9.

⁴² Copan, Paul, *True for You, But Not for Me: Overcoming Objections to Christian Faith*, (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House, 2009), 11.

truth is relativism. Relativism proposes that what was once seen as true or false now is relative to the judgment of individual persons. For example, a person may say that trains do not exist because they do not believe in trains.

Would you please give a little indulgence as this proposition goes to its logical but furthest extension? One person stands on railroad tracks and observes the following a short distance down the tracks. A large locomotive-shaped object comes at high speed with thick smoke billowing from its top and a roar that becomes deafening as it comes closer. This observer decides a train is coming and promptly steps out of the way of danger and watches the engine and 20 railcars rush past. A while later, another person observes the same evidence the first person saw but concludes that what is coming is a herd of bunnies smoking cigars and playing kazoos. His proposed truth lends him to crouch down in preparation to be swarmed by the furry maelstrom coming for him. Sadly, the herd of bunnies does not correspond to reality, nor was it represented by the evidence. The man dies instantly as this train makes its impact. He was entitled to his truth, but thankfully he was the only one harmed when he believed a lie.

Consistency is critical not only in ministry but in life. Credibility and accurate presumptions require consistency. The evidence was consistent for the two men, but the interpretation was relative, and the results were violently different. What if the circumstances were different and the evidence was inconsistent? Similar results are likely to occur.

Personal Consequences:

What inconsistencies exist in your life that can impact the credibility of the message you present?

In the last five weeks, I hope you have learned that I would never want to be intentionally offensive, so please keep that in mind as you read the next few lines. In paraphrasing Penn

Jillette, let me ask you this, “You truly believe that people can die and go to hell. So why do you live like it does not matter?”

Journal entry:

Take time to write out your answer to the questions above.

Prayer:

Maybe you are genuinely at a loss regarding today’s Personal Consequences prompts, and please know that is perfectly fine! Your struggles may not be with correspondence between your beliefs and your actions. You may never engage in putting on airs. If so, pray today that God would grant understanding to those you encounter that what they see and comprehend is genuinely what you present. If you feel that you need God’s help with matters of incongruence, then ask for His hand on that, along with Him opening the eyes of those to whom you minister so they can receive and understand truth.

Wednesday: Dependability

Primary Thought:

If this writer had to define the word dependability, it would read like this, the inherent worthiness of being relied on for essential needs in life. Today should help you understand the critical nature of your personal character and the dependability you demonstrate in giving an addict a better understanding of God.

Scripture:

Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.

Isaiah 31:1 Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help and rely on horses, Who trust in chariots because they are many, and in horsemen because they are very strong, But who do not look to the Holy One of Israel, Nor seek the LORD!

Isaiah 50:10 “Who among you fears the LORD? Who obeys the voice of His Servant? Who walks in darkness And has no light? Let him trust in the name of the LORD And rely upon his God.”

Significant Undercurrents:

Dependance revolves around things without which life is not possible. As human beings, we depend on oxygen in its gaseous form. Yes, oxygen exists in liquid states, but those are not compatible with life when it comes to us. While the dependability discussed today may not seem as critical as what happens with oxygen, food and shelter, it is actually more crucial than these.

Addiction is often considered synonymous with dependence. In preparing to draft this curriculum, the author spent a significant amount of time examining the relationship between addiction and dependence and concluded that dependence is a contributing factor in a person

developing the condition of addiction. An addict, by nature, depends on the thing to which they are addicted.

Dependence can be physical. Biological processes adjust to the intake of a substance, and major physiological issues will occur if the person stops using the substance. Another manifestation of dependence in addiction is emotional dependence. When a person is emotionally dependent, they rely on things for comfort, coping, and even providing their sense of identity. Like with physical dependence, abstinence can and often does lead to significantly unbalanced emotions. Additionally, mental dependence is possible. With mental dependence, the person believes that they cannot function without partaking in their habits.

So now that we understand what we are competing with in the life of an addict, we must look for how to demonstrate dependability and some things of which to be cautious. First and foremost, you cannot become a source of dependence for an addict. What that situation often creates is either the enabling of the addict or co-dependence for yourself.

These dangers most often occur in the immediate family members of addicted individuals. For argument's sake, we will use the example of an addict and his mother. Initially, the young man's mother made excuses for him regarding his seclusion and use of gateway drugs such as marijuana. Instead of allowing herself to see the reality that her son was spiraling further into a life of alcohol and pot, she would point to his father's absence following their divorce. This mother's response is known as enabling and contrary to popular belief, enabling is not loving. In enabling the addict and making excuses, his mother is permissive of negative behavior and rationalizes her decision not to intervene.

The second dependence issue we should discuss is co-dependence, and it occurs when the mother begins to find her identity and meet her own needs in the requirements of caring for her

son. In co-dependence, the mother's life begins to revolve around her son's issues. She may make excuses for avoiding other relationships or attending self-care events because little Joey might need her.

The critical problem with co-dependency is described perfectly on the website of Mental Health America.

These repeated rescue attempts allow the needy individual to continue on a destructive course and to become even more dependent on the unhealthy caretaking of the "benefactor." As this reliance increases, the co-dependent develops a sense of reward and satisfaction from "being needed." When the caretaking becomes compulsive, the co-dependent feels choiceless and helpless in the relationship but is unable to break away from the cycle of behavior that causes it. Co-dependents view themselves as victims and are attracted to that same weakness in the love and friendship relationships.⁴³

This significant tangent was intentional to demonstrate that in ministering to people with life-controlling issues, we must observe and never enable or become dependent on those we are trying to help. These people are not your responsibility, and you are unable to fix them or remedy their problems. The following statement will sound a little odd but think of your relationships and interactions within the culture of addiction as getting into the pool without getting wet. There has to be a level of separation despite the willingness to become a critical part of someone's life and recovery.

Now we can return to the issue of dependability. Those you seek to help must depend on you in the sense that you are a support and a hand reaching out to help. It is strongly discouraged to allow financial interactions to become part of your relationship. However, it is perfectly acceptable, even expected, to refer a person to agencies that provide financial assistance, or you may even take a person to one of those offices.

⁴³ Co-Dependency. "Mental Health America." Non-profit, 2021. accessed January 21, 2021. <https://www.mhanational.org/co-dependency>.

