



THE PRAYER CLOSET

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE PRAYER CLOSET MINISTRIES

DECEMBER, 1998

Prayer and Addiction

There is great heartache and frustration for those who have a family member or friend who is an addict. It is not so much what the person is addicted to as it is that the person has lost control and has become enslaved by it. The addict is now being controlled by something or someone else. He or she continues on the path of self-destruction, blind to the dangers and the destruction of the addiction. And, you feel as if nothing can be done.

I am sure that you can think of someone in your life that is an addict. If you cannot, you would probably be surprised to know who is. It could be a family member or a friend. It could be someone that you work with or someone with whom you attend church. You know that this person is in bondage to alcohol, drugs, pornography, another person, or the variety of things to which a person can be addicted. You wonder, "*What can I possibly do to help the person? What can I do to make a difference in this person's life?*" **The most important thing that you can do for this person is to pray for this person.** You must cry out to Jesus Christ in his or her behalf.

You must realize that there are no helpless or hopeless cases when Jesus Christ is concerned. The power of Jesus Christ can set the addict free. Through Him, there is hope and power for deliverance and freedom for the addict. This is not just a religious cliché; these are not fancy words that are empty of meaning or power. This is living truth! Jesus Christ is real and His power to change lives is a living reality. You can see this power flow into the person's life through prayer.

In order to help you learn how to pray for an addict, this article will feature the basic facts about addiction. The focus of the article will be on the basics of what addiction is and how a person becomes an addict. Following this, suggested, specific prayer requests will be offered as a guide to help you pray for this person. Through this article, it is my hope and prayer that you will gain greater insight into this issue. By doing this, I hope to challenge you to intercede for those who are addicted. Your prayers can make a difference in the lives of the addicted.

The Heart of Addiction

At the heart of addiction is idolatry. The addict is an idolater who has made an idol not with his hands, but with his heart (**Ezekiel 14:3**). Addiction is a lordship problem. The addict has surrendered himself to something or someone else other than God. The reason for this surrender is to meet some need or to fulfill some desire. The person turns to this something or someone rather than God to meet the need or the desire.

It is important to understand that addiction is the symptom of a self-centered heart and not a victimizing physical weakness. The secular mindset calls addiction a 'disease;' the Bible calls it idolatry. Why is addiction idolatry? The addict has gone outside of God to something or someone else for what he or she feels is needed or what is desired. This person has turned away from God, the only true source of hope, comfort, and blessing to something or someone else for what is needed or desired. Idolatry is turning away from God to worship and serve something or someone else. This is exactly what the addict does. The addict surrenders himself to the something or someone and becomes its servant. This is what the Bible calls idolatry.

The purpose of this idolatry is to manipulate the idol for one's own benefit. In Old Testament times, people erected idols and surrendered themselves to false gods. The reason that they did this was to get their will done. An example of this is **1 Kings 18**. In **1 Kings 18**, Elijah confronts the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel. The prophets of Baal slashed themselves and did everything that they could to manipulate Baal to do their will. An idolater does not worship and surrender himself to something or someone because he is convinced that this is the true God. He does it in order to get something he wants. The addict does not surrender himself to alcohol, drugs, pornography, or whatever the addiction because he feels that this is the true God. He does this because of the feeling it gives him: good feelings, a better self-image, a sense of power, or whatever the heart is craving. In surrendering himself to this thing, it becomes his god, his idol. It gives him what he wants and it becomes the center of his life. It takes the place of God in his life.

This is at the heart of what addiction is all about in a person's life. There are some people who are desperate for love and acceptance. They seek for this. Due to the reality of sin, they seek to find love and acceptance in substance, a possession, or a person rather than in a personal relationship to Jesus Christ. There is an emptiness in the person's life, a hole that nothing seems to fill. Instead of turning to Christ, the person turns to this something or someone. It gives temporary comfort. But, the person is hooked. They crave the thing or the person because it helps them deal with the lack of love or acceptance that they feel.

There are some people who want to escape the pressures of life. The pressures of life can feel overwhelming and at times, almost unbearable. The person does not turn to Jesus Christ and His Word to find the help that he needs in facing these pressures. Instead, he turns to a substance, an activity, or a person to deal with or to forget about the circumstances. In order to escape, the person turns to the addiction rather than to Jesus Christ. Again, the something or someone gives temporary comfort. The person gets hooked. They begin to crave the thing or the person because it helps deal with the pressures of life.

