

# Helping Drug Addicts

by David Wilkerson

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*This sermon emphasizes the importance of surrendering to God and the struggle to overcome sin and addiction. It highlights the need for a deep understanding of God's love and compassion, the power of prayer, and the gradual process of victory over sin and strongholds in our lives.*

**Scripture:** Isaiah 57:15, Matthew 26:41, James 5:16, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Psalm 51:17

**Topics:** "Surrender to God", "Overcoming Sin and Addiction"

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## Transcript

Counseling the drug addict. Let me start by telling you what not to expect in this session. Don't expect to become an expert with all the answers.

Why? Simply because the drug scene is changing every month. New drugs, new kinds of effects, new problems before unknown. Let me give you an example.

When I first started in New York City, glue sniffers were the rage. We discovered a Pentecostal, Assembly Guide Minister's son in a garage, sniffing glue from a handkerchief. I called the narcotics squad in New York and they laughed at me.

They said, it's harmless. And we thought that the only way it was sniffed was from a handkerchief. And then we discovered in another garage about 12 kids sniffing out of a paper sack.

Well, there was a new concept. And then when glue sniffers were losing their minds and winding up in hospitals, then the warning went out nationwide, the dangers of glue sniffing. In those days, nobody had to know how to work with glue sniffers because there were no glue sniffers.

And you see the drug scene is changing all the time. Then came pot and pills, acid, speed, and now PCP. You're never going to be totally knowledgeable about the changing drug scene.

You'll never know it all. Just when you think you've got it mastered, it's going to change on you. And you don't need to know all the medical terms.

I used to memorize all the medical terms. I thought if I could throw the terms around, memorize a list of dangerous drugs that would make me knowledgeable. Well, it makes you sound like an expert, but it won't save anybody.

Suppose you wanted to really learn all about amphetamines, for example. At first, when they became popular on the street, about 18 years ago, they were called Benny's. All amphetamines were Benny's.

All of them were listed as uppers under one heading. But now, Blackbirds, Cartwheels, Co-Pilots, Lid Poppers, Jelly Babies, Sky Rockets, Chalk, Cranks, Chicken Powder. I mean, there's a hundred terms for it.

And every kid in every city has his own term. And if you go into Chicago and talk about Blackbirds, they're using Cartwheels. They don't even know what you're talking about.

When I first started in New York 20 years ago, barbiturates were all downers. Occasionally, they called them barbs. Now listen, Blockbusters, Seggies, Gorilla Pills, Blue Heavens, King Kong Pills, Marshmallow Reds, Pink Ladies, Red Devils.

How do you keep up with it? There's no way on earth that you can do that. Heroin was H, horse, or smack. And that was it.

Now, brown sugar, caca, cabala, Mexican mud, skag, crap, on and on and on. Marijuana was pot. Occasionally, they called it a joint, a reefer, or grass.

Now, Buddha sticks, ganja, hooch, stinkweed, sweet Lucy, Hawaiian hay, Mahotsky, goof butt, broccoli. I mean, broccoli? And just about the time you try to impress a junkie by throwing around all your street wisdom, they're going to laugh at you because you're showing how far you are behind. You're a month behind.

And I learned the hard way. I picked up every slang expression the first year in New York. Boy, I was going to learn it.

Every drug term I mastered. I was going to speak the language. I wanted to be what is called relevant.

And I thought I'd learned it all, and I thought I'd put it to work. So I went up to a couple junkies sitting in a rooftop. They were goofing.

They were high. And I went up and said, Hey, man, soul brother, I see you caught some dynamite. Good thing the narcs didn't burn you with some nickel bags on you.

Better be careful your dirty spike doesn't mess up your track because that horse junk is full of garbage. It's going to give you a bummer. He looked at me like I was crazy.

And he thought I escaped from a mental ward. I decided never again try to impress a junkie with my street wisdom. Don't do it.

Secondly, don't expect sudden results. Some could be thinking, But brother Dave, you spent 20 years making mistakes. I'm going to learn from all your mistakes.

I'm going to go out and do it right. Hmm. The first three months, all I had was failure.

Sonny Argonzoni was the first. I took him into my house. My wife went to her mother's for three or four days.

And we helped him kick cold turkey. Third day, I had to go into Brooklyn. And I had to take him with me.

I just had to go. I couldn't stay at the house weeks on end. So driving into Brooklyn, he jumped out of the car in a sudden urge for drugs, started down the street.

And I yelled, Sonny, I'd just as soon take a pistol and shoot you in the back of the head. But I can't stop you. But I know God will never let you get away.

He'll never forget what you learned. Well, that was what I thought I'd say. Of course, today, Sonny's pastor of a large church and doing great.

He never did forget. But I didn't get results right away. It was two years later that Sonny came back to the center, found Christ, and called to preach the gospel.

Now, I'm not suggesting you should expect to fail in all your first efforts. Don't expect every drug user to think you're his savior. After 20 years, I still have drug addicts who won't let me touch their problem at all.

With all the experience, they won't let me touch their heart. And you're not really called to cure drug addicts or homosexuals or alcoholics. You're called to preach Christ and offer the whole counsel of God and then leave the results to the Lord.

If you get hung up on results, you're going to have problems. Most results are delayed action results anyhow. I remember a junkie coming in one day and he laid on my desk during an interview an old dirty track, Do You Want to Cure for Drug Addiction? I'd written it five years before.

Somebody had given it to him on the street and he stuck it in one of his dirty overalls, put aside the overalls. About four years later, he picked up those overalls, evidently from the corner of his closet, put them on, was sitting on the curb looking for money for fixing. He thought, maybe I've got a quarter or a dime or dollar in my pocket.

