

Addictions: the problem

John VanSloten Jan. 16, 2005

That song ([Hurt - Johnny Cash](#))

sung by that man (a man who struggled with own demons for much of his life... addictive behaviours toward prescription drugs... to point of ruing his very life)... **That song** - probably one of most powerful pictures - **the despair and desperation - that can result from evil of addiction... I've seen**

Those words come from the heart of an addict! **Regret** asking- **“What have I become?” “My empire of dirt...” PAUSE... Reality** screaming -**“I hurt myself today...” PAUSE... This** terrible irony of addiction... that what we use to dull the pain/free us - ends up making it worse/ imprisoning us... what we use- **“Try to kill it all away...” ends up killing us instead.**

PAUSE... And- “everyone you know ends up going away at the end”- relationships are ruined by addictions..

The Life of Freedom

written by the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Galatians, chapter 5

¹Christ has set us free to live a free life. So take your stand! Never again let anyone put a harness of slavery on you...

¹³It is absolutely clear that God has called you to a free life. Just make sure that you don't use this freedom as an excuse to do whatever you want to do and destroy your freedom. Rather, use your freedom to serve one another in love; that's how freedom grows. ¹⁴For everything we know about God's Word is summed up in a single sentence: Love others as you love yourself. That's an act of true freedom.

¹⁵If you bite and ravage each other, watch out--in no time at all you will be annihilating each other, and where will your precious freedom be then?

¹⁶My counsel is this: Live freely, animated and motivated by God's Spirit. Then you won't feed the compulsions of selfishness. ¹⁷For there is a root

relationships with self...
others... even with God... **“I will let you down, I will make you hurt”**

LONG PAUSE... **The tragedy of addiction** - not just a Johnny Cash problem, or Trent Reznor problem (auth.) **It's a human race problem!... PAUSE...** (Jim Pender P.hd) - 25% of populace directly affected by Alcohol abuse in Alberta ... (sure similar for N.Amer.... why DVD such a huge hit! - if you can call it that!)...

I'm sure - % would rise considerably if you then included - various **derivatives of addiction...** ie: different **1. levels of addiction** - there are alcohol/ substance **dependents** or **abusers...** or different **2. types of addictive substances** (usually drug/alcohol) but what included - **food... coffee... cigarettes...**

LONG PAUSE... What if incl. **addictive processes?** **Gambling?... Pornography?** - nasty ones...-- **TV? Internet?...** **Shopping?** Video Games (Nintendo lines)

of sinful self-interest in us that is at odds with a free spirit, just as the free spirit is incompatible with selfishness. These two ways of life are antithetical, so that you cannot live at times one way and at times another way according to how you feel on any given day. ¹⁸Why don't you choose to be led by the Spirit and so escape the erratic compulsions of a **law (ed. note – Paul was writing to those with a religious addiction toward moral legalism, you can insert your addictive tendency here if you'd like)** - dominated existence? ¹⁹It is obvious what kind of life develops out of trying to get your own way all the time: repetitive, loveless, cheap sex; a stinking accumulation of mental and emotional garbage; frenzied and joyless grabs for happiness; ²⁰trinket gods; magic-show religion; paranoid loneliness; cutthroat competition; all-consuming-yet-never-satisfied wants; a brutal temper; an impotence to love or be loved; divided homes and divided lives; small-minded and lopsided pursuits; ²¹the vicious habit of depersonalizing everyone into a rival; uncontrolled and uncontrollable addictions; ugly parodies of community. I could go on.

I'm not sure where to draw the lines on additions... but the defn has been **broadening** recently...

Dr Neal Plantinga (who btw- I'm heavily relying on... along with others... in fact all I say - from others... not a Psych! ... but I am addicted to talking as though I know what I'm talking about!... OK-admit Preachaholic! (Don't laugh... I wonder some times!) ... **Plantinga** broadens defn further - saying **"[we all] have a habit where sin is concerned'** **[EXPLAIN - sin's a self destructive tendency that we cannot stop!]**

PAUSE... So... next few weeks - talk addictions... try to focus on places addictive story connects - spiritual story... (really everywhere b/c all of life is spiritual!)... Start with **definitions and processes...** weave 'God thing' into the dialogue... Why (the God thing)?

At its core - **what drives addictive process is search for a God thing!...** **[Pender - O shaped whole]...** **[KING - spiritual search/Answer]...**

This isn't the first time I have warned you, you know. If you use your freedom this way, you will not inherit God's kingdom.

²²But what happens when we live God's way? He brings gifts into our lives, much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard--things like affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity. We develop a willingness to stick with things, a sense of compassion in the heart, and a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people. We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments, ²³not needing to force our way in life, able to marshal and direct our energies wisely.

Legalism (*ed. note - insert your addictive tendency here*) is helpless in bringing this about; it only gets in the way. ²⁴Among those who belong to Christ, everything connected with getting our own way and mindlessly responding to what everyone else calls necessities is killed off for good--crucified.

²⁵Since this is the kind of life we have chosen, the life of the Spirit, let us make sure that we do not just hold it as an idea in our heads or a sentiment in our hearts, but work out its implications in every detail of our

“What drives addiction is longing —a longing not just of brain, belly or loins, but finally of the heart.” William Linters, The freedom we Crave

A longing we all share...