There are some people who have never learned how to cope with pain. They turn to something or somebody other than Jesus Christ and His Word in order to deal with the pain in their lives. If you've ever had a toothache, you know that the only thought in your mind is to get rid of the pain. This is exactly what the addict is doing. The addict turns to the person or the thing in order to deal with the pain, whether it is physical or emotional pain. As stated above, the person finds temporary relief. The person is hooked. They begin craving the something or somebody because it helps them deal with the pain.

No matter what the reason the person has for turning to his addiction, it is idolatry because the person is turning away from God to find help in something or someone else. The great tragedy of this addiction/idolatry is that the person becomes enslaved to the feelings or benefits that the something or someone gives. Therefore, the person has to continue to cling to the addiction. On the one hand, idolatry is a rebellious, selfish choice. It is turning away from God to find what is needed in something

or someone else. Yet, it slowly becomes a state of enslavement, a loss of control. This is due to the nature of sin. Sin captures and controls (**John 8:34; Galatians 6:1**).

These truths point out how to deal with addiction. First, there must be repentance. Addiction begins with a rebellious, selfish choice. A person is not an addict because he is a victim. A selfish, rebellious choice was made to turn from God to this something or this someone. The addict must repent of his idolatry and turn back to God. He or she must realize that all that is needed can be found in a personal relationship with God, walking with Christ and obeying His Word.

Yet, there must also be the power of Jesus Christ. Addiction is a sinful, rebellious choice. But, when that choice is made and the person continues in the addiction, the person becomes enslaved. The person is captured and controlled by the addiction. This person must have the life-transforming power of Jesus Christ that comes through the Holy Spirit. "Just Say No!" is a tremendous slogan for the prevention of addiction to drugs and alcohol in children and teenagers. Yet, it has no power for the person who is in bondage to addiction. It is simply not enough to say no. The person who is in bondage to addiction must have the power of Christ to break the chains of the addiction. The only answer to the enslavement of sin is the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. It is only by a daily reliance on the power of the Holy Spirit that a person can get free from the chains of addiction.

The Making of An Addict

Nobody plans to become addicted. Nobody likes being addicted. And everyone is sure that it will never happen to them. So how does it happen? How does a person get into this bondage? It is the result of a process over a period of time. A person does not become an addict overnight.

Each person travels a private path to addiction. Yet, there are basic steps that are similar in each situation. The first step is indulging in a sinful habit. This is when the person turns from God to meet his needs or desires in something or someone outside of God and His will. The person finds some temporary relief or pleasure in the sinful habit.

Following this, there is dependence. The addict begins depending on the sinful habit. He or she needs the alcohol. He or she craves the pornography. He or she needs the other person. At the point, the indulging turns into a desperate needing, a craving dependence. The addict now needs the benefits or the help that the substance or something gives.

The next step in the process is tolerance. As the person continually turns to the addiction, the "high" involved gets less and less. For example, it takes more and more drugs to give the "high" that the drug addict needs. The drug addict has to turn to more and more drugs to get the original feeling that he once had. As the "high" diminishes over a period of time, the greater the amount of drugs that the addict has to use. This is true for any kind of addict regardless of the substance or thing that is being used.

The final step in the process is withdrawal. The person is consumed by the addiction and it is in complete control of his life. The addict withdraws from life, family, and friends. At this stage, the addict cannot function in society. He or she loses the ability to live a responsible life at work and home. Severe financial difficulties set in as this person struggles to support his or her addiction. The person becomes paranoid about contact with other individuals, fearing that his addiction will be discovered. This is the stage where severe mental and physical problems can set in or even death.

Suggested Prayer Requests

The following is a list of prayer requests that you can pray through for a person who is addicted. These prayer requests are offered solely as a guide to help you in praying for the addict. You can use these or develop your own from these. Also, you will know the specific details of the person's situation. You can develop your prayer requests from these. Pray that God will give you specific insight into the particulars of the addict's life and problems. Ask God to help you in praying specifically and intensely for this person.

(1) If this person is not a Christian, pray that God would draw this person into a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ (John 3:3, 3, 15-17; John 6:44). This person needs the Lord Jesus Christ and His power. Plead that God would reveal the Lord Jesus Christ to this person and that he or she will truly turn away from his or her sins and trust in Jesus Christ as the personal Lord and Savior of his or her life. There is very little that can be done for this person until he or she knows Jesus Christ in a personal relationship.

