

Slippery Slope of Addiction

by Shane Idleman

Addiction is a choice, not a disease, and we have the power to choose to overcome it with God's help.

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Scripture: Proverbs 20:1, Isaiah 28:7, John 8:36, Romans 6:16, 1 Corinthians 6:12, 1 Corinthians 10:13, Galatians 5:1, Ephesians 5:18, James 4:7, 1 Peter 5:8

Topics: "Idolatry", "Addiction"

Description

Shane Idleman addresses the pervasive issue of addiction in his sermon 'Slippery Slope of Addiction,' emphasizing that addiction can take many forms, from gaming to substance abuse, and often stems from a deeper spiritual struggle. He highlights the importance of recognizing addiction as a form of idolatry, where anything placed before God can lead to bondage. Shane shares personal anecdotes and biblical insights, urging listeners to confront their struggles and seek freedom through Christ. He warns that addiction can destroy families and lives, and encourages a proactive approach to overcoming these challenges through prayer, accountability, and reliance on God's strength. The sermon concludes with an invitation for those struggling with addiction to seek help and healing at the altar.

Transcript

Gaming to gambling, and I'm gonna give part two of this, which is vitally important, part two on January 2nd. New Year's resolutions are coming, and I know there's gonna be a lot of resolutions in this area. So I'm gonna tell you how to break free of the strangle of addiction on January 2nd.

So get friends here, family here, yourself here, and if you need extra help, or you know somebody that needs help, we've made my book, Help, I'm Addicted, free in the lobby. Just grab a copy, or two, or three, and get it to those who need to hear what God can do in the lives of people who submit to him. And the book is about four and a half hours long, so obviously there's a lot more in that than I can give you here, but it's so important because this is something that we're dealing with in our culture today.

Have you read the news about the opiate crisis, and the ravage of alcohol during COVID, and disease-related things because of gluttony, and it's just like, we are an addicted nation. And God's word has something to say about being in bondage to something because it can be a form of idolatry. If I put anything before God, it can become an idolatry.

Now, I'll share with you one of my personal struggles is having Christian crack before my Bible study in the morning. It's in a cup, it's black, something called Keurig, you know, kinda makes that, and Starbucks, come on, you guys know. So if I have to have that every, don't talk to me, don't have the kids around me, I don't wanna pray first, I can't read the Bible first, nothing, I have to have this.

Now I'm ready. It's addiction. I'm just here to shoot you straight.

And it will, all addiction in some form or another is not meant to be your friend. I didn't read this at the first service, and I almost didn't at the second, but I think it's important to help start this third service. It was written, I was told, by a young woman who overdosed and died.

And her family found this in her journal. And I will tell you, I've done a few memorials from this church for those in their 20s who died of heroin. It's a nightmare.

This can relate to alcohol, marijuana, things like that. And they found this in her journal. I Destroy Homes, and the title is The Cost of Addiction.

I destroy homes and tear families apart. I take your children and that's just the start. I'm more costly than diamonds, more costly than gold.

The sorrow I bring you is a sight to behold. Just try me once and I might let you go, but try me twice and I'll own your soul. You'll forget your morals and how you were raised.

I'll be your conscience, I'll teach you my ways. I'll take and take and take till you have nothing more to give, and when I'm finished with you, you'll be lucky to live. If you try me, be warned, this is no game.

If given the chance, I'll drive you insane. I'll ravish your body, I'll control your mind. I'll own you completely, your soul will be mine.

Your nightmares, the nightmares I'll give you while lying in your bed, the voices you'll hear from inside your head, the sweats, the shakes, the visions you'll see, I want you to know these are all gifts from me. Anybody detoxing can relate to that. But then it's too late and you'll know in your heart that you are mine and we shall not part.

You'll regret that you tried me, they always do, but you came to me, not I to you. You knew this would happen many times you were told, but you challenged my power and chose to be bold. You could have said no and just walked away.

If you could live that day over now, what would you say? I'll be your master, you will be my slave and I'll even go to you when you go to your grave. Now that you have met me, what will you do? Will you try me or not? It's all up to you. I can bring you more misery than words can tell.

Come take my hand and let me lead you to hell. This is in the book I mentioned, you can get in the foyer. And I know this is applied to some people.

You know, if you're addicted to caffeine or sugar, it's probably not gonna apply. You know, but those harder things that begin to really, really tax our lives and any type of an addiction will take you farther than you want to go, cost you more than you want to pay and keep you longer than you want to stay. And so we find ourselves in Genesis nine, verse 20.

Noah began to be a farmer and he planted a vineyard. So the ark was on the flood waters for about five months or so. And I believe it stayed stationary and they lived in it for about seven months on the ark.

And then after that, he planted a vineyard. It took some time, I'm sure. And so this is who knows how long, maybe a decade or so after the flood.

And so he planted a vineyard, then he drank of the wine and was drunk and became uncovered in his tent. So there was this nakedness that happened and Ham, the father of Canaan. Now it's interesting here.

Ham is Noah's son, but he also adds the father of Canaan. And that tells me right there that Ham, when they were on the ark, didn't have any kids. So for him to identify Canaan, that means he's had a child.

So this is some time after the ark had landed there on the mountains of Ararat. So Ham saw the nakedness of his father and he told his two brothers outside about the nakedness of his father. Now this is interesting because commentaries are divided.

Nobody really knows. Uncovering a person's nakedness often would mean sexual relationships in the Old Testament. However, if you keep reading verse 23, but Shem and Japheth, the two sons that did what was right, took a garment and they laid it on their shoulders.