And he pulled out that old track, read it, got convicted and came in four years later and became one of our best workers. That really made an impression on me. Nicky Cruz was saved four months after I ministered to him.

Israel spent, remember, all those years in jail, the delayed action. The Holy Spirit never allows the seed to die. Get rid of all pressure on you to produce results.

You know, when I first opened a home for drug addicts 20 years ago in New York, the pressure to produce cures was absolutely unbearable. Everywhere I went. How many converts do you have? How many junkies have been cured? How many? I didn't have a body count.

And I finally got out of that rat race. And you see, you're here studying the concepts of how to reach drug addicts and when somebody finds out you've been to this school, for example, you've been to a seminar and you've learned a little bit about it, they're going to come to you wanting results. They expect you to produce.

And right off, you have to admit, I'm not an expert. I can't cure anybody. I'm simply interested in people.

Don't promise anybody anything. Just say, I'll try my best. No pressure to produce results.

And thirdly, don't expect some kind of complicated method to reach them or rehabilitate them. The more complicated a method is, the least effective it is as far as I'm concerned. That's why Paul warned us to never, ever be removed from the simplicity of the gospel.

Now, when I'm through today, it's going to sound so simple, you'll say, is that all there is to it? If it's that simple, why do I need so much time spent on studying the problem? I could have learned all that in a couple of days. But of course, to get the whole counsel of God, you have to understand yourself first. And the discipline required, not just to understand these simple truths, but to prepare your heart to put them in action.

Now, I've read a lot of scholarly books about the problems of drugs, and it's all pretty good stuff. It analyzes the problems perfectly, but it's never saved a single drug addict. I mean, I've got my library filled with books on the problems of drugs, how a person becomes addicted, the habituating nature of mankind, but not one of them.

Governor Rockefeller, when he was governor of New York, when I was working with drug addicts, spent one year, ten million dollars, one year in a little program, and after ten years, they got about four big books and studies out of it, and only one convert, only one person was helped, and I looked down underneath, and it said, he claims to have gotten converted in a Baptist mission. Well, they were taking credit for something God did, after ten million dollars, and all these fancy books on the problem. And I'll tell you, I read it, and it's good stuff on how they got hooked, but not one word, how to get out.

Now, the key to any cure, and here are the simple things that I've learned in twenty years. The key to any cure is desperation. Not the desperation of their friends, or their parents, or relatives, but self-desperation of the addicted person himself.

He has got to be desperate. And every word you speak to a drug addict is absolutely in vain, unless that person really wants help. It has to be voluntary help, not involuntary persuasion.

So many parents have come to me in the past twenty years, but they've helped my son. I found some marijuana in his overalls, I was washing his clothes, and I found this sweet-smelling stuff, I'm scared, please help him. If I go to that boy, he's just going to laugh at me.

He's going to say, hey, I'm not hooked, I'll never become strung out, I don't need help. And sadly, most of the time, you have to wait until they're hooked, or they're messed up, or they're in jail, they're destitute, they've come to the end of themselves. I have never in twenty years been able to help anybody when they were climbing up the ladder, I've always had to catch them coming down.

I've never been able to help a single person who was convinced that they were different, that they will not get in trouble, that somehow they're different than all the others. Now, you will have all kinds of people contacting you, saying, look, I found out that my brother, my sister's using drugs, come on, talk to them for me, see what you can do. Now, your answer should be, do they want to talk to me? Are they really wanting help? I'll just be wasting their time and mine if they don't want help, I can tell you that right off the top, I'd like to help them, but let them come to me, bring them to me, or let them ask for me.

I'll go anywhere, but they have to ask for me. You have to have some sign of desperation from them. Now, how can you determine whether or not the drug addict is desperate? Well, the scene involves three

stages.

First, the user, secondly, the abuser, and third, the addicted. Now, the user is just experimenting. He's trying out what the crowd's doing, he's curious, most of the time the first drug experience is bad.

Do you know that most kids have to smoke eight, ten joints before they get an effect at all? The first time they snort heroin, it burns, there's hardly ever a high, and I've known kids that had to skin-pop a needle 15, 20 times before they really got a good hit. They keep going back because of the crowd pressure, they keep seeing these kids stoned and talking about all the good things, so they keep it up until they finally get a good hit, and these are the users. The user takes drugs usually at parties, weekends, and really not over-excited about it, he's just experimenting.

Then the abuser, this is the one who hangs around the drug scene regularly now, he talks more and more about drugs, he begins to study its effects, he can rattle off all the clichés like, hey, marijuana's not habituating, you can smoke pot, you can sniff coke, scientists have proven it's harmless, in fact, marijuana's good for your eyes, they say. You ever heard that? You see, they're beginning to justify their continuous use of drugs now. Now, the abuser is still in the fun stage, it's all a big blast, it's harmless fun, he's thinking he's never going to get hooked, but these abusers become drug addicts overnight, they can become addicted.

Now, the users and the abusers are seldom desperate because they have not had any bad experiences yet, they haven't had to rob or mug to support the habit, they still have a job or they have somebody supporting their habit, they have an income. The abuser now, though, is spending more and more money and time on drugs, but he can still get the drugs without wasting himself, he doesn't have to mug, he doesn't have to rob or steal, his supply is adequate, he's got a stash somewhere, he always knows where his next fix is. Fear will never work with the user or the abuser.

Don't ever talk about how dangerous drugs are. Now, if I give you one thing that could be more important than anything else right now, don't ever use fear on a junkie, on a drug user or abuser, especially the early user. Don't try to warn him out of the problem, don't ever suggest that pot smokers become mainline addicts, because that's simply not always true.