Dependability is being there to talk when someone is struggling with issues that may lead to relapse. When the phone rings late at night, dependability means being available to provide a calming presence. Being dependable is crucial in the ministry to people with addiction issues because the people you reach have learned to depend on what is deadly for their very lives. They must learn to depend on God and something that they cannot see or buy or smoke. They must learn to rely on faith in the only One who is dependable.

Biblical Truths:

In Matthew 8:5-13, the Apostle relates a story that resonates on the topic of dependability. A Roman centurion has come to Jesus in Capernaum asking that the Lord heal a servant in the centurion's home. Jesus immediately agrees and prepares to go to the man's home. But the centurion states that he does not feel worthy for Jesus to enter his home and instead gives one of the most outstanding examples of dependence in scripture. He says to Christ, "Only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to one go, and he goes and to another come, and he comes." Jesus is astounded at the demonstration of faith by this pagan Gentile and affirms that He has not witnessed any more remarkable example of faith throughout Israel.

Naturally, Jesus proved dependable because the Centurion's servant was healed in the very hour that he spoke with him. In being dependable, we do our best to meet the reasonable expectations of others. As said above, those you are learning to minister to have severely ill-placed dependencies and need to replace those with healthy reliance. You are the representation of the dependability of God to them, and it is in the mirror of your life that they will look for Him.

Competing propositions:

As we have already discussed among previous Competing Propositions, the world and society would depend on either themselves or society and not on God. The world has even gone as far as proclaiming that God does not exist and is therefore not dependable. By eliminating what can be truly relied upon, the world sets people up for even more struggle as the expectation is that life must occur alone.

Personal Consequences:

Are you ready for someone to depend on you? Yes, it sounds daunting and may make you want to run screaming from the calling to be involved in this type of ministry. But please understand this, it is not on you that they must learn to depend. Show them Christ and live out your dependence on Him in front of them. Ultimately, this is not about you and them. It is about Him and them. You just happen to be the one making the detailed introduction.

Here things get a little touchy. Do you genuinely rely on God in your life, or are there competitive allegiances? Proverbs 3:5-6 calls you to “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.” He does not ask us to rely on Him when only when life turns south. We are to rely solely on Him in all seasons of life. Jeremiah 29:11 in the New International Version reads as follows, “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

Journal entry:

Which areas of your life would be better off in His hands? Over what things do you insist on holding control?

Prayer:

Father God, help us to come closer to You in our reliance upon You. Lord, You taught us to pray by asking You to provide for our daily needs. Heavenly Father, teach us by Your Spirit to do this in our lives. Let us look to nothing for our surety except You. In Jesus' precious name, Amen.

Thursday: Accountability

Primary Thought:

There is no genuine relationship without accountability. We are all held to account for our actions and decisions by someone. Earlier, we briefly discussed repentance and emphasized that it mandates recognizing our sin and failures then turning from those to God. That recognition is where accountability lies.

Scripture:

Genesis 3:9-10: “But the LORD God called to the man, ‘Where are you?’ He answered, ‘I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.’”

Luke 18:13: “He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’”

Significant Undercurrents:

Accountability is not something that is come by naturally. People learn accountability through modeling and repetitive gentle reinforcement. With children, we teach accountability when we have them identify the behavior that has gotten them in trouble. I frequently find myself starting a discussion with my six-year-old son by asking him, “What did you do that upset Daddy?” Naturally, what I am looking for from him is recognition of his actions and understanding that his behavior is in some way unacceptable.

Accountability is the condition where a person justifies or explains their actions. Naturally, this justification mandates that there be an admission and acceptance. In the world of addiction, accountability is often a forced condition imposed through the legal system. Accountability for the addict usually involves being charged with a crime, locked up in jail and standing before a judge to be once again sentenced. Accountability is avoided frequently by the

distribution of blame. The addict rationalizes that it was not their actions that resulted in their being held accountable, but instead, it was the fact that the police officer arrested them. Sometimes it may not be the police officer. Instead, the prosecutor refused to offer a deal or even the judge who “has it out” for the addict. Regardless of where the blame lands, addiction involves excusing the behavior and refusing to be responsible for actions.

While ministering to a person with addiction issues, it is imperative that you avoid accusation and always encourage acceptance of responsibility. This encouragement might even involve sharing stories from your own life of being accountable for your actions. A prime example from this writer’s life is when he was released from his employment a few years ago. No excuses are available, I allowed life circumstances to take control, and I said some things and acted in very unprofessional ways on one occasion. Do I feel that warranted my firing? No, I do not. But, I must be accountable for my actions and accept the results when I make poor decisions.

The vast majority of negative encounters or situations in life can find justification in our actions. We can never entirely avoid being responsible. It may have been something you said which exacerbated the circumstances, and maybe it was just a skeptical look. Regardless, we all hold responsibility and need to learn to be accountable.

As was discussed earlier this week, enabling is a dangerous thing. The enabler often deflects responsibility, and therefore the addict is never held accountable. If we are to help people with these significant issues in their lives at some point, we must be willing to help them understand their role in their circumstances and guide them to a place of accountability.

Biblical Truths:

In Romans 7:15-25, Paul gives a perfect example of biblical accountability. He states in verse nineteen, “For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing.” Confession and repentance are critical in being accountable for our actions, and simply saying one is “sorry” falls well short of the line that needs crossing. In ministering to those with addiction issues, it is the one who ministers responsibility to help guide those she seeks to help into a position of accountability where confession, apology and repentance transpire.

Jonah likewise demonstrated accountability when he confessed to his traveling companions that he was the cause of their calamity.⁴⁴ He admitted his failures and sought to rectify the situation as much as he could. The second chapter of Jonah further deals with the prophet’s accountability as Jonah spends time in reflective and repentant prayer. God’s favor returned to him, and God spared his life. His commission to Nineveh renews, and this time he did as God commanded.

The last example we will look at comes from the parables of Christ in Luke 15:11-32. In verses 15-20, the young man engages in confession and repentance and begins his journey toward rectifying his problem. Christ relates the story that the young man found himself in the worst condition imaginable, feeding the pigs of a pagan Gentile and starving. We see just how bad the situation was in verse 16, “He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating.” It was these conditions that fueled his need to be accountable for his mistakes. Verses 17-19 state,

When he came to his senses, he said, “How many of my father’s hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to

⁴⁴ Jonah 1:10-16.

my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.” So he got up and went to his father.