And what they did is they walked backwards and they didn't look at their father's nakedness. They covered the father's nakedness. So some, because of the language and different, I mean, if you get somebody who's a Hebrew student and they can really unpack it, they would even say that this son mocked their father, was kind of belittling and making fun of his father.

Look at this, look at what he's done. And he uncovered his nakedness. Maybe he did something.

And so we don't know exactly, but we do know that it brought some wrath from the father. And so Noah awoke from his wine and knew that his younger son had, what his younger son had done to him. Again, we don't know exactly what he had done.

But then he said, curse be Canaan. Notice he didn't say curse be Ham, the son. He actually went to the grandchild.

And Canaan is actually the Canaanites. You've heard that as we're going through the Old Testament, the land of Canaan flowing with milk and honey, the promised land. And so we see that's descendants here of Ham, but curse be Canaan.

And how is Canaan going to be cursed? In a nutshell, he's gonna have to serve the other two brothers. Especially in the Jewish culture, that the firstborn or the heir of everything. And they were elevated.

They were up here. And so be serving your brothers is actually a curse. It's a curse on Canaan for doing that to Noah.

And it really should have been on Ham. But we see here the sins of the father affect the family. How many of us can shake our heads to that? Don't worry, wives.

I'm not done yet. The sins of the parents can really affect the children. And what we're seeing, and one of the things that I'm concerned about really is with now a new variant.

Here we go again. You know, it's in the fear that many people are instilling in their children, that fear at a very young age, and they're fearing all these things, and the parents are in fear, so the kids are living in fear, or addictions or different things that can really be passed down to our children. And so the children, the grandchildren, the great-grandchildren of ham were gonna pay the price of their father's sin.

Now, I need to clarify because it does come up. I don't use the terminology generational curses. The reason is, now, if you talk to people who do, we're kind of saying the same thing.

It's not like something way out there. I just don't use that because it would be like telling somebody, well, you're cursed because of your great-great-grandfather. Sorry, buddy.

There's a curse, God's curse is on you. But what we do know is that, because in the Old Testament, that was the case for millennia. If a father did something, for example, Achan took the things from the city of Jericho, and they had to stone his whole family.

Can you imagine stoning little children? Or when the ground was swallowed up when they challenged Moses' authority and the man and his whole household? Or they'll take the man and his household. There was always that identity, the sins of the father were passed down to the children. But then in Ezekiel and other places that are taught, no longer God says, well, I punish the children for the sins of the father or the father for the sins of the children, but each one will be judged based on his own behavior.

And that's what's been taken down now since the time of Ezekiel in the Old Testament prophets. But you can still say there is, and what I say is there is a predisposition. So if there was something in your family if 1930s, your great grandmother was into seances and the occult and horoscopes, that could be an open door to where there's now a stronghold and it can be passed down to the children.

It doesn't mean God can't break it, doesn't mean there's freedom, but if somebody struggled with alcoholism, there's a good chance. And I don't know if it's in the DNA, I don't know exactly how it works, but there is an inclination often, that is passed down. And if you've seen certain sins come out, I know my dad dealt with that or my grandparents dealt with that, and so there can be a predisposition.

I just personally, and I don't think the elders here do as well saying that there's a generational curse on that family. I would say there's a predisposition to that sin, there's a likelihood, there might be an open door, a demonic open door that you need to close. And I mean, sometime we should tell you about all the different types of demonic things that are released in people once they submit and surrender, repent of other things.

There seems to be a release because there's no longer that stronghold on someone because repentance has taken place. And now there's freedom in that area. So that's what we see here.

And Noah lived 350 years after the flood, actually lived to be 950 years old. And so I take the Bible literally. I believe that that did happen because a couple of things, most speculate that the atmosphere was much different.

The rays of the sun, the covering around the earth, the natural environment. Also, I personally believe it was very clean eating, not all the junk and garbage that we have today that is really affecting, it affects your cell at the cellular level. What happens is these toxicities, let's say glyphosate, for example, and Roundup or sodium bicarbonates or aspartame or MSG, monosodium glutamate, partial hydrogenated oil.

I mean, you name it, all this junk, we're eating a lot of chemicals and it begins to damage the cell and your cells are meant to reproduce, die, reproduce, die. And technically you can see how a person could keep living based how the body was designed. So I think in the fall, something happened that stopped that renewing process.

So God said, you're not gonna live to be over 120 years old. In my opinion, that's what that meant. And no, so we see something now happening that people die because the body's not, you die of a toxic state, wrinkles, old age.

It's all because the body can't continue to fight off disease and different things. And on a separate note, the one reason we're calling the church to prayer and fasting January 1st, one of the best benefits of fasting, of course, spiritually, but physically benefits of fasting is something called autophagy takes place. And your body, instead of having no more food because you're not eating, begins to burn your fat as fuel, but also decay and dead and diseased cells now become food for the body, begins to break them down.

Autophagy, self-consuming. It's a Greek word, I believe, or Latin word. And it consumes tumors and different things by fasting.

It has major, major physical benefits as well. But let's talk about this for a minute. The slippery slope of addiction.

The slippery slope of addiction. Noah began to be a farmer and he had drunk wine and was drunk. Now let's define addiction.

And this is from the Biblical Counseling Coalition. Very good resource on this. The Bible can sympathize with the feeling of bondage from addiction, yet it never avoids holding us morally responsible for our actions.

Isn't that interesting? The Bible says, yes, we know it's hard, it's slavery, but you're still in control. That kind of, that goes against popular psychology. Does it not? How often have you heard this? Alcoholism is a disease.

Well, I'm here to tell you it is not a disease according to scripture. And I know that gets people upset, but that's okay. You can't fix it unless you stir the pot.