PAUSE... To know God in all

his fullness... **BELONG**...

ACCEPTED... MEANT TO

BE!... **WHOLE**/Complete...

BEAUTIFUL Once more

-That's the end goal of these next 3 weeks... by better understanding addictions/**tendencies**-freed from them

DEFN - “Addiction is a complex, progressive, injurious and often, disabling attachment to a substance (alcohol, heroin, barbiturates) or behaviour (sex, work, gambling) in which a person compulsively seeks a change of mood.” Plantinga - oh

yeah... I missed **work**... a biggy in this highly entrepreneurial town of ours!!!!

NB in defn... **complex**

(variances discussed, cross addictions)... **progressive**

(escalation key indicator - see handout/checklist)... **injurious/**

disabling (negative effect!)...

-- most NB - **mood change!**

lives. ²⁶That means we will not compare ourselves with each other as if one of us were better and another worse. We have far more interesting things to do with our lives. Each of us is an original.

Dynamics of Addiction

Want to do a self test? Generally speaking minor league addictions display at least a few of these dynamics, while major league addictions display many more, or more intense forms, of them.

1. Repetition of pleasurable and therefore habit forming behaviour, plus escalating tolerance and desire.
2. Unpleasant aftereffects of such behaviour, including withdrawal symptoms and self reproach
3. Vows to moderate or quit, followed by relapses and attendant feelings of guilt, shame and general distress.
4. Attempts to ease this distress with new rounds of addictive behaviour (or with the first rounds of a companion addiction)
5. Deterioration of work and relationships, with accompanying cognitive disturbances, including denial, delusions, and self deceptions especially about the effects of the addiction, and the

ie: get away from something!... - can take many forms **1. Pain of abuse/hurt** (past/current...to forget/deny) -next wk! (**JVS run to TV** in conflict just this week!...)

2. Relieve stress (pressure release... clear head... calm confusion... stereotypical 'drink after work')

3. Alleviate dissatisfaction (want to be more!... to get past insecurities... richer life- Shop to 'makeover' self hit net b/c we crave intimacy, etc...)

4. Break through boredom (JVS eating while on bike withdrawal!... text twist addiction...) **& others...**

Bottom line - don't like where we're at - engage addictive substance/process to change situation!... to **change selves** in the situation... **Basically- go to these things for HELP...**

PAUSE... here's where God fits in/spiritual connection- **often we go there instead of to God!...** after discover God won't intervene(our sched.)... after blaming God... whatever)

(not to make things worse... in Bible - **idolatry**... asking things

degree to which one is enthralled by it.

6. Gradually increasing preoccupation, then obsession with the addict.
7. Compulsivity in addictive behaviour: evidence that one's will has become at least partly split, enfeebled and enslaved.
8. A tendency to draw others into the web of addiction, people who support and enable the primary addiction. These 'co-dependents' present certain addictive patterns of their own – in particular, the simultaneous need to be needed by the addict and to control him. The codependent relationship is thus one in which primary and parasitic addictions join.

Dr. Neil Plantinga, Not the Way its Supposed to be; A Breviary on Sin

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to become what only God can be!... eternal human propensity - toward **self help**)

Why do we do that? PAUSE...

1. An attempt to **control** our lives! (seems reasonable, we have that right don't we?)... We have right to do whatever we want make selves feel better! (Mantra today!) society teaches! (Plantinga) "The addict must make his way in a culture that presumes everybody's fundamental right to gratify at least five of his senses and that discourages self denial as foolish or even impious. For the self is a sacred object."

We do live in a world where self is #1... we have the right to **not be bored, feel insecure or suffer pain... PAUSE...** & we believe have **power** to fix it ourselves! **only doesn't work-**ask anyone familiar with addiction!

Is it any surprise - addiction problems when live in a Culture of individualism?(when its all about **self... control!... belief we can fix selves?**) **LONG PAUSE**

I think this primary **inclination toward self** - #1 issue needs to be faced- to be free from

addiction... **PAUSE**

Not surprisingly - #1 issue to be faced - to be free from **control of sin**(that **spiritual drug** keeps from O!)

Again, not surprisingly- answer to problem of 'self first' - honest confession **we can't do it on own!** (Step 1)

- recognition that **God can do it for us!** (Step 2)... then most NB - **make decision to turn our will and lives over to the care of God** (Step 3 from 12 steps)

[Past Month - JVS struggles Control/profound self orientation... "my way"] -

realize again - at 43 years... 12 yrs into renewed walk with God - I can't do it on own... I'm not God... need to once more - turn my will and life over to care of God... **PAUSE... how can best thing for me...us... you... be so very hard?**

Such is the power of addiction!...

[ROMANS 7:17-25 Message]

... The solution is life on God's terms... what are they?--

[Romans 8:1-4, Message]

Want freedom? Simply embrace what Spirit is doing in

you... **LONG PAUSE...** even
right now... God wants you to
be free... a freedom that only
he can give!... **LONG PAUSE**

PRAYER... or...

Galatians to close... meditate on
for 3 weeks... Freedom of giving
all to God... moving out of
self... prison of addictive
tendencies...