Don't ever tell fear stories about how drugs can kill you. Don't ever try to warn them about going to jail or the police are going to catch them or the family is going to expose them. No fear tactics at all.

Fear has torment and God never works through fear. All right, let's talk about the addicted now. Here's the graduated abuser.

Here's the person who lives only for drugs now. He's nervous, tense, suspicious, he can't exist a single day without a fix. Now, the abuser is using an excuser.

You know, if he's just in the abuse stage, he's got these excuses, all kinds of excuses, why he's using drugs, I've got a poor family life, I was neglected, there's a lack of love, I have a heartbreak, mean father, a bad situation, poverty, he's got all kinds of excuses. But the addicted has passed the point of excusing his problem. Hang the reasons.

Man, I need a fix. He doesn't care. He's not going to sit down and tell you all about his problem.

If you spend time trying to retrace all the reasons why he got hooked, you're just wasting his time and your time. He says, I don't care, man. I need a fix.

Tell me how to get out. He didn't want to be analyzed or psychoanalyzed. You sit down with an addicted drug addict and say, hey man, I know what your problem is.

Interpersonal relationships, intensified anxiety states, and sibling rivalries. Hey, look at you. Who the dickens cares at all? I need help.

See, he's passed the stage of excusing his problem now. He's not going to stand by while you probe his past looking for clues. He'll be thinking to himself, look, I'm hooked.

It doesn't matter how I got that way. Help me out. Usually, only the addicted reach the point of desperation.

Those who are really hooked. He's got to hustle for money. He's usually stealing, robbing, and even if he or she is a medical addict, they become very deceptive in their procurement of drugs.

They've either been caught, some have been jailed, they've been humiliated. So the first question, are you hooked? Come on, are you hooked? That's the point blank question you've got to ask, and if they admit it, you know you're getting to a point of desperation. The attitude of desperation is this, simply.

I'm at the end of myself. I've tried everything. It hasn't helped me.

I'll do anything I want out. I'm like an animal. Help me.

That's the language of desperation. Okay. Let's talk about the concepts of cure.

Now, Jesus, remember, outlined the steps of evangelism in easy to understand uncomplicated terms. One, go into all the world. Two, preach only the gospel.

Baptize believers. Heal the sick. Freedom you've been given.

Freedom you've received. Freedom to give. Five easy steps.

Using his kind of easy outline, I want to share my concept of a cure. Now, these concepts were born in 20 years of experience. They've been used by God to change the lives of thousands of drug addicts.

And I'm glad I've been forced to put it down on paper and crystallize it. All right. Number one.

Show the drug addict how his condition is fully described in the Bible. In other words, say to him, look, I want to show you yourself in the word of God. I want to show you how I can find you in the Bible.

I can show you. I can prove to you that God knows all about you. He knows all about your problem.

And then take him to what I call the junky psalm. Psalms 31. Start with verse 9. Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am in trouble.

My eye is consumed with grief. Yea, my soul and my belly. And you say, and point it to him.

Make him read it. You say, now look. You see, God knows you're in trouble.

He knows how you're hurt. He knows how your bones ache. Your stomach gets sick.

You see, God knows. You're consumed with it. Your soul and your belly.

He knows that ache when you're coming down. See, it's right there. Take him to verse 10.

For my life is spent with grief. And my years with sighing. My strength faileth because of my sin.

And my bones are consumed. And you say, the drug aches. See, God sees what you're like when you're down.

He's watching you waste your life away. And he's telling you all about your downer. You're sick.

You're weak. And you're aching. You're being consumed by it.

See, God knows that. He understands it. See, it's all right there.

Then take him to verse 11. I am a reproach. And make him read it.

He sees himself. Especially among my neighbors. And a fear to my friends.

They that see me run from me. They say, hey, isn't that cute? Aren't your friends all letting you down? Aren't they all cheating on you now? Nobody wants to talk to you. You're a burnt out junkie.

You see, God knows that. That's you. Your neighbors don't trust you.

Your friends let you down. People treat you like a criminal. Nobody going to stick with you now.

Because you're an outcast. Then look at verse 10. For I'm forgotten as a dead man out of mine.

I'm like a broken vessel. Now take a look at it, son. God knows all about what you are.

And you know what that means? Out of your head. Broken down. Busted.

Nothing left. Come on, isn't that you? And by the time he's on his head. Because he knows that he's forgotten as a dead man out of mine.

He's a broken vessel. Then, all drug addicts are concerned about their blood. So you take in the Psalms 30.

Verse 9. Say, what profit is there in my blood when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise thee? Shall it declare thy truth? And I say to you, my junkie friend. God is saying, why go to hell with your polluted blood? You don't have to die as a wasted human being. Psalms 30.

Verse 3. O Lord, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave. Thou hast kept me alive that I should not go down to the pit. And that's why I'm talking to you, my drug addict friend.

That's why God's chosen you now. He's bringing you out of death. There's a plan for your life.

That's why he's having me talk to you. Now, look this way. Get your Bible out of your pocket.

Search the Scripture. Find every verse that speaks to a hopeless problem. And let it be a mirror to them.

Show them themselves in God's Word. You've got to begin with the Word. Everything else is chaff.

It's all worthless. Your own experiences or the experiences of others that have been cured. Sharing those experiences are fine after the Word has been planted.

And the foundation is there. Without the Word, it's all chaff. It doesn't work.

You have to start with the Word. Power and life are in the Word. Get them right into the Word of God.

Show them a mirror. Hold the Bible up as a mirror. Say, here, take a look at yourself.

I want to show you in the Bible where you're described. Your problem is described. Here you are.

And second, let your conversation be filled with hope and not hype. You know what hype is? It's public relations build up. And it goes something like this.

Boy, I'm glad you came to me. I know all about your problem. I've studied.