And let's put something up there. I heard this actually from Greg Laurie. I reached out to his secretary many, many years ago and got the exact wording.

If it's a disease, it's the only disease without germs or virus. If it's a disease, it's the only disease that is self-inflicted. If it is a disease, it's the only disease contracted by the act of the will.

If it is a disease, it's the only disease that is bottled and sold over the counter for a profit. If it is a disease, it's the only disease that will cause a father to grab his baby and shake him violently, or cause a mother to desert her children, or cause them to not have money for clothes and things. If it's a disease, it's the only disease that will keep one out of heaven and send that soul to hell.

That, sir, is not a disease. It's an addiction called sin. And why this is so important.

I remember I actually had a couple leave the church when I just told you, I just told you. It is a disease. And the reason is when it's a disease, it's not my fault.

There's different views. Now, I was trying to try to see where they're coming up with the concept of disease. And when they talk about the mental anguish, the physiological pain, the dependence of the body, I can see what they're saying, but disease is not the right word because disease removes all types of responsibility.

There's nothing you can do. You're not, you know, you can't do anything about a disease. It comes upon you.

Now, I think some disease is self-created for sure, especially what we're seeing, especially in our country with the healthcare system and a lot of disease is directly related to lifestyle choices. But this is what the Bible calls sin. It's a choice.

And so what we'll say is, hey, it's not my fault. It's a disease. And when I researched this, the word disease actually came up, I think about 80 years ago or so.

The whole reason, the whole reason it was called a disease is because those in the medical field didn't want addicts to feel bad. And so they changed the diagnostic, whatever they call it, diagnosis to disease. They have a disease.

AA calls it a disease. Most places online call it a disease. But if you look at the definition of a disease, it's not a disease.

It's a choice. And the reason they want to remove that feeling of feeling shame, because this term addict, and I got it. I mean, that's a harsh term.

But conviction can also be good, right? We own it. God has us feel shame and guilt. So I take it to the one who took my shame and guilt.

Without filling these areas of conviction, we don't change to the degree we could. So if somebody's always excusing their sin, you're not going to see a lot of freedom. And many of you know, could be you, those you know caught in addiction, excuses are at the top of the list, correct? I can stop whenever I want.

I don't have a problem. It's not my fault, it's your fault. I can't control myself.

Or my favorite, the devil made me do it. The devil made you do it? Flip Wilson? The old timers remember that guy, right? The devil made me do it. No he doesn't, he just entices, he just tempts.

Now I'm not minimizing the pull of addiction, because if you've ever been caught in it, it's not something you just get up and pray, oh Lord, take this away, thank you very much, positive thoughts, read scripture, I'm good. Sometimes it's a battle, the battlefield of the mind. But the Bible Counseling Coalition goes on to say, the individual feels both guilty, because they caved in, yet unable to stop.

They feel responsible, but they also feel out of control. The Bible is not naive about the nature of addiction. God holds us morally responsible for our actions, but he also recognizes the way in which sinful choices can enslave us.

This is one of the best definitions I've ever heard on addiction in just a few words here. Addictions are best described as voluntary slavery. That's exactly what it is, voluntary slavery.

And if we had time, we could turn to Paul's words, I believe it was in Romans. He says, whatever you choose to obey becomes your master. So there's a choice involved.

If there was really no choice behind it, we'd have to get rid of quite a few scriptures. Make no provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts, meaning I make provision for thought, for planning. No temptation has overtaken you, but what is common to all men, that God will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will make a way of escape that you may be able to bear it, unless you're addicted to such, such, such, and such.

No, you don't have that. And it's actually quite empowering to say, Lord, with your help, I can overcome this. With your help, I can do this, versus, well, this is a disease, this is my death sentence, there's nothing I can do.

And I think the enemy keeps us trapped in that area as well. But again, I'm gonna talk more about that on how to be set free on January 2nd. Right now, I'm just laying the foundation.

But this area, I should clarify two things too. Drug, what is the word drug? Well, we have a, without taking anything, if you just, who you are, the way you think, cognitive patterns, your heart rate, your hormone levels. If any of us weren't taking anything, how we would act is normal.

Sleep, eat, normal, communicate with people, there's normal, normalcy there. But when you take something labeled as a drug, it alters that. So, usually in the mind, right, a lot of neurotransmitters are ch-ch-ch-ch, what cocaine will do.

It'll make you, I remember the very first time I tried crystal meth at 17 years old, I looked at a dime for about 30 minutes and couldn't believe the dime is just, wow. And then alcohol gives you a different effect. I was in a running with the wrong crowd of people.

And we would smoke weed, then get drunk, then take something a little harder. And it was, they would have, they would offset each other. I remember a trip to Las Vegas, I stayed up the whole weekend.

My friend's dad would make the crystal meth and sell it. It was just, it was a hard, it's a hard thing to break out of, so I have sympathy for that, I was a teenager. But they do different things to you.

They, where alcohol make you, it's like sedating. That's what most people say. I just wanna relax.

Anybody relate? Just wanna work, work. Your Vente Starbucks doesn't make you relax. Gives you the opposite.

Let's go, go, go, go, go, move, move. It's a central nervous stimulant. It's actually a drug.

I'm trying, not trying to upset people today, but caffeine is a drug. It's actually listed in the manual of mental disorders. Caffeine-related stress disorder, caffeine-induced sleep disorder, all over 500 milligrams a day, which is, a Vente's probably 300 of strong coffee.

And so you get that and a couple monster drinks, you are soaring. And so it alters who you are. And that's why I've talked about this before, because Morgan will say, you've had coffee, didn't you? How'd you know? Because you're a jerk.