(2) If this person is a Christian, pray that God would grant this person repentance from this addiction (2 Timothy 2:25-26). The addiction that this person is in bondage to is a sin-the sin of idolatry. In order to be free from it, the person must confess that it is sin before God, turn away from it, and commit through Christ's power and help not continue in this sin. Call on God to grant repentance to this person. Plead with Him to enable this person to turn away from the addiction to Jesus Christ;

(3) Plead that this person will realize that Jesus Christ is sufficient for him or her (Colossians 1:15-23). This person needs to realize that Jesus Christ is sufficient to satisfy, protect, guide, and supply every need. These are not just religious maxims that are to be repeated. They are living truths. Jesus Christ is the complete and sufficient Savior, Lord, and King. This person must come to see that the only way to true peace and fulfillment is by walking with Jesus Christ in a daily, personal relationship;

(4) Plead that this person will come to see clearly the dangers of his or her addiction and the destruction that can happen if he or she does not repent (Proverbs 14:12). The addict cannot clearly see the danger of his or her addiction. This person is blind to the ultimate consequences of what the addiction can do. Plead with God to show this person the danger and the destruction that this addiction can bring. Call on God to take away the blindness of this person concerning this matter. Plead with God to destroy all the excuses and self-justification that this person has;

(5) Ask God to break any demonic strongholds that have been set up in this person's life; call on Him to remove any influence that Satan or his demons may have in this person's life (1 Corinthians 10:19-20). In this passage, the apostle Paul states

that the sacrifices of pagans were actually to demons. He is referring to the fact that this meat was offered to the idols of the pagans. Where there is idolatry, there is demonic power. This refers to both idols made with the hands and those made with the heart. When a person is addicted, whatever that person is addicted to becomes the center of his or her life. This person is committing idolatry. When this takes place, demons will be involved to exploit this matter and to lead the person deeper into bondage. You need to pray that these demonic forces would be hindered and that their work in this person's life would be destroyed;

(6) Plead with God to take away any pleasure, satisfaction, or comfort that this person receives from his or her addictive behavior (Hosea 2:6-7; Ezekiel 37:23). The power that the addiction has over this person is from the benefit that is derived from it. Call on God to remove any benefit that this person might get from the addiction. Ask God to make this a bitter thing in the eyes of this person. Plead that God will take away any pleasure that this person has from the addiction; ask for a change of heart in this person concerning whatever the person is addicted to;

(7) Plead with God to break the power of this addiction in the person's life through the life-transforming power of the Holy Spirit (Genesis 1:2; Acts 2:32; John 16:7-8). The power of the Holy Spirit brought about the creation of all things. The Holy Spirit raised Jesus Christ from the dead. These are magnificent displays of the power of the Holy Spirit. It is through this power that He can transform lives. Plead with God to grant this power to flow into this person's life. This person needs the miraculous power of God to break the chains of this addiction. Plead that the Holy Spirit would cause His power to flow into this person's life, causing the chains of this addiction to be utterly destroyed in this person's life.

(8) Pray that God will enable this person to learn to cope with pain (2 Corinthians 1:3-4; Psalm 86:17; Isaiah 12:1, 49:10, 51:3, 12, 52:9; 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17). Many times a person turns to drugs and alcohol to deal with pain, whether physical and emotional. This person has not learned to cope with and face pain. Because of this, the person turns to drugs, alcohol, or other addictive things. This provides a quick fix, but does not offer a long-term cure. Pray that this person will turn to Jesus Christ rather than whatever he is turning to in order to cope with the pain. Call on God to give this person the grace that he needs to face and deal with the problems that is giving him so much pain and is causing him to turn to something to find relief;

(9) Plead that God will enable this person to face and deal with the pressures of life (2 Corinthians 1:8-9). Many times a person turns to addictive substances in order to deal with the pressures of life. Rather than turning to Christ and His Word, this person turns to a substance in order to cope with the pressure. Plead with God to grant this person the grace to turn to Christ and face the pressures with Him;

(10) Pray that God will strengthen and enable the family and friends of the addict to stand by this person and minister to him or her (Proverbs 17:17; Ecclesiastes 4:10). Those who are the closest to the person who is addicted needs family and friends to stand by him or her and to provide ministry in this situation. The emotional stress of the family of this person is