Boy, I've got the answer. You're going to fly right through this thing with me. You're going to be clean in no time at all.

Maybe you'll be another Nicky Cruz or pastor of a great church. All you've got to do is believe. Confess right.

Get rid of all your negative thoughts. Then I'm going to cast the junk demon out of you. In no time, you're going to be cured.

Bang! That's hype. Pure hype. There are no magic cures.

No instant success. I have heard all kinds of evangelists talk about on-the-spot cures. I just laid hands on the drug and it was cured.

Well, Jesus, hey, he goes on his way. He gets on his plane. He's gone.

The junkie comes to us. To one of our centers three months later. Back on drugs.

And evangelists are still out claiming that cure. Never say to a drug, I'm going to lay hands on you, pray for you, and set you free. Because it's devastating to offer false hope for an instant cure.

Because in 20 years, I've never seen one instant cure. Never. The battle rages on and on after conversion.

And they should be told so. Here's the language of hope. God loves you, my friend.

You see from his word that he cares. Thousands are free from drugs around the world. God's no respective person.

He can do the same for you. Listen to what God says. Then take him again to the word of God.

Psalms 30, verse 2. O Lord our God, I cried unto thee and thou hast healed me. Psalms 31, 7. I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy. For thou hast considered my trouble.

You've known my soul in adversity. And then take them to what I call the junkie's victory psalm. Psalm 32.

And make him read it word for word. Psalms 32. And explain it to him.

Study it. And explain it to him. It's the junkie's victory psalm.

If it's truth that sets men free, then bombard the attic with it. About 95% of all the stuff I read about addiction and its cure is nothing but hype. Hope is based on truth alone.

Now it's not enough to pray a prayer of deliverance until the word is planted. How can they believe except they're told? Now here's what I suggest. You go to your Bible.

Pretending that you're a strung out hopeless drug addict. In your own mind, put yourself in their shoes. Imagine you're without hope.

You've lost your family, respect of everybody. Go to the word of God and find every scripture on hope that you can find and deliverance. And memorize it.

Memorize at least 50 of them. So that you can start bombarding that drug addict with messages of hope. Not from other experiences.

Not from Nikki Cruz. Not from Sonny Argonzoni. But from the holy word of God.

Because it's truth that sets men free. Right or wrong? You should know the truth and the truth shall set you free. And the more truth you master, the more hope you offer and the more effective you'll be.

I won't run that by you again. The more truth that you master, the more hope you offer, the more effective you'll be. Okay, after hope comes honesty.

After hope comes honesty. Now you must honestly outline the terrible battle that's coming if there's going to be a complete cure. You've got to be honest with the junkie.

Tell them, or make them be honest first with you. Drug addicts all lie. Do you hear me? Drug addicts all lie.

That's the way the life has made them. They can tell you stories that would make a good movie. But make them admit they're hooked.

Tell them, look, they're no big habits or little habits. Hooked is hooked, so face it. They'll come to you, hey, I've just got a little habit.

No such thing as a little habit. All habits are the same. And don't let them sidetrack you with long, involved stories of their past.

Because they'll con you into a sympathy rut. You say, well, Brother Dave, that sounds hard and callous. Shouldn't you listen first? I've always been taught to sit and listen to people.

What about compassion? Well, folks, compassion must be balanced by discretion. Compassion without wisdom is nothing but pity. I'm going to say it again.

Compassion without wisdom is nothing but pity. Now, look this way for just a minute. You can quit copying notes here in this classroom, because I'm going to give you a copy of these notes.

Now I tell you. See, I see how you're scribbling. I'm afraid you're going to be scribbling so fast, you're not going to catch it.

You can go back and pick it up later. Sit back and relax and let it, like rain, hit you first. Then we have time to come back over again.

Compassion without wisdom is nothing but pity. Now, compassion says, look, I'll give you the shirt off my back. But I'm not going to give you all my clothes so I stand in front of you naked.

Compassion says, I'll go the second and third mile, but I'm not going to go to the point of exhaustion where I die. Compassion says, I'll give you what you need, but I'll not give you everything you ask. Now, when I first went to New York, I wanted drug addicts to be cured so bad I'd do anything.

And the first boy, second boy I took in, Sonny was first, next boy was a black boy. And I played a saxophone at the time, I had about a \$250 saxophone. And I just sat around playing that saxophone as a hobby.

And he came in the room one day and he said, boy, all my life I've wanted a saxophone. I said, here, take it. He said, compassion, I thought.

That poor black brother has never, he's been raised in a ghetto, he'd never get a saxophone all his life. Here, I've had this saxophone all my life, I'll give it to him. Two days later, he ran out in the center, it wound up in a pawn shop.

And my saxophone was gone. It wasn't compassion at all, that didn't help the boy. Compassion has to be balanced by discretion, use your head.

Otherwise, it's just pity, it's just do-goodism. He should be told he's going to suffer. Tell him, look, it took months for you to get into this mess, it's going to take some time to get out.

Don't expect to just walk out without any pain or suffering or sacrifice. You gave the devil a lot of your time and your strength, now you're going to give God your time and your strength. Your fix was a quick and easy way out of your problem, but you're not going to get a quick God fix.

You're not going to use that same philosophy on God, you're going to be patient. Don't try to fool me or God, it's your life. I don't get anything out of this, it's your life.

If you want help, I'm here to help you. Jesus learned obedience by the things he suffered. Cold turkey hurts.

Withdrawal is hell. You're going to feel like you're losing your mind at times. You're going to sweat, you'll get chills, you're going to be nauseated for weeks at a time.

Perhaps it's going to be worth it all. Now, I've seen many, many draggers come through cold turkey without any pain. They've come through without any nausea.