You're meaner to the kids. You're snappy. You're irritable.

You're anxious. Your attention span is not there. Because it's affecting me.

It's a central nervous stimulant. It makes your body like fight and flight. Thousands of years ago, you had to run from a lion.

So what would kick in? Adrenaline, cortisol. These are fight and flight, and that's what this drug does to your body. It's actually not very healthy to take that type of drug and sit and do nothing, because your body needs an outlet for all these hormones and neurotransmitters that are firing.

And so other drugs, crystal meth will give you something different. Cocaine is a little bit different, but similar. And then he was at our first service today.

Mark, he's gonna talk on January 2nd. I noticed and asked him if he would give his brief testimony but he's six months free of crack cocaine. You wanna talk about something hard to break, that he's just gonna briefly, just give his testimony briefly, but that's something really hard.

A lot of us can't relate to that. And at 24 Hour Fitness, I had a lot of people, well, not a lot, probably a few dozen that were addicted to crack cocaine. It would take them out.

It's your payday, you wouldn't see them for a week and try and have sympathy with them, but it's a hard, hard thing. So that's what a drug is. It alters who you are and what you do.

And that's why we have to be careful because when we take drugs to offset something, how we're feeling, sometimes the drug has worse side effects than what you're actually feeling. Just go and look at the side effects of Xanax. It's like, whoa, that's worse than the depression or the anxiety.

And this is, make sure you talk to your doctor about weaning off carefully and slowly. If not, it could lead to suicidal thoughts and traumatic types of episodes and hallucinations. I'm like, unbelievable.

So we have to be careful in this area of Big Pharma because Big Pharma is not for big health. It's putting a pill on it. I mean, that's what we do, right? That's what you call most doctors.

Call most doctors, tell them you're struggling with anxiety. What will they do? Raise your hand. What I would do is say, okay, tell me about your mental diet.

Tell me about what you're feeding your mind. Next, tell me about your relationship with the Lord, your devotional, your prayer time. Tell me about that.

And then I'd look at what's their physical diet. Did you know your deficit and key vitamins and nutrients and things, it can really mess up your hormone levels, thyroid levels, all of it. It's how God designed us.

You start playing with how God designed us, you're gonna start having problems. Mental diet, physical diet. Now, I'm not saying there's never a time and a place for something.

I mean, I've seen where people have actually reset their serotonin levels by taking some intake inhibitors that can really balance out. So why do we always think it's brain chemistry right off the bat? And that's our first go-to. We don't know that.

Have you done your due diligence? I mean, if somebody's struggling with anxiety, the first thing I would do is wean yourself off of caffeine quickly. Because what it is, it makes you anxious. Hello, this is not rocket

science.

But we don't wanna do that, just give me a pill. Just give me the pill. Same thing a doctor, hey doctor, I have very high cholesterol levels here.

My HDL, my LDL ratio, high density lipids, low density lipids, it's not good. What am I gonna do? Here you go, here's a statin drug. This will cause your liver to produce, not produce cholesterol.

To me, that's not a good thing. You're supposed to produce, every cell in your body needs cholesterol. It's very important to the body.

Why don't you ask them what their weight is, what they're eating, and how to get them in shape? That's how you combat these things. I mean, we can go down the line of diabetes. Did you know type two diabetes is health-related? It's a disease that is caused by poor lifestyle choices.

It's caused by that. Losing sight, amputation on limbs, gaining weight, and then we go and we get the insulin. What's insulin? Actually, when you do that, insulin is the hormone that tells your body to store fat.

Uh-oh, we've got a problem here. And if you're insulin resistant, how are you shooting more insulin to your body really gonna fix the problem? Most doctors will tell you, this is unrepairable. You're gonna have this for the rest of your life, and it's just not true.

I can tell you dozens and dozens of people I've known personally who have reversed all of these things by taking care of how the body was designed. So what kind of person would I be if I didn't tell you the truth? Yes, it's convicting, it's hard to hear, but we need to hear it. Those things we need to hear are often the most important.

But this word drunk then means affecting someone's behavior to the extent of losing control over that behavior. It causes problems, embarrassment, and shame. Uncovered, like he was uncovered.

You become spiritually dull, spiritually dull. Ephesians 5.18, do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. I love that word.

What is debauchery? Excessive indulgence in sensual pleasure. So getting drunk leads to excessive indulgence in sensual pleasure. Without a shadow of a doubt, after 12 years now we're going on of planting the church, anytime somebody is addicted to, let's say, alcohol, they've also got a problem with pornography or gluttony.

There's no way like, hey, this alcohol has got me, but all these other areas are doing great. You just open the door to all types of sensual, it's a sensuality, that spiritual aspect has taken over your life and will rule and reign in all areas of the lust of the flesh. You lose that discipline or that knowing of the Holy Spirit or that feeling of the Holy Spirit in that area and other areas will crumble as well.

And he said, instead, be filled with the Spirit. Instead, Paul in Ephesians 5, instead be filled with the Spirit. To me, it tells me there's a choice.

Don't be filled with this Spirit. Ever see on the liquor store spirits? There might be something to that. But be filled with God's Spirit.

So I know you're all curious on our church's stance on this issue. So here it is. Obviously, the Bible allows for the enjoyment of an alcoholic beverage now and then.

But what we forget is that the alcohol content in Jesus's day was not what it is today. Wine was not at 12%. You can ask Jewish historians, Josephus, early church fathers, different things.

It was probably around 2% because it was very diluted with water. So you could drink a big glass of wine and you're not gonna have 12% alcohol and feeling pretty good. It's not gonna alter that state.