We observe with Paul, Jonah and the prodigal son the mechanics and results of accountability. Paul relies on the mercies of God through Christ, “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!”⁴⁵ Jonah, while significantly reluctant, preaches God’s forgiveness to Nineveh and, “When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened.”⁴⁶ Lastly, the prodigal son was welcomed home and restored to his place in his father’s home.

Reconciliation and restoration often must be prefaced with the work of accountability.

Competing propositions:

The world’s permissiveness relates directly back to the proposal of relativistic truth. The world holds that everything should be permissible so long as one’s actions do not harm another person. Therefore, if anything can be true for anyone, no one has the right to declare any actions as wrong, and accountability falls apart. As we discussed previously, the world of addiction utilizes blame and deflection of responsibility to eliminate the need for accountability. For the addict, his thinking runs such, “I am in trouble not because of my actions but because the police caught me and arrested me.” In the mind of the addict, the blame has shifted from himself to the police officer. Therefore, the addict holds no responsibility.

⁴⁵ Romans 7:24-25.

⁴⁶ Jonah 3:10.

Personal Consequences:

In what areas of your own life do you need to be more accountable? Are there people that you need to be accountable to and to attempt reconciliation?

Journal entry:

How do you think accountability aids in guiding someone to faith in Christ?

Prayer:

Today, pray that God would open your heart to being accountable for your actions and seeking reconciliation with others in your life.

Friday: Living life together

Primary Thought:

A 17th century English poet, John Donne, once wrote the famous line, “No man is an island unto himself.” The reality of life is that God designed humanity for relationships and community with others. The time we have on this earth is time to be shared with those around us.

Scripture:

Genesis 1:26: “Then God said, ‘Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness.’”

Genesis 4:9: “Then the LORD said to Cain, ‘Where is your brother Abel?’ ‘I don’t know.’ he replied. ‘Am I my brother’s keeper?’”

Genesis 14:11-12; 15-16: “The four kings seized all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food; then they went away. They also carried off Abram’s nephew Lot and his possessions since he was living in Sodom. Abram divided his men to attack them, and he routed them, pursuing them as far as Hobah, north of Damascus. He recovered all the goods and brought back his relative Lot and his possessions, together with the women and the other people.”

John 4:6-7: “It was about noon. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, ‘Will you give me a drink?’”

Acts 18:1-3 After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus... with his wife, Priscilla. Paul went to see them, and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them.”

Significant Undercurrents:

Statistics abound about the effects of solitary confinement on prisoners. Stuart Grassian writes, “for many of the inmates so housed, incarceration in solitary caused either severe

exacerbation or recurrence of preexisting illness or the appearance of an acute mental illness in individuals who had previously been free of any such illness.”⁴⁷ Those suffering from addiction experience circumstances very similar to solitary confinement. While the addict is free to come and go, there is often self-imposed confinement as isolation and withdrawal from those who would support him.

It may have been years since a person approached an addict with no ulterior motives. As we reach out to this group, we need to keep in the front of our mind that the relationships we establish can and often will make a significant difference in the lives we touch. Ministry is not about personal gain. It is about the growth of the Kingdom of God and the betterment of those reached with the gospel.

Living together is an accurate reflection of God’s Kingdom. Revelation 7:9 clearly shows the unity in Heaven, “there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.” Christ repeatedly ministered within communities, as seen with Sychar, Bethany, Capernaum and numerous other places. His ministry focused on twelve men who lived and traveled with Him for three years.

Ministry does not happen in a vacuum or on a set stage. It happens within communities, families and small groups. Ministry even takes place seated beside an inland sea in a far-off land. Living life together is a critical part of engaging people for the Kingdom. Peter stated, “Always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you.”⁴⁸ That does not happen in seclusion. It is only within a community that people can see each other’s lives

⁴⁷ Stuart Grassian, “Psychiatric Effects of Solitary Confinement,” *Washington University Journal of Law and Policy* 22 (January 2006): 325–47, 333.

⁴⁸ 1 Peter 3:15.

and know where there is hope and where there is none. Christ called His followers to be salt and light to the world, which mandates being together. The light from a first-century lamp did not penetrate very far, and sharing such light required proximity to each other precisely the way He meant. Likewise, salt that does not touch meat cannot preserve it. The flavor is not imparted simply by putting a bowl of salt on the same table as dinner. The two must come together.

This idea, living life together is where we have been heading for the last five weeks. Everything to this point helped clarify that it is necessary to reach out and engage people who are hurting and welcome them into an inclusive, caring, accountable community.

Biblical Truths:

God created humanity in His image, and a crucial part of that image involves living life together in a community. Although intricately and inexplicably intertwined, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit reside together in an inseparable union. Each person comes with the desire to be part of something bigger and included within society.

As scripture progresses, one key becomes apparent, that God uses people to reach people. Cain asked God if he was his brother's keeper. The implied answer to a certain degree is that we are the keeper of our brothers and sisters. While not responsible for the decisions that lead to the harm of addiction, we are responsible for what we can do to bring people in contact with God. It is not our place to rescue or save. Our business is to help the lost know that they are loved and valued by both their Creator and us.

Competing propositions:

Several years ago, an unsuccessful marketing campaign utilized by the United States Army touted that young men and women become "An Army of One." The issue that received the most criticism is that there is no room for someone focused on doing their own thing in any

Army unit. Each person plays a critical role in the success or failure of the team. Even when a person reviews the awards of the country's most prestigious decoration, the Medal of Honor, what becomes apparent is that nearly all recipients were doing everything they could for the survival of the unit. Their concern was no longer about themselves; instead, they were worried about everyone else.

On January 20, 1961, John F. Kennedy delivered his inaugural address on the steps of the U.S. Capitol and compelled each one who heard him, "Ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country." Coming off the enthusiasm inspired by that statement, multitudes were encouraged "to see the importance of civic action and public service. His historic words . . . challenged every American to contribute in some way to the public good."⁴⁹ However, modern society has taken up the banner of the individual over the last few decades.

What people strive for now is personal success and fulfillment. Whether we see contributing factors in young people spending excessive amounts of time using technology or any number of issues, what matters is that society is pulling further to a place where dependence replaces self-reliance.