I've seen that on numerous occasions and it's encouraged my faith. But others are suffering and suffered terribly through cold turkey withdrawal. Addicts lost their desire to be cured when methadone came along.

It was supposed to be an easy way out, but it only complicated the problem. They got hooked on methadone and they continued their junk habit. The addict has to be persuaded once and for all that there's no easy spiritual methadone.

That no one can do it for him, he must do it on his own with God's help. And that comes back to desperation. But also, he's got to be told that suffering is short-lived in comparison to the glory that awaits him.

Would you rather go on suffering as a wasted fool for nothing but shame and hell or suffer a little while into a new life of joy and respect and love? Hallelujah. That's what Paul said that suffering can't even be compared to the joy that awaits. Okay, now I'm going to come to what I call the master key.

The master key. And here's where there can be no fog, there can be no uncertainty, no misunderstanding in your mind. The counselor must work out in his own mind a clear concept of both man and God's part in salvation.

I'm going to run that by you again. The counselor must work out once and for all in his own mind a clear concept of man and God's part in salvation. How can you show anybody the way to be cured or saved when you've not taken the time yourself to work it out in your mind and understand clearly God's plan of deliverance? Most of us have been trying to just sneak by, get by for years by saying, Hey, believe and repent and be saved.

And for most of us it's a cliché. We've not yet worked out in our minds what man has to do and what God has promised to do. If you're sure and bold about that, you're always going to be effective.

No fog, no uncertainty. And if there is uncertainty, you're wasting your seed. Anybody can say the sinner's prayer.

You can lead anybody's sinner's prayer. You go out on the street and any junkie, if he's high, any addict or any alcoholic that's stoned, he'll cry and pray. Man, he'll raise his hand.

You can get anybody to pray. Anybody who seeks the sinner's prayer, repeat the sinner's prayer when they're high. To the addict, salvation means only one thing.

Power over his sin. That's all that salvation means to him. And you have to come in on that line.

Do you understand that? Nothing else you say the drug addict's going to mean anything until you let him know that there's power over his sin. He doesn't have to go through life addicted. Let me share with you an easy to understand concept of man's part and God's part.

This is something I've spent years working on. And it's simple. And yet, there's no fog in my mind anymore.

All right, here it is. Number one, you can't just walk away from any besetting or habituating sin. You can't just walk away from it.

How do you overcome a sin that's become a habit? Where's the victory over a sin that's become a part of your life? It's inbred almost in your nature now. You can hate that sin. You can keep on swearing you'll never do it again.

You can cry over it. You can weep over it. You can live in remorse for what it does to you.

But you just don't walk away from it. How do you reach the point where sin no longer enslaves you? I remember in New Orleans not too many months ago, 300 people came forward and I asked this pointed question. How many of you standing here are fighting a losing battle against a sin that hooks you, a besetting sin that hassles you? How many have one secret sin that keeps dragging you down? You've got victory in every other area of your life, but one area, one sin that keeps its hold on you.

I was shocked. 300 hands shot up, immediate reaction. Seeking desperately to be delivered from one besetting powerful sin.

And boy, I hear these horrible confessions of defeat everywhere I go about this victory over a sin. Many are dedicated Christians who deeply love the Lord too. They're not wicked or vile people, but they just have to admit, I've got this one problem that keeps me from being totally free.

Now you have to work this out in your own mind and have victory over your own besetting sin before you can promise victory. How do you go out and tell a drug addict he can be totally free from sin if you're battling the thing in your own life? How can you be honest? Look him right in the eye and tell him there's victory over sin and you're still fighting the battle. Now, I'm going to tell you right now, you may not get total victory, but you have to have a handle on it.

You have to know the concept. You have to be working on it while you tell the drug addict to work on it. Here's the confessions I get.

I can't tell anybody what my secret battle is, what my habit is. It's between the Lord and me. I've prayed for deliverance for three years now.

This lady said, I've made a thousand promises to quit. I've lived in torment. The fear of God haunts me.

I know it's wrong, but try as I may, I keep on doing it. I sometimes think I'm going to be hooked forever. Why doesn't the Lord come down and burn this thing out of me? And that's what the drug addict wants.

It's easy to say it's a demon and lay hands on it, cast out. Then he has no responsibility to him. Man, that's easy.

Everything's blamed on the devil. You heard that, didn't you? The devil's sitting on a stump crying. Christian came up and said, What's wrong with you? He said, I'm tired of Christians blaming everything on me.

I'm not trying to be facetious, but I am abhorred with the idea. I resent the idea that things that are chemical in my body, for example, are caused by demons. People who eat like pigs and then get sick.

Blame it on a demon. It's not a demon at all. It's too much ice cream and apple pie and foolish eating habits.

Somebody said to me recently, You tell me to lay aside my sin, my habit. That's great. I've done that a hundred times already.

But my sin won't let go of me. Just when I think I've gotten the victory, wham, it comes back again. I've cried a river of tears over my sinfulness.

I've tried to make promises to God I'll never do it again. All I want is to be free, but I don't know how to be free. I know I'll never be what God wants me until I get the victory.

Now, folks, there are no formulas. There are no easy, simple solutions. But I do know there is much comfort in the Bible for those who are fighting battles against the flesh and the spirit.

Paul fought the same battle against the same kind of enemy because he confessed for the good that I do not, but the evil which I don't want to do, that I do. Romans 7, 19. Paul cried out, just like we all do, O wretched man that I am, who's going to deliver me from the body of this death or this habit? He goes on to say, I thank God through Jesus Christ my Lord.

Now, that's where we usually stop. We tell everybody, the victory is through Jesus Christ the Lord. Well, fine, but how? What's that mean? You come to me and say Jesus Christ is the answer.