That's why the Bible goes on to say hard drink or strong drink. That's a differentiation of the alcohol content. So yes, it allowed for a little bit of alcohol.

But what is that definition? Every night? Well, that's not a little bit. That's an addiction. And just because something is allowable or permissible doesn't mean it's necessarily a good idea.

Paul said, yes, all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the bondage of anything. So just because you can, we really shouldn't be asking, I tell people this, they ask me, well, Shane, can I do this? No, here's what you should be asking. Should I do this? Should I? Because the can, can you? I mean, technically, biblically speaking, sure, you can have a beer.

And it's those people have one beer every couple months or a drink of wine now once a week. Now, I mean, it's not part of their life. And that's the Bible allows for that.

But you can also own a rattlesnake. You can own a rattlesnake, but should you? You can go catch a coyote and make him a family dog. You can.

You have the liberty as a Christian to go do that. You motorcycle riders, you can go dirt bike riding without any gear and any helmet, go 60 miles. You can do that.

As a believer, you can do that. Should you? No, you shouldn't. So see, I think we missed the question.

Look, the Bible never encourages crossing the line. The Bible never says Jesus was even remotely intoxicated, but he made the water into wine. Sure, but diluted wine, we don't know the fermentation process, how long, but they would never encourage drunkenness.

And this is something interesting as well. God, now let me flesh this out for a minute. God never created alcohol.

You're not gonna go into the Garden of Eden when we learned about earlier, and there's gonna be that the wine tree or the Modelo keg, the IPA, the big popular thing. I looked at some of those the other day at the store. I'm like 8%, 9%.

You're feeling pretty good on that beer. No wonder you can have just one. Because see, the content has been increased.

But what he did, what happened, there wasn't alcohol before the fall. The fall, how was alcohol made? It's made in the decaying process of the fruit. So as the fruit is decaying and dying, there's fermentation, and that's where alcohol comes from.

So it's because of the decaying aspect of fruit after the fall, and from that comes the alcohol. So God allows it in moderation where it doesn't affect or influence you. I remember, I've been at Christian gatherings, and it's like they're very liberal in this area, and it's like, yeah, I just have one, and the goblet is like a 32-ounce goblet.

You fit the whole bottle of wine in there. I bet you just have one. And so we love good news about bad habits.

And I give people shame, but the antioxidant effects, the benefits, the antioxidants. I'm like, no, just eat some grapes. Much better, much healthier.

So here's the thing. You're in control, but that's the church's stance, but we also promote, I would encourage abstinence. You know, why walk the razor's edge? Now, growing up and have a history of this, you know, it's when I was 12 years old is when I started.

I remember in Courtsill, I remember the street, I remember the Coors container, and I didn't say, ooh, gross. I said, wow, that makes me feel pretty good. And it was hooked at a young age, and so I know the struggle that is there, and we're not talking about perfection here.

We're talking about direction. Where does God want the direction of our heart? But you're in control until you take that first drink, and it begins, now you take that strong drink, and now it begins to alter. Now, I was in control.

Now I'm in semi-control. Now I've got this influence kind of talking to me a little bit. And now, well, maybe if one is good, two might be even better.

And I can handle, and so once you open that door, it's hard to close it. That's all I'm saying. And most people I talk to now, there's people going here, this is, I mean, lives are affected more than you realize.

Some of you might know, but there's a lot of families here dealing with this at this church, and who listen online. And nobody sets out to be an alcoholic. A lot of times, it starts with the first or the second, or they've got it for a few years, but then here comes difficulty, and they run to that.

And now it's not about feeling good anymore. Now it's about not feeling bad. So now we have it more, and now it's turned into kind of a problem, but I got this, and now it's that slippery slope.

This is a slippery slope, because most people, and you know who you are, the people who don't have a problem with it, say, Shane, we gotta get this sermon out. This is so important. The people that have a problem with it, but they're acting like they don't, they don't like this sermon.

You're judgmental. The Bible says I can drink. No, it doesn't say that.

It says be careful. The scriptures supporting alcohol are far outweighed by those warning of its dangers. Let me tell you.

There's Old Testament examples. There's New Testament scriptures. Proverbs is filled with it.

Strong drink is a brawler. It's a mocker. Jesus actually said, don't be weighed down by carousing and drunkenness, and that day come upon you unexpectedly.

The reason it's a razor's edge as well is because a person could have just one too many to drive, and here they are driving. Do you know if you hit somebody, and they're injured, it's a felony? You could become a felon like that. They're injured.

Try talking your way out of that one. Razor's edge, slippery slope. Or what about if we have it in the home? You know, now and then, have some strong drink in the home.

Well, guess who sees that strong drink? Little kiddos. I think that's what started mine. You know, just barely learning to drive.

I named the houses and the parents. I still remember those families. We're like, oh, wild turkey.

I wonder what that is. And you try, it's wild, let me tell you. And you can pour a cup out, just get a cup of water, replace it, and the parents will never know.

Don't act like you don't know what I'm talking about. Come on. Please.

But see, out of sight, out of mind. So I would encourage parents, I wouldn't have it in your house. It's just, it's too easy to open that door.

First time I had wine was on M14, M4, across from the little league field in Quartz Hill. I'll never forget the house. We opened it up.

My mom said, are you drunk? When she picked me up, at 12 years old. And see, I didn't say, oh, this is gross. I said, oh, because it makes you feel alive.

Now I'm talking, because I was shy and introverted and not the party guy and quiet and kind of, you know, maybe dorky, right, or not smart, uneducated, kind of. And then this, oh, 10 feet tall and bulletproof. And now the life of the party.

But it cost me a great deal. Because it takes and takes and never gives. It's a slippery slope.