Personal Consequences:

What thoughts do you have regarding today's study? In your opinion, is society pushing away from the ideals of living together as an interdependent community?

⁴⁹ John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum. "Ask Not What You Can Do For Your Country . . .," accessed July 10, 2021, <https://www.jfklibrary.org/learn/education/teachers/curricular-resources/elementary-school-curricular-resources/ask-not-what-your-country-can-do-for-you#Overview>.

Journal entry:

Would you agree that you are, to a degree, your brother's keeper? Naturally, a line appears between beneficial healing relationships and less healthy or even enabling ones.

How does that thought of being responsible for and to others make you feel? What actions would you need to take?

Prayer:

Pray today that God would begin using you to effect transformation in the life of another person. This person does not have to be someone with addiction issues. Just seek His guidance and be willing to serve where He places you.

Week 6: Staying the course

Above everything discussed this week, there is one critical point in long-term, life-changing ministry: commitment. Without commitment, we become nothing more than just another group that is trying to make addicts change. There are multitudes of good, well-meaning ministries across this globe that reach into the lives of the most hurting of society. Churches and other organizations come and go, and people with whom they interact see new faces time and time again.

What is crucial for us to keep in mind is that we represent God to the people we strive to reach, and whether they should or not, they often equate our actions with His actions. Suppose we do not demonstrate reliability, compassion, grace, understanding or commitment. In that case, the assumption is that the God we proclaim cannot be any of those things, and our message becomes useless.

Jesus spoke directly to this point in Luke 14:28-33. Verses 28-29 read, “For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it— lest, after he has laid the foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him.” Each of us must count the cost of ministry. We must determine whether the effort is worth the reward. Allow a moment of indulgence here, as we must remember what is at stake, the eternal life of people near us that we can impact. By no means is this reminder intended to create guilt in anyone. However, if we begin tallying pros and cons, we need to be honest with ourselves. Ministering to the lost is serious work.

Monday: Disappointment is coming

Primary Thought:

There are at least two tracks for disappointment to follow in the context we are discussing, and we need to prepare for each one. The first is the disappointment that an addict experiences when he relapses. The second is the disappointment you will feel when someone you have ministered to for a long time relapses.

Scripture:

John 11:21: “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.”

John 11:32: “Then, when Mary came where Jesus was and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying to Him, ‘Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.’”

Acts 9:39: “And all the widows stood by him weeping, showing the tunics and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them.”

Luke 22:61-62: “Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, ‘Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.’ So Peter went out and wept bitterly.”

Significant Undercurrents:

In the passages above, along with numerous others, disappointment abounds. Disappointment is that emotional disturbance experienced when expectations are left unmet. Both Mary and Martha had expected Jesus to come immediately on hearing that their brother was sick and dying. Instead, he intentionally waited two more days before beginning the journey to Bethany. On arriving, He must deal with the sister’s disappointment. Both women expected that Jesus would come and heal their brother. However, once Lazarus was dead, healing was no longer an option. Even with their faith in the resurrection to come, the disappointment is palpable.

The same events appear in Acts with the story of Peter bringing Dorcas back from the dead. The women were disappointed that she died, and they expected that she would recover from her illness, but their expectations were unmet, and disappointment arrived.

The final example relates much more directly to the issues we are examining. Peter's disappointment is not in external events or the actions of another person. Instead, Peter alone is responsible for his disappointment. He boldly proclaimed that he would never abandon or deny Jesus. Yet, within a few hours of Jesus' arrest, Peter emphatically denied ever having known Jesus and the realization crushes him.

The author of this curriculum has always been fascinated with Peter and especially this time in his development. Peter had done what he swore he would never do. He failed miserably. But three days later, on hearing that the tomb was open and Jesus had risen, Peter and John race to the grave. John arrives first and stops at the door. But Peter runs headlong into the empty tomb without slowing. Why did he rush into the abode of the dead? This writer believes that Peter engaged in significant soul searching and reflecting in the three days following Jesus' arrest and execution. Somehow, he had finally connected the dots and realized the truth of what was about to happen. Peter regretted his actions and desperately wanted to be forgiven by Christ, but the only way forgiveness might happen was for the tomb to be empty and Jesus to be alive.

Mitigating disappointment generally requires one of two things. Either lowering the expectation or the ability to accept failure must be increased. When dealing with addiction, we should never diminish the anticipation of perpetual abstinence. Therefore, dealing with disappointment needs to come from building up the individual's ability to accept and quickly recover from failure. We are talking about instilling emotional toughness and stamina.

That toughness and stamina mandate that the person be ready when they fail but not just waiting for failure to occur. We will touch this point in Competing Propositions, but the world with its “Once an addict, always an addict” philosophy seems to be preventing a person from looking for success. If all an addict has to look forward to is the sad existence he experiences, then what expectations of better can prevail?

Similarly, there must be diminished expectations or an increased ability to reckon with failure and relapse for those ministering within this context. As you prepare to step out into the field of battle with the realities of addiction, please allow these words of advice.

First, the failure of an addict in recovery is not in any way your fault. Nor is it even the result of an intentional plot on the part of the addict. Relapse happens and must be dealt with when it occurs. However, it is not a loss of all ground gained, nor is it a reason for abandoning the cause. You nonjudgmentally assist the person in picking up the pieces, help them identify what went wrong and reformulate a plan for the next time the urge to relapse comes. Never forget that even in your state as a justified child of God, you are still only being sanctified. Perfection is impossible on this side of eternity because we remain in our earthly bodies that want to default to what they know so well, sinful thinking and acting. Remember, even Paul admitted his struggles in Romans 7.

Second, you represent God, and He calls you to show the hope of your relationship with Him. As long as progress is happening and change occurs, sobriety is possible. Failure equates to failing only when the flawed person refuses to get up, dust off, and move forward. God tells us in Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV), “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Additionally, He reveals His plan in 2 Peter 3:9, “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness,

but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” The Apostle John makes it clear just how far God will go to secure us for Himself. John 3:16-17 reads, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”

Disappointment is a reality in life, and it must be dealt with and mitigated. We must be prepared and toughened for when we will experience failed expectations and have the fortitude to press on. In the 1980s, the G.I. Joe cartoon series always included a public service announcement that included the phrase, “And knowing is half the battle.” We know what disappointment is, how it works, what it can do and how to prepare. What is left is to get ready, and when the time arrives, we must fight that battle as if life depends on it because it does.