Well, we all know that victory over all enemies is through Jesus Christ the Lord, but how do you get the power out of his vine into our puny little branch? How does the thing work? I love Jesus, I always have. I know he has all power. I know he promises me victory, but just what does it mean? How does the victory come? It's not enough to be forgiven.

I've got to be free. There's a difference between being forgiven and being free. Not everybody that's forgiven is free.

And my prayer is, Lord, I don't care if I'm forgiven a thousand times a day, that's not enough. I want to be free. I don't want to be hooked.

That's what every drug addict is crying for. Every prostitute, every homosexual, deep in his heart, unless he's been given over completely to himself. I'm just now beginning to see a little light on this great mystery of godliness.

And let me show you the three things that God has led me into in this search for freedom, for myself and for the drug addict. One, I've got to learn to hunger for holiness and to hate my sin. That's called seeing the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

Every waking moment I've got to remind myself that God hates my sin, mostly because of what it does to me. God hates it because it weakens me, it makes me a coward, therefore I'll never be a vessel of honor to do His work on earth. God's more concerned about our sin, not what it does to Him, but what it does to us.

If I excuse my sin as a weakness, if I make myself believe that I'm an exception, God's going to bend over backwards to comply with a unique need that I have. If I put out of mind all thoughts of divine retribution, in other words, God will judge others but He won't judge me because of my circumstances, then I'm on the way to accepting my sin and I open myself to a reprobate mind. God wants me to loathe my sin, to hate it with all that's within me.

There can be no victory or deliverance from sin till I'm convinced that God will not permit it in my life. If I let my mind believe that there is one little inch that my sin can be allowed, then there can be no total victory. I've got to be convinced that my sin is cancer, my sin is hated by God, God cannot put up with it, and the fear of God against sin is the basis of all freedom.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and this fear of God against sin, seeing our sin as God sees it, that's the base of all deliverance. God cannot look upon my sin, He cannot condone it, He can't make a single exception, so I've got to face it. And until you get the drug addict to face that fact, no way on earth can God ever accept his habit, no matter what his background has been, no matter what he's been through, no matter where the hell he's come from, God will not excuse his sin.

It's wrong. Don't expect to be excused or given a special dispensation. God must act against all sin that threatens to destroy one of His children.

God has to act against all sin that threatens His children. It is wrong. Nothing's ever going to make it right.

Sin pollutes the pure stream of holiness that flows through us. It's got to be confessed and forsaken. I've got to be convinced of that.

I can't learn to live with it. God will not somehow keep on just forever putting up with this thing in my life. It's got to go.

All right? Secondly, I've got to be convinced that God loves me in spite of my sin. God hates my sin, but He loves me in spite of it. To the drug addict, God hates what you're doing, but He loves you in spite of it.

Oh, God hates my sin with a perfect hatred, but at the same time, He loves me with an infinite compassion. His love will never compromise with my sin, but He clings to me as sinning child with one purpose in mind, to reclaim me and to heal me. He's going to hang on to me through it all.

He's not going to let go of me. His infinite love. Now, His great wrath against my sin is balanced by His great pity for me as His child.

You see? He balances. And then His pity conquers His loathing against my sin. His pity is stronger than His loathing against my sin.

Hallelujah. The moment He sees me hating my sin as He hates it, His pity moves in. The moment He sees a drug addict hating his sin, the mercy of God, an ocean, begins to open up.

Hallelujah. My motive must never be fear of God's wrath against my sin, because fear never saved anybody. Do you understand that? My motive must never be fear of God's wrath against my sin, but a willingness to accept His love that seeks to save me.

I want to accept His love. I'm not going to do this because He's going to send me to hell, or because of His wrath He's going to smack me or kill my grandma with cancer or something. No.

Because He's offered me this gift of love, and I want to accept it. If His love for me can't save me, His wrath never will. It should be more than my sin that shames me and humbles me.

It should be the knowledge that He's been loving me ever since I started this. He's loved me through all this. He's been patient with me.

Now think of it. God pities us. He knows the agonies of our battles, but He's never far off.

He's always there with me, reassuring me that nothing can ever separate me from His love. He knows my battle's enough burden without forcing me to carry the added fear of wrath and judgment. Do you

understand? He knows my battle's enough.

He's not going to put another load of wrath and guilt on me. I know His love for me will cause Him to withhold the rod while the battle's being fought. Did you hear that? God's going to withhold His rod of correction for me until this battle stops raging, because He sees my struggle.

He's not going to add a spanking on top of my battle. He's not going to hurt me while I'm swimming upstream, reaching to His grace. The Lord never tiptoes around people waiting for them to fail and mess up.

Ha ha, I caught you! Sanctuous, no good, sinner. I knew it was in you all the time. I knew you didn't have it in you.

Oh, no, no, no. I don't serve a Savior like that. Hallelujah.

God will never hurt me. He'll never strike me. He'll never abandon me while I'm in the process of hating my sin and seeking for deliverance.

When I'm swimming upstream, He's not going to shoot arrows at me. He's going to throw a lifeline, isn't He? Thirdly, and here it is. Hallelujah.

I wish I could have had this brought to my heart 20 years ago, the pain that I could have avoided and all that I've been through. Somehow, I wish I would have learned this. If you don't learn anything else in your own life and for the sake of counseling and helping others, here it is.

Victory comes one small step at a time. As much as you want to see sudden deliverance, as much as you want to lay hands on somebody and cast out their problems, you want to see the fire of God come down suddenly and burn it all out. It hasn't been true in your experience.

It's not going to be true in the experience of those that you minister to. Sin is like an octopus with many tentacles trying to crush up my life. Set them to all those tentacles loose and they're holding me at once.