You will not be filled with the spirit to the degree you could be filled. You will not be filled with the spirit to the degree you could be filled if you're engaging in this. Even now and then, I believe.

I've never, I've never, unless it's you, maybe tell me afterwards. I've never met someone who came up and said, man, after that big glass of wine, I had an amazing prayer time. I was in God's words, just amazing.

I just, oh, it's usually the opposite. Let me see what's on Netflix. Let me feed the spiritual side that I just opened up this door.

That's not healthy, it's not good. R.A. Torrey said the gratification of the flesh, fulfilling the flesh and the fullness of the spirit do not go hand in hand. You can't have both.

So I know Christians go to this church or outside the church, friends, Christians. Yes, they have a little bit now and then, but the fullness of the spirit is not there. They're not on fire for God, filled with the spirit, doing great things for God.

They have this liberty, but this liberty is costing them the fullness of the spirit. Because you can't have both in this case. And with the slippery slope, the farther you slide down, the harder it becomes to get back up.

Like I said earlier, I alluded to this, I don't have a bone to pick, I just have a truth to tell. I'm not trying to ruin anybody's fun or I'm just telling you the truth. Did you know that there's three million deaths a year as a result of harmful use of alcohol in the world? That's 5% of all deaths in the world.

The abuses, I mean, if we had time, I could talk about gaming addiction. You know, that's huge right now. With COVID, and I mean, that one I never understood.

I can't sit in a computer and play Mario or Pac-Man or whatever the games are. Call of Duty, you know, these games, that's not my cup of tea. But others can sit in there for hours.

It begins to affect their health, their relationship, their attitude. Don't be doing this to people, I see you guys. Gaming is very addictive, very addictive.

What else is very addictive like gaming? Just try going no day, without it each day. I try them like this. Oh, that's right.

Oh, that's right. Oh, let's see right now. But there's this, it's a stronghold that takes you captive.

Gambling. Have you ever seen a family destroyed by gambling? Oh, that one, you just want to slap them in the face because there's no drinking, nothing. It's just like, I know the next time, the next trip to Vegas, or down to the races.

And it's just like, they're all about getting, it's a fix, adrenaline. And they eventually end up losing. And listen, Vegas doesn't look the way it looks because there's lots of winners.

Very slippery slope. What happens, the devil plants thoughts and we think they are our own thoughts. Probably over the last year, I've talked to a couple dozen people who have went years and they'll fall back into it.

The number one at the top of the list is this. It's been a while, I can handle it now. I'll just have one.

And when you have a stronghold in an area of life, and unless you've been completely delivered, good for you, I've never heard, I haven't heard that very often. But opening that door again, the door that God wants you to close, and Satan has a stronghold, when you open that door again, it actually sometimes becomes harder now. And that verse jumps out at me a lot when Jesus said, you know, the spirit leaves, but then the house is not swept and put in order, but there's nothing there, and he brings back more spirits.

And the last state of that man is worse than the first state of his man. And there's something, I've seen that many times. When you open the door to something, when it comes back in, it ravishes.

It's hard to stop now. But that's the excuse. It will never happen to me.

One won't hurt, I got this. I'll never forget. I mean, I open up, I think, in the book a little bit.

But many years ago, I was in construction. I just met Morgan. And I was done with it, it destroyed my life in like 2002, three, four, five, six.

I'm like, it's been five years or so, and me and my friend are talking. I think I can have a beer now. I mean, gosh, boy oh boy.

One turned to six, and then six pretty good. How about 10? How did this happen? Years and years and years and years. Because that addictive nature, it's that hook of the enemy that always wants to get you.

I even, I mean, we started the church. A friend of mine told me, you gotta try this, it's pretty good, it's called Kabucha. And wouldn't you know, I had to have one every single day.

For like, I'm like, Lord, this can't, what is going on? And then you look, oh, wow, trace amounts of alcohol, there you go. And the longer you let it ferment, the stronger it becomes. And so all these things that are there, they can pull, the enemy is waiting for opportune times.

He's not in a hurry, he's patient. He knows what will take us down. And they'll teach you in recovery that halt is something to be aware of, hungry, angry, lonely, tired.

Those are the areas he will hit. Even with pornography, even with pills. Hungry, the body's craving something, so you run to that.

Lonely, tired, angry. You know how many people go run to the liquor store when they get in a fight at home? What they're really looking for is an excuse. But these things are triggers, triggers, triggers.

I just called a man from our church about a month ago or so that this happened to, was doing great and then fell. And I didn't rebuke or anything, I said, hey, just get back up. You got hit with the right hook, we've all been there, just get back up, fight again, learn from it, but then you get caught in shame and guilt and failure and you stay there.

And you start going back into the addiction, it gets deeper. See, it's really, I often say, it's not the fall that hurts, it's staying down that does. Now, don't fall, because it does hurt, don't get me wrong, but that, I mean, life to me is like a bunch of setbacks, a bunch of right hooks, a bunch of failures.

And you're, but you're getting back up and you're fighting, saying, Lord, I repented that, I don't want to go there again. But the enemy wants to keep you in discouragement because then it's shame and guilt and failure that leads to caving in again. Then now you're doubly shamed and guilt and it's just an endless cycle that he keeps you defeated.

Most addicts are miserable, those addicted to things. Those addicted to gluttony is something that was actually talked about a lot 100 years ago, but we don't talk about it anymore, really, because it's kind of offensive and I understand that. I mean, if I'm not careful, I could put on some weight because some of you have that addictive nature, some people don't.

A friend of mine doesn't. I'm like, praise God, must be nice. Must be nice to have one piece of gum.