Biblical Truths:

We addressed earlier that disappointment is a recurring theme in scripture, and in each instance, the answer to disappointment is to depend on God. Peter rushes to secure in his mind that His Lord has risen. Mary and Martha know that their brother will rise in the last days. The thread woven into scripture is that man will fail repeatedly, but God never fails. He is never late. The hope of man resides only in the person of Jesus Christ who died to redeem and save us.

Competing propositions:

The world loves branding people with labels that restrict and limit. Some may be titled addicts, others carry the name failure, and others are labeled worthless or unfit. Society thrives by tearing down. Have you ever known persons who found value in themselves only by publicizing the flaws of others? We spoke several weeks ago about the role of difference and how it is used as a weapon to reduce others in value as human beings. Nothing has changed on

that front. Our opposition will always look for weaknesses and chinks in armor to exploit, demean, and demoralize others.

Personal Consequences:

Are you ready for disappointment? What times of disappointment and failure have you experienced personally, and how has that period made you stronger?

Journal entry:

What steps and plans can you take to better prepare for failures that will happen? Does failure have to mean failed?

Prayer:

Lord, I come to you and lift my brothers and sisters. Lord, I pray for those they minister to, and I ask Your hand to be upon them both. Lord, strengthen resolve and toughen them for the times when expectations are met with failure and help them understand how you can use those valleys to set us on even higher mountains. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Tuesday: Righting the wagon

Primary Thought:

Being ready for disappointment only prepares you for the initial impact. Just like in any other life situation, there immediately comes the question, “Ok, what now?” First and foremost, remember from yesterday, it is not the end of the world. While there can be no step-by-step procedure for picking up the pieces of human life, actions exist that can begin moving the person forward.

Scripture:

Luke 10:34-35: “So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn and took care of him. On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper and said to him, ‘Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.’”

Luke 15:20: “And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.”

Romans 5:8: “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Ephesians 2:4-9: “But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved) and raised us up together and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace, you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

Significant Undercurrents:

Countless other passages of scripture point to God's redemptive plan for each of us, and it is within those verses, we come to understand just how welcoming the God we serve is. His plan is not just if we will fail, instead, He is ready for when we will fail. Now let's be clear we cannot claim to know Him and willfully, repeatedly wade into the filth from which He delivered us. But when we do come to know Him and His saving grace, He equips us to overcome all things.

As we have already discussed, disappointment will happen when you minister to people with addiction issues. What matters, though, is not the relapse but rather the regrouping. From today's scripture, we see that God's love and, therefore, the love of His people must be unconditional. We must remember that nothing we do puts God in a position to owe us His love. God loves us simply because He is love and, He chooses to love. Romans 5:8 states, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Notice the condition described for those to whom God is showing his love. Sinners or sinful, meaning they are still in a rebellious state toward God. Elsewhere scripture refers to the sinner's mind as "enmity with God" or at war with Him.⁵⁰ So God does not answer hate with hate. Instead, He answers hate with love.

The addict knows hate and hatred is precisely what she anticipates when she fails. Think about it; anger and hatred have probably been the response she has received numerous times from family, friends or even church members. When has she been welcomed with wide-open arms by someone simply rejoicing that she is alive and has returned? That welcoming response would be the last thing an addict would expect after failure. Remember, we are not talking about

⁵⁰ Romans 8:7.

eliminating accountability. Instead, we are talking about bathing accountability with love and understanding that exceeds what was known before.

Jesus noted, “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.”⁵¹ The Holy Spirit welling up from within the believer will overflow that person’s life and infiltrate the lives of those he ministers. Living water in scripture refers to flowing, pure water that is essential for life. Living water is what occurs in a spring or stream. Unlike still, stagnant water, it is moving and refreshes. Christians are to be an avenue for the living water of Jesus Christ into hopeless lives. So we love as God would love.

Second, as we see in the parable of the Good Samaritan, the addict needs someone to come alongside and help him travel. The beaten man in the story is hurt so severely that he cannot walk. Therefore, the one who came to the rescue had to help him and put the man on a donkey to carry him to safety. Helping an addict may sometimes mean providing a shoulder upon which to lean, or it can even be carrying the person for a short distance.

When addicts relapse, they will often abandon themselves in preparation for others to also abandon them. The inner voice they hear tells them that they are not worth anyone’s trouble or that the struggle is too difficult. In these instances, we would carry them through to a place of safety. By remaining present and supportive, the one we help learns that he is worth more than he imagined. In getting someone help that we cannot give, we communicate the worth God has for them. Remember, the world focuses on better than and less than, while God focuses on the person and the value every life holds.

⁵¹ John 7:38.

As God's emissaries to the world, Christians are to be countercultural. What the world gives should never occur in one who seeks to reach people with the love of Christ. Where someone expects avoidance and abandonment, they should find unconditional love and genuine.

Biblical Truths:

Above all else, God intends to work through His Church to show the world the love and mercy He holds.

Competing propositions:

Society seems to hold to the baseball premise, three strikes, and you are out. The expectation is that eventually, it is permissible to abandon someone who fails too often. This concept even bleeds over into many helping professions where a person is declared impossible to help after a predetermined number of failures. Society equates personal worth with positive contribution, and when a person is not capable of contributing, he is left to fend for himself.

Personal Consequences:

Where would your life be if God had not seen beyond your failures? Can you tally up, with any accuracy, the number of times you have needed help moving forward?

Journal entry:

Imagine yourself in the story Christ tells in Luke 10:25-37 and take on the role of both the beaten man and the Samaritan. What emotions would you feel in each instance? What hopes would you have? Try to imagine an alternate ending for the story, one where no one stops. What would be the expected outcome?

Prayer:

As we have previously done in this section, take time in prayer to ask God to continue to break your heart for those that break His.

Wednesday: Lost pieces of the puzzle

Primary Thought:

One of the most peaceful memories I have from childhood is my grandmother's kitchen. There were always incredible smells and fantastic flavors in that room. The centerpiece was her table, and a massive puzzle was always present on half of the. Thousands of tiny pieces of cardboard with the slightest image made up many of these, and every piece was necessary to complete the picture. As little children, my cousins and I were forbidden to touch the puzzle because we might lose one of the pieces. Each person has thousands of pieces, and all of them are necessary for us to live, think, enjoy life, and be whom God created.