It's one tentacle at a time. Now, I've put it down in terms that any drug addict can understand. And I call it, this method I call one dead soldier at a time.

One dead soldier at a time. And I'll tell you, you can remember the whole system here today if you can remember this. One dead soldier at a time.

What's that mean? Have you ever, could you ever imagine two armies entering into a battle? And here they are lined up here and one lined up here. And the general of the good army has one big cannon. And he stands out there and they're all ready for this battle.

And the general of the good army yells, fire! And suddenly one big 50 millimeter shell explodes and the whole army falls dead. Is that how it works? No. How does a victory come? One dead soldier at a time.

It doesn't come through one shot. Does it? One dead soldier at a time. But you see, this enemy, this enemy of ours comes at us from all sides.

He's camped all about us. That's why the angel of the Lord has to camp around us, cover all the fronts. And we're surrounded by the enemy.

And we put on the whole armor of God and we get a hold of our rifle, the word of God, and fire one volley and expect the whole army to fall dead. One dead soldier at a time. It's hand-to-hand combat.

It's one small victory at a time. God doesn't send me out to do battle without a war plan. He's my commander.

I'm going to fight inch by inch, hour by hour, under his direction. He dispatches the Holy Spirit to me with clear directions on how to fight, when to run, where to strike next. This battle against principalities and power is his war against the devil, not mine.

It's his war, not mine. He enlisted me. I'm just a soldier fighting in his war.

I get weary. I get wounded. I get discouraged.

That's what Paul said. But I can keep on fighting when I know he's got to give me the orders. I'm just a volunteer.

I'm ready to do his will at any cost. I'm going to wait for his orders on how to win. Those directions come slowly at times.

The battle seems to go against me. But in the end, I know we win. God wants me to just believe in him.

Like Abraham, my faith has counted me for righteousness. The only part I can play in this war is to believe God's going to bring me out of the battle victorious. Oh, it's one day at a time.

I don't worry about tomorrow. I get up. I put on the whole armor of God.

I resist the devil, and he flees from me today. I kill one dead soldier that night. I put my foot on his neck and say, God gave me the victory today.

I'm going out tomorrow. He's going to bring me through again. It's one dead soldier at a time.

The enemy is always there. He's never far away. I thank God that the victory I had yesterday gives me the faith for today.

And I say to myself, you see, underneath all of this, there's a fear. I'm going to blow it all. It always lingers right under the surface.

It's with every drug addict. It's even with Christians. Somehow, the enemy is going to defeat me.

Somehow, I'm going to blow it all. I'm not going to learn this thing right. I'm not going to handle it right.

Maybe after all I've been through, after all I've studied, after all I've done, I'm going to blow it. No, you're not going to blow it at all. You lean on the Lord.

You trust in him. He's going to bring you through. But it's going to be one day at a time, one dead soldier at a time, inch by inch.

And that's why when God sent the children of Israel into Canaan land, he didn't throw out the enemy all at one time. They inched their way in one battle at a time, one dead soldier at a time. So that by the time they got there, they had the character to handle the deliverance.

Hallelujah. Okay. Now, when sin in me is conquered, all my other enemies must flee.

What I do about the sin in my life determines how my enemies are going to behave. Victory over besetting sin causes all my other enemies to flee. Worry, fear, guilt, anxiety, depression, restlessness, loneliness.

They're all my enemies. But they can harm me only when sin turns me into an unprotected target. Sin in my life turns me into an unprotected target.

But the righteous are as bold as a lion. And they become a fortress that the enemy cannot overrun. If I want victory over all my enemies, then I go at it the right way by dealing ferociously with my besetting sin or my habit.

And that's why people are frustrated and everything else. There's one thing in their life bringing in all the other enemies. All these enemies, fear and guilt, we deal with those.

We deal with worry, depression, guilt. And we're not getting to the root. The root, there's only one root.

And that's the one habit, the one besetting sin that causes all this other thing to happen. Let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us or harass us according to the Scripture. Hebrews 12.1 Now, let me say this.

You say, well, Brother David, you're suggesting maybe you have complete victory in your life. You see, there is a teaching called the second work of grace. You believe God to be baptized suddenly by fire and the Holy Ghost burns out all the sin and the battle's all over and you're perfectly holy.

I've talked to people who claim to have this second work of grace, total sanctification. One preacher got so angry at me, arguing the point. I said, well, what about the temper you have right now, my brother, in telling me how sanctified you are? And his wife didn't believe at all that he was sanctified.

Not at all. And you can't promise the drug addict perfection. But you can tell him there's victory in striving toward perfection.

And I believe there is holiness and righteousness and freedom. And you never preach to others by the measure of your own achievement. You don't go to drug addicts or alcoholics or prostitutes or homosexuals or suicidals and say, hey, I have a right to talk to you because I've achieved perfection.

Not at all. David said, I preach righteousness to the whole congregation, I spared not. In other words, he went home from the pulpit and said, boy, Lord, I skinned him alive, I really told him.

And the next verse, my sins have overwhelmed me. They're too high for me, I can't understand them. I don't know what's happening in my own life.

Come on, ain't that been your testimony? I can't understand some of these personal life. What you do, you understand this battle that is going to rage, but that your faith has counted you for righteousness. Your faith has counted you for righteousness.

Hallelujah. And that what God wants out of you as a counselor is this hunger, this thirst after perfection, after righteousness, after holiness. I'm ever reaching into his heart.

And I finally boiled it down that staying clean is simply staying close to Jesus. That the closer I stay to him, the less the struggle is, the less the battle. I can't honestly look you right in the eye, nor can any man on the face of this earth look you right in the eye and say, I am perfectly holy, perfectly clean, therefore I have a right to minister to others.