I want the whole pack. You can have one little piece of that chocolate bar, I want the whole thing dipped in peanut butter. You know, right? Who can go buy In-N-Out Burger and just have one burger? That's it.

Not me, double doubles. Two double doubles, french fries and a chocolate shake, then I'm good. Don't worry, it's been a long time, but that is possible, right? But that also, that weakness can also be a strength because many times, those people are very motivated, very disciplined, go-getters.

So if you can turn that to God honoring things, you can be very productive. So that being a struggle of mine, if God, that's what people ask, Shane, how do you write 12 books? Well, I just don't watch TV. I don't do things, I don't waste my time.

So this thing that God takes and he channels the energy in the right direction, the time, the productivity. So whatever your weakness is can be turned into a strength. God, in perfect, in weakness, there is the strength of God in your life because you admit that, Lord, I need you.

So this area that can be a stronghold can actually be a stronghold for God if you turn it around on its head and be very productive with it. So be careful of those opportune times. If you're looking for an excuse, you will find it.

Isaiah 28, drunkenness in the Bible always had friends. You would see wine and pride. You'd see drunkenness and gluttony.

They're always married. Isaiah 28, they are swallowed up by wine. They are out of the way through intoxicating drink.

They err in vision. They stumble in judgment. You will not have a clear vision for your life.

You will not be productive. You will stumble in making right decisions when alcohol and drugs are leading the way. Wine is a mocker.

It will mock you, will it not? Anybody else relate and say, if I could redo that day, if I could redo that night, if I could redo that time period, man, it mocks you, mocks you. I still run into people and they're like, oh, Shane, I haven't seen you in 25 years. I'm thinking, oh, where was it at? Where do you see me, schooners? I remember the old schooner's location.

And now one of the bouncers, the bouncers is involved in our homeless ministry. It's pretty cool. God, I don't know if he ever kicked me out, but, and you live with a little bit of shame and guilt because of the past and it mocks you.

It makes fun of you. I still run into people who knew me, I haven't seen them in a long time, like school reunions. Like, Shane, I can't believe you're still alive.

You were the craziest guy. You put your truck in four wheel drive and just, I'm like, oh, thank you. Thank you for reminding me of this.

And they just remind you of who you used to be, forgetting of who you are now. And it mocks you. It's humbling to see how far, I mean, I've totaled vehicles.

I don't know how I walked away. Got arrested when I was a teenager. And spent the night in the jail at an old location in Lancaster.

Getting out there in the morning, going, oh, I don't know what happened. I know what happened. Didn't learn my lesson.

Next weekend, here we go again. And just God's grace, the evidence of God's grace on our lives, and watching us and having the mercy and helping us steer us through if we commit everything to Him. That's why I love that verse.

While you were still a sinner, while you're caught in your sin, Christ died for you. While you're mocking God, still, God died for you. Strong drink is a brawler.

Fights. Alcohol, right, 10 foot tall and bulletproof. Lots of fights, lots of things.

I remember I shared with some of you a while back that I was kicked out of Black Angus for life. But I think they don't remember anymore, so that's good. It was in the 90s, and me and my friend, and we were on steroids and really big and fighting, and there's five bouncers, and it didn't go well, and the police were called, and the bouncers broke their arm, I think, and they wanted to do a lawsuit.

It was just, you just think you're fighting. And I remember other times, and I would be in Los Angeles, you don't want to mess around in some places. People would chase me with a knife, and we'd just have to get out of there.

It's just not a good atmosphere, because it opens up all kinds of things. And whoever is led astray by them, by it, is not wise. Woe to you men mighty at drinking.

Woe to you men valiant at mixing intoxicating drink, meaning there's nothing to that. Oh, here's the verse I was looking for, Luke 21. But take heed to yourself, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing.

Carousing, nights on the town, or unproductive. You know, Christians can be unproductive. And woe to you if you're carousing, and drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and that day come upon you unexpectedly.

What day is that? The day of Jesus' return. And so the final statement here I want to make is, I talked about this. Maybe you might want to go and listen to the last service if you need thoughts on this.

But I talked about AA, recovery, or celebrate recovery, my thoughts, or teen challenge, which that would be my top choice, of course, what my thoughts are on that. I don't want to go into it now. But if something's working for someone, I don't want to discourage that.

I mean, I'm not really just, guess I will talk about it for a minute. But like AA, you know, it's all like a higher power. Hi, my name is Chris, I'm an alcoholic, even though you've been clean for six years.

I mean, it's just, it's not really biblical. However, it's helped a lot of people. And friends of mine go there, and they are mentors to people, and they help them.

So, you know, if it's working for them, I'm not gonna speak against it. I would just point them in making sure that you do identify the true and living God, and that you are surrendering your life to Him. Because you can be sober, but not saved.

Sober, but not saved. It's amazing. I had a guy so bothered by that statement at the last service that he realized that he's sober, but not saved.

Because you can go through the motions of Christianity. You can be sober, but not saved. And that's my problem with groups that are not Christ-centered.

So we'll close with that 1 Corinthians. Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Folks, listen, do not be deceived.

Neither fornicators, sex outside of marriage, nor idolaters, putting something, worshiping something above God, nor those who cheat on their spouse, nor homosexuality, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revelers, nor extortioners will enter the kingdom of heaven. Now, of course, many people, and I get

this question, but Shane, I struggle with some of these. Well, remember, struggle is not a lifestyle.

Because a person struggles with a certain sin. I'm not encouraging you to do that. I'm just saying that's not a lifestyle of sin.

It's like the lamb and the pig. They both get caught in the mud. The mud represents the sin of our lives.