In almost all that we experience, some things slip through the cracks. A prime example is a current situation facing our nation with the COVID-19 outbreak. People are encouraged daily to get vaccinated against the disease. However, even with vaccinations, there are breakthrough infections even in vaccinated people. It seems that there is nothing foolproof in life, and what we have is the best for which we can hope. But in the world of addiction ministries, such as this curriculum promotes, we must do everything possible to ensure no one falls through the cracks. We must do what we can to not lose any of the pieces. But there is the reality that the pieces we are talking about are not inanimate flecks lying on a kitchen table. They are human beings with individual needs and desires that they seek to fulfill, and sometimes they do so in unproductive ways.

Scripture:

Matthew 8:21-22: "Then another of His disciples said to Him, 'Lord, let me first go and bury my father.' But Jesus said to him, 'Follow Me and let the dead bury their own dead.'"

Luke 18:22-23: “So when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, ‘You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.’ But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich.”

John 6:66: “From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.”

Significant Undercurrents:

A few issues remain prominent as we close out the study of the last six weeks. As we look today at things slipping through the cracks, one point must be explicitly stated. You cannot fix anyone, and you cannot help everyone. While you should be ready to help pick people up, whether they stumble or fall flat on their faces, you are not responsible for carrying the entire load. We have discussed already that we must be consistent and reliable in our ministry and that, as believers, we are responsible for emulating the love of God. We also hold a responsibility to help those to whom we minister. But even Christ, the only perfect minister the world ever knew, saw followers fall away. For most in this category, the price was more than they were willing to pay.

Biblical Truths:

When ministering within the Putnam County Jail, this writer quickly learned that one of the most unproductive and frustrating wastes of time and resources was chasing after people who did not want help. Men would regularly attend services while incarcerated, and some even made professions of faith and showed a genuine change in their lives. Yet on attempting to follow up with them after their release, very few desired any further contact except for occasionally calling when needing a ride or looking for money. Finally, a very loving but firm conversation had to address the personal responsibility of life outside the jail walls.

Our passages for today are a few examples of when even Jesus watched people walk away. An interesting point comes from Luke 18 and the story of the rich young ruler. This man was genuinely invited into a relationship and to follow Christ in the same way Jesus called the Apostles. Jesus asked the man, just as He invited Peter, Andrew, James, John and others to follow Him. This man might have been the thirteenth disciple had he not refused to accept the invitation.

The young man made his decision, and Jesus moved on with His ministry. The story does not tell of Jesus returning to see if the man changed his mind. Jesus did not weary Himself agonizing over what the man was doing. The invitation happened, and He offered the opportunity, and sadly a decision occurred. It seems the man retained the chance to change his mind and begin following Christ at any time. Scripture does not say that the man was abandoned utterly. We do not see the language that he hardened his heart like what happens with some who were hopeless, such as Pharaoh. But Jesus' energies and efforts refocused on those who were ready and willing to follow Him.

Similarly, we can only help those we can help. Ministry is like extending a life rope, and it is nearly impossible to push a rope. But it is easy to pull something along or provide an anchor point enabling a person to pull himself up. We might lift or carry the first couple of times, but addicts need to learn to begin caring for themselves. Otherwise, the dependence transfers from a drug to the person who is trying to help. Previously, we talked about being your brother's keeper, which continues to apply, but there is also a time when people are no longer children and must be able to stand and walk in self-reliance.

Competing propositions:

This week began with an example from the current times in which we find our nation. In coming out of the pandemic era, many people now depend on federal and state assistance for their support. In working for the Tennessee Department of Labor, the writer observes this reality daily. In our office, there are no less than a dozen calls every day from people who are uncertain how to restart their lives now that unemployment assistance has ended.

Society encourages dependence. The message communicated is that people must depend on society, or they will fail. Yes, we need community. Yes, we need others. But we do not have to rely on anyone other than God, and he bluntly tells us to rely on nothing other than Him. Proverbs 3:5-6 states, “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.” If there is an addiction that we should pursue, it is an addiction to Him which we should run after.

Personal Consequences:

Feeling responsible for anything can bring anxiety and tension. Upon adding that the responsibility may include another human being and that person’s future, it is easy to become overwhelmed. Know that when you step out to engage in work to minister to those who are lost and dying, Christ promises His presence and loving assistance. Matthew 28:20 states, “And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen.”

Journal entry:

Understanding that missional outreach requires personal investment, what pressures do you find yourself feeling right now? What apprehensions do you feel?

Prayer:

Lord God, I lift up my brothers and sisters who have committed themselves to this study over the last several weeks. I pray that you have not only convicted them of the need to reach the most needful in our community but, Father, to reassure them that You walk not only with us but before as when we engage in the commissioned work of the Church. Lord, let us see the need around us and strengthen us for the task ahead. Let us know unequivocally that when Your people engage in Your work that the Church will be victorious and that You will build Your church, “and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.”⁵²

⁵² Matthew 16:18.

Thursday: Take a Break and Breathe

You have persevered through a lot in the last six weeks. Take today as a Sabbath rest to spend with Him. Reflect on the previous few weeks and prayerfully consider the subsequent steps you will take.

Friday: You are not alone

Primary Thought:

No one engages in outreach ministry to a distressed population, such as people in slavery to addiction, on an island with no support. With that in mind, below, you will find local resources valuable to assist families and individuals. Feel free to add to this list as you find other resources in the area that will be critical toward what God has set you.

Assistance Resources

Housing

Highlands Residential Services
235 West Jackson St / P.O. Box 400
Cookeville, TN 38503-0400
931-526-9793
<http://highlandsrs.com/>

Highlands Residential Services operates and manages low-income housing units across Putnam County. They provide subsidized housing through multiple grants and publicly funded programs consisting of 607 total housing units.

SSVF (Supportive Services for Veterans and Families)
Operation Stand Down/ Nashville
1125 12th Ave South
Nashville, TN 37203
615-248-1981
<http://osdtn.org/>

The Department of Veterans Affairs provides grant-based funding for the SSVF Program. The intention is to eliminate homelessness within the veteran population through financial empowerment training, job readiness training, employment assistance, legal aid, transportation services and assistance with utilities and deposits.