Oh, no. I am afraid that would come up with filthy rags and stains in God's nostrils. If any man says he sins not, the truth is not in him, the Bible says.

No, I come to you, drug addict. I come to you, alcoholic. I come to you, prostitute.

As a sinner saved by grace, I know your struggle, and that's why I can talk to you because I feel what you're feeling. I hurt like you hurt. And you've got to come with that compassion, with that love.

My own life, talking about the need to reach drug addicts, I went to New York City broken hearted. I prayed for a solid year before going to New York. We used to have a little green Chevrolet.

We lived on the side of a hill. I parked the car up on the hill where my wife could see it. And if anybody came to see the pastor, she'd say, see the car up there, go blow the horn.

He's in the woods, he'll come out and talk to you. I had my Bible, and I was in the woods. And for months, while the weather permitted, I was out there week after week after week.

I went through Isaiah. I went through Jeremiah. And oh, I've got a Bible I wouldn't trade for \$100,000, but I marked in all the truth that God spoke in my heart.

And it was that word that broke me. Oh, I cried before, but now I was crying in the Spirit. I was crying through the heart of Jesus.

And folks, when I went to New York City, I went there for a year and a half every Thursday and Friday. And I can take you down the Pennsylvania Turnpike now and show you a tree here, a barn here, up and down the road. Places are still sacred to me because I couldn't drive another inch because I was so broken.

I had to stop the car, run out in the woods, and fall on my knees before God. When I went to New York City, I moved to Staten Island. I had to take a 45-minute ride on that Staten Island ferry boat, and I wept all the way every day.

I look over Brooklyn. The Statue of Liberty is on this side. I never even looked at the Statue of Liberty.

I was on the other side looking at Brooklyn, leaning over the rail crying. And people thought I was crazy and I was losing my mind. And folks, those were the days that I knew God could use me.

Not to any pride, but because I knew I had a broken heart and a contrite spirit. To this one I looked, he may have a broken heart and a contrite spirit. Well, I got busy.

I had to go around raising thousands and thousands of dollars because the work was growing. And I became a pencil pusher. And one day I was walking from one building to the other and a little Chinaman said he was from Hong Kong.

Stopped me. Just a white shirt, short-sleeved shirt. He said, You're Mr. Wilkson.

I said, Yes. He said, God sent me to you. I'm from Hong Kong.

I'm a Chinaman. He said, You're out of the will of God. You've become proud.

You're not praying. You're just going on steam. And he went on for half an hour humiliating me.

And boy, I got righteously indignant. No, I got plain mad. I said, Look, mister, you go in that chapel right now and you look at those 45 junkies there on their knees.

You go with me to one of my crusades and you look at all those alders filled and then you tell me. Who are you to tell me? I've been pouring out my life here. Who do you think you are? I said, I think you go around everybody doing it.

You get a vicarious thrill out of running people down. And I threw him off the street. I said, Get out of my sight.

I was angry. And that bugged me all day because the truth always hurts. He touched a raw nerve.

I went home that night and told my wife about it. She said, Well, David, do you think God sent him? She knew. The wife always knows.

I went out in my garage. I had converted to a little chapel, knelt on a green rug. I said, Lord, did you send him? And then suddenly I knew because it had been months since I'd spent a night in prayer, broken and weeping.

And God can't use you if all you have is theory. If all you have is your heart stuffed in your mind, even with the Word. When you pray, enter in the closet and shut the door and pray the Father in secret.

And the Father who sees you in secret shall reward you openly. And until you become a person of prayer, balanced by your Bible study, God's never going to use you. Never.

I make it a point to pick the brains of any man or woman that God ever used. I used to work with Kathryn Kuhlman for five years. And I picked her brain.

Oh, I wanted to find out why God was using her. Why was she so successful? Why were people being changed? Here's a woman evangelist over here. Nothing's happening.

And here's Kathryn Kuhlman. Just everything she did was turned into glorious gold for God. Not financially, but soul-saving.

That woman, I used to see her behind stage, mascara running down her face, and she'd take the curtain and rub her face. It was horrible. She'd pray, Oh God, without your anointing, without your touch, I'm in the flesh, and I stink.

And I used to see her driving down the road. We'd drive, and her secretary, Margaret, was in the back seat. She'd have to have me drive.

She said, I've got a breaking. She's always broken. She could break like that, the hand of God.

And until you're broken, nothing in this school is going to make you. Nothing in this lecture is going to make you effective. We can give you all the tools, but the power comes from that bended knee and that

brokenheartedness before God.

And this is all a waste of time unless you determine on your own to shut yourself in with God. Now, you're expecting a drug addict to come through, but by golly, when you sit down with that, he'd better know you've been with Jesus. He'd better know that you've been talking to him.

Now, I can always tell when somebody's been with the Lord, there's something about them. They look you right in the eye. You can tell it.

Even though they may be fighting a besetting sin, something that's still on the victory, they're broken about it, and they want victory, and they hate what's happening in their sin, and they minister almost as though they're a cripple, and they do it in love. Hallelujah. Heavenly Father, make this real to us.

Make this praying people. Lord, we thank you for some tools and some insights. But more than that, oh God, we have to have broken hearts, contrite spirits, be men and women of prayer.

Hallelujah. Lord, don't ever let me get away from those tears. Don't ever let me get away from that brokenness.

Lord, I don't want to have to say to myself, lest having preached to others, I myself become a castaway. Lord, let me weep my way into the hearts of people using your Word, the Scripture, and faith. But to water it with my tears.

Amen. God love you.

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Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/a1kvwh2jF1c.mp4>

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