The lamb hates its condition. It cries out, it needs help. But the pig loves the mud, and it wallows around, and enjoys it, and it even leads others in.

That's the difference. So this verse, do not be deceived, means if you practice such things, if you're like, I don't care, I love my gin and tonic, I love this, I love this lifestyle, that's who I am. I'm an unrepentant sin.

I'm not repenting and acknowledging that this is wrong. Because a person can be on fire for God a couple, and they fall into fornication. Like, oh, we made this mistake, and we don't wanna do this, Lord, our heart's not to do that.

See, the heart is right. So a struggle with sin is not the same as a lifestyle from sin. And the judgmental Jerrys like to email me and say, Shane, you're encouraging sin.

No, I'm not, I'm encouraging making a stepping stone, not a stumbling block. Get back up and fight again. Don't sin, but the Bible says, when you do sin, I'm sorry, if you do sin, do this.

You have an advocate, the Father, through the Son. And so we have to encourage people, this is serious. If this type of, if anything, any one of these lifestyles is unrepentant, if you enjoy it, oh, this is the way I am.

God created me this way. Who are you to tell me this is wrong? This is how I was made. God loves me regardless.

I'm going to embrace a sinful lifestyle. Really, it's not the sinful lifestyle that's really, you know, all these different distinguishing marks, it's the heart. That's why it says all these things, all, if you embrace any one of these things, the heart is not right.

You've not repented of your sin and allowed Christ to change you. That's why we warn people. If they put homosexuality way up here, you know, and now there's, the Bible has a lot to say about it.

But if you're drunk and you're cheating on your wife and you're worried about this one, let me, you better first be worried about this one. That's what they mean by all sin is the same. Because in God's eyes, if it's unrepentant sin, no matter how it manifests itself, in some it manifests itself this way, in drunkenness.

Others it manifests in this thing. If it manifests itself and there's unrepentant sin, that's a very dangerous road to be on. But then Paul encourages us, and such were some of you, and such were some of you.

Isn't that great news? It doesn't just keep beating people. It says, hey, listen, such were some of you, but because you've been washed by the lamb, you've been sanctified by Jesus Christ, you are justified because of what Christ did on the cross. You have been set free, you have been saved, you have been cleansed.

Yes, such were some of you. So many of us can say this morning, yes, that was me. That was me, amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.

Though I struggle, don't hold me down. Though I struggle, don't hold me back. The Lord Jesus Christ is still on the throne, and God, you will get me through this struggle.

You will get me through this challenge. The power of persevering prayer, this kind does not come out except by prayer and fasting. You better get on your face before God and be set free of these things.

So I'm gonna close on that note and just throw it out there. If that is you, if you do not know Jesus Christ as your Lord and as your Savior, you can say, I've been justified. I am not embracing any of these sinful lifestyles.

If you can't say that, then repent this morning and say, I need that, I need that. I'm sober, but I'm not saved. I know about the Bible, but I don't know the God of the Bible.

Don't leave here different. Don't leave here in this state. Don't live your life with a question mark here.

And also, what we're gonna do, I know it's a step of humility, but those who are struggling with addiction, any type of addiction, the altar's gonna be open. We did that the first service, the second service. The altar's gonna be open.

If you struggle with something that has got you bound, gluttony, food, sugar, caffeine, alcohol, whatever it is, we wanna open the altar during worship and we want you to just, that time with God. We'll also open the prayer room, so the prayer team will be available, maybe here first, then there, or there, and then here. Or, of course, you can stay in your seats, you can leave quietly out the exits.

That's up to you and God, but we wanna make that a place of transparency because that's where healing takes place. And that's with any good recovery. You know what the first step is? The first step is, it's not my fault.

It's not my fault, it's my spouse. I have a tough job. I need to relax.

The first step is, Lord, I need help. I can't overcome this on my own. This is beyond my scope of repair.

I'm humbling myself, and I'm coming forward and saying, Lord, I need help in this area. I need you to help me. I need you to overcome what is overcoming me.

It's a step of humility. Here's why this is so important. Listen to this.

Hearing from God's word, I just spent an hour, three hours, actually, today to different congregations. It's wonderful to hear what God's word has to say. It's powerful.

Many people are encouraged. I see a lot of this. But do you know that won't help you? That's called hearing.

That's not doing. Bible says if you hear God's word but don't do it, you live in deception. And that's why, unlike many churches, they have, okay, quick song, let's get out here.

Let's go to the buffet. We do the opposite, like let's wait on God. Let's go and pray for you.

Let's have the altar open because that's the time that God begins to heal the heart and change the heart. That's the time of pressing in and having that relationship with God built and be satisfied. That's the time where the heart changes.

It actually doesn't change all the time when the message is being preached. It can, but a lot of times, it's changed when action follows. For example, how many people do you think, and even heard it today, thousands of people on Facebook, media, social media, YouTube, heard it and said, ah, ha, ha.

Boy, he's got a good point. He's got a good point. That's where it ended.

That's where, and if that's where it ended, that's where it's gonna end. There will be no change. Because God's word never says agree with it and say, that's a good point in my mind, but not backed up by my actions.

So again, we're gonna open the altar. Don't be ashamed. Don't be worried about what people think.

Because if the truth be told, most of us struggle with something. Let's be honest. That's why I tell people that come down hard on maybe a child that fell back into addiction.

I say, well, you can't give up your caffeine and your nicotine and your binging on TV and your porn. Well, that's different. Really? That's different.

Now, the outcome might be, I mean, you know, if you're hooked to heroin and you're hooked to sugar, there's gonna be different consequences. Don't get me wrong. But many people have a stronghold in their life that they just can't give.

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