National Coalition for the Homeless
2201 P St NW
Washington, DC 20037-1033
202-462-4822
<https://www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/federal.html>

NCH is a web-based referral source for connecting those in need with potential resources and interventions through volunteer and non-profit services.

Food

Community Care Center
406 Short St
Cookeville, TN 38501
Director: Connie Bilbee
931-520-4481
<https://www.stevensstreet.org/carecenter>

The Care Center partnership of local churches supplies food, clothes and counseling to people in need in our community.

West View Baptist Church
Food Pantry/ Clothing Closet
427 Laurel Ave
Cookeville, TN 38501
931-526-7220
<https://westviewcookeville.org>

WVBC provides free clothing and supplemental food along with personal ministry and connection with those in need.

Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency
680 S Jefferson Ave
Cookeville, TN 38501
Director: Judy Sanchez
931-528-1127
<http://www.uchra.com/nutrition.html>

Offers programs through federal and state grant-based programs and serves as a referral source for multiple local needs. Programs include Commodities (Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program). UCHRA Provides surplus foods to low-income households. Child & Adult

Care Food Program provides funding assistance for low-income families in need of help with food during hours where children or dependent adults are in care facilities while primary caregivers are at work. Meals on Wheels of the Cumberland. Supplies noon meals to persons age 60 or older and persons with qualifying disabilities. MOW also ensures daily contact for older clients that may be isolated from regular community contact.

Food & Nutrition Service
3101 Park Center Dr
Alexandria, VA 22302
703-305-2062
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/>

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) administers 15 federal nutrition assistance programs, including WIC, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and school meals. The purpose of FNS is to provide more secure access to nutritious food while supporting local agriculture.

Extensive Programs are available. Access through <https://www.fns.usda.gov/programs>

Financial Assistance

Helping Hands of Putnam County
421 E Broad St
Cookeville, TN - 38502
931-526-3838
<https://givingmatters.guidestar.org/profile/1980/helping-hands-putnam-county.aspx?fbclid=IwAR1H57PXD74HlalDuhQfOxlOqNyJY9B7MrllaGAJI8-2lkr-JfFd8gn32t4>

Helping Hands of Putnam County is a charitable non-profit that can assist low-income families with emergency services, including food, utilities, medical expenses, rent and gas vouchers to attend medical appointments.

Families First
Family Assistance Service Center
505 Deaderick St
Nashville, TN 37243-1403
615-743-2000 or 1-866-311-4287
<https://www.tn.gov/humanservices/for-families/families-first-tanf.html>

Families First can provide temporary assistance to families in Tennessee through TANF.

Families First supplies a path to financial stability through work, training and personal responsibility. Also, Families First can assist in providing temporary cash assistance, transportation, childcare assistance, educational supports, job training, employment activities and other support services.

Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)
Administered Locally through UCHRA
580 S Jefferson Ave
Suite B
Cookeville, TN 38501
931-528-1127

LIHEAP provides a one-time per year payment for household energy consumption.

Recipients are qualifying low- and moderate-income households selected through a point system giving priority to elderly disabled families and those with children under the age of three.

Healthcare

Putnam County Health Department
701 County Services Rd
Cookeville, TN 38501
931-528-2531
<http://www.putnamcountyttnhealthdept.com/>

The Putnam County Health Department provides health services to citizens of Putnam County through multiple avenues, including a Primary Care Clinic, Well Child Examinations and Screenings, Adult and Child Immunizations, Communicable Disease Prevention and Education, Family Planning, Chronic Conditions Screenings and Women's Health Clinics.

State of TN Department of Health
Lisa Piercey, MD, MBA, FAAP Commissioner
710 James Robertson Pkwy
Nashville, TN 37243
<https://www.tn.gov/content/tn/health.html>

The Tennessee Department of Health is responsible for administering and developing the State Health Plan. The County Health Department facilitates most of the services included in the State Health Plan. Additionally, the State Department provides licensure for medical and mental health professionals within the State. Disciplinary action reports against providers are available through the Department website.

US Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave S.W.
Washington, DC 20201
1-877-696-6775
<https://www.hhs.gov/programs/index.html>

The USDHHS provides education, training and information regarding health-related issues across the nation. While the programs are nationally administered, the services are delivered locally through both State and County Health Departments.

Substance Abuse

Bradford Health Services
1330 Neal St Suite D
Cookeville, TN, 38501
877-688-0734

Bradford provides Substance Abuse treatment and screening services through Outpatient, Outpatient detoxification, Intensive Outpatient Treatment and Relapse prevention. Bradford utilizes CBT, Trauma-Related Counseling, 12-step facilitation, Anger and Behavior management counseling.

New Leaf Recovery Center
1200 S Willow Ave
Cookeville, TN 38506
931-432-7818

New Leaf provides comprehensive substance abuse and codependency treatment. They utilize Outpatient Services, Intensive Outpatient Program, Adolescent Day Treatment, Residential Treatment, Medically Managed Crisis Detoxification, a local Half-Way House and the Choices Women's Program.

Volunteer Behavioral Health System
Administered Locally through Plateau Mental Health
1200 South Willow Ave
Cookeville, TN 38506
931-432-4123

Plateau Mental Health is the local administrator for VBHS. They provide similar treatment modes to New Leaf, including comprehensive Addiction and co-occurring disorders treatment. They utilize Outpatient Services, Intensive Outpatient Program, Adolescent Day Treatment, Residential Treatment and Detoxification, Medically Managed Crisis Detoxification, Half-Way House and the Choices Women's Program. Additionally, a DUI program is available, providing various treatment resources for individuals with multiple DUIs. This service accepts referrals only via the court system.

Adult and Teen Challenge
200 Freedom Ln
Livingston, TN 38570
888-688-0470
<http://teenchallengeuc.org/>

Adult and Teen Challenge of the Upper Cumberland provides residential services for women in the Upper Cumberland region of Tennessee. Women come through self-referral, family intervention and court recommendations. The recovery program foundation is through Biblical discipleship, including a structured environment where the ladies encounter the

compassion of the local church. Intensive Nonresidential and support groups are available through partnerships with numerous local churches via the Hope for Life Curriculum. Support is also available for family members and other concerned persons.

Mental Health

Mental Health Cooperative
Kayla Jackson- Office Supervisor
418 North Willow Ave
Cookeville, TN 38501
931-646-5600
<https://www.mhc-tn.org/>

MHC is a for-profit provider of comprehensive mental and behavioral health services. They work with all ages ranging from children to senior adults and utilize a complete-person case management approach. Areas of care include, but are not limited to, mental stability disorders requiring psychotherapy, CBT counseling or Trauma-related counseling. Their approach is strengths-based and provides a coach/ trainee relationship more than a counselor/ counselee relationship.

Volunteer Behavioral Health System
Administered Locally through Plateau Mental Health
1200 South Willow St
Cookeville, TN 38506
931-432-4123

The VBHS provides community-based services including, but not limited to Outpatient Treatment, Case Management, Psychiatric Services and Medication Management, Peer Support Centers, Residential Services, Projects For Assistance In Transition From Homelessness (Path), Choices Women's Program, Project Basic (Better Attitudes and Skills In Children) and School-Based Counseling

Veteran's Crisis Line
1-800-273-8255 and Press 1
<https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/>

On average, 22 veterans commit suicide every day in the US. The Veterans Crisis Line is a free, confidential resource available to anyone, even if you're not registered with VA or enrolled in VA health care. The caring, qualified responders at the Veterans Crisis Line are specially trained and experienced in helping Veterans of all ages and circumstances.

Marital/Relational Issues

Erin Kelly, LMFT
320 East Broad St
Cookeville, TN 38501
931-252-4245
<https://www.erinkellylmft.com/>

Erin Kelly provides numerous family and marriage counseling issues.

Ronald Lee, LMFT
906 Allen Ave
Cookeville, TN 38501
931-261-2302

Mr. Lee has seventeen years of experience walking with couples through issues ranging from pre-marital counseling to communication problems, fidelity, controlling spouses and much more. He has extensive experience with anxiety, depression, divorce, marriage counseling, grief, parenting, self-esteem, sexual abuse, spirituality and mood disorders.

Family Dynamics Institute
<http://www.familydynamics.net/>
P.O. Box 682549
Franklin, TN 37068-2549
800-650-9995

Family Dynamics is a nonprofit marriage and family ministry headquartered in Franklin, Tennessee. They work with churches and organizations to prevent marriages from encountering distress while working with marriages already in pain.

National Healthy Marriage Resource Center
<http://www.healthymarriageinfo.org/>

A website that provides referral information for nationwide marital and relational health services.

Connected Marriage
Phil Carlson
952-892-0072
www.connectedmarriage.org

Connected Marriage is an online program to equip pastors, marriage mentors and counselors to work with couples who need help. Through interactive online education, couples receive biblically based tools and information to strengthen and repair their marriage. As the couple works through the material, they answer questions about their relationship. The system combines those answers and creates a report for the mentor to use directly with the couple.

Prepare/Enrich Marital and Premarital Counseling
Locally facilitated by
Jimmie Simpson, M. Div., Certified Prepare/Enrich Facilitator
<https://www.prepare-enrich.com/>

Prepare/Enrich is an assessment-based program for pre-marital and marriage enrichment counseling in either a counselor-to-couple or group format.

Pregnancy

Cookeville Pregnancy Clinic
714 North Dixie Ave
Cookeville, TN 38501
<https://www.cookevillecpc.org/>

CPC is a free medical clinic that offers confidential services, including pregnancy tests, ultrasound, peer counseling and practical assistance. They also provide mobile services in communities around the Upper Cumberland. The programs focus on Pregnancy counseling, health care, Pro-Life counseling and Abortion Recovery.

Healthy Babies- TN

<https://www.tn.gov/health/health-program-areas/mch/healthy-babies.html>

Healthy Babies-TN is a web resource for information on a multitude of Maternal and Child Health topics.

Heartbeat International

<https://www.heartbeatinternational.org/>

A network of pro-life pregnancy resource centers in the U.S., Heartbeat International is an interdenominational Christian association of faith-based pregnancy resource centers, medical clinics, maternity homes and nonprofit adoption agencies.

Death/ Hospice/ Grief

Caris Healthcare

2525 Highway 111 North

Algood, TN 38506

931-537-3430

<https://www.carishealthcare.com/>

Caris is a local hospice provider offering in-home and General Inpatient Hospice care over several adjacent counties.

TN Commission on Aging and Disability

502 Deaderick St, 9th Floor

Nashville, TN 37243-0860

615-741-2056

<https://www.tn.gov/aging/resources/community-resource-guide/end-of-life-care.html>

TNCAD is a statewide referral source for those seeking information about Hospice, Palliative Care and End of Life Resources.

National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization

1731 King St

Alexandria, VA 22314

703-837-1500

A nonprofit membership-based organization committed to improving end-of-life care and expanding access to hospice care. As a referral source for local providers of quality,

compassionate care at the end of life. NHPCO advocates for the terminally ill and their families through public and professional educational programs and materials.

Immigration/ Naturalization Services

US Citizenship and Immigration Services
Tennessee - Memphis Field Office
80 Monroe Ave., 7th Floor, Memphis, TN 38103
Tennessee - Nashville Field Office
340 Plus Park Blvd, Nashville, TN 37217

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services processes and adjudicates requests for immigration benefits. USCIS is the government agency that oversees lawful immigration to the United States.

US Citizenship and Immigration Services
<https://www.uscis.gov/>

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services processes and adjudicates requests for immigration benefits. USCIS is the government agency that oversees lawful immigration to the United States

Legal Services

Legal Aid Society of Middle Tennessee & the Cumberland
9 South Jefferson Ave, Suite 102
Cookeville, TN 38501
931-528-7436
<https://www.las.org/>

LAS is committed to defending and enforcing the legal rights of low-income and vulnerable people to secure the necessities of life. They are Tennessee's largest nonprofit law firm. Services are income and need-based.

Tennessee Alliance for Legal Services
50 Vantage Way, Suite 250
Nashville, TN 37228
1-888-395-9297
<https://www.tals.org/>

TALS is an online referral source for local and statewide legal aid services. TALS strengthens the delivery of civil legal help to vulnerable Tennesseans.

USA.Gov Legal Aid
Internet Clearing House for Numerous issues
<https://www.usa.gov/legal-aid>

Web-based referral source for legal aid needs.

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