



# Knowledge Base

# KNOWLEDGE BASE

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## Recognizing and Responding to Addiction

# 1. How to Recognize Addiction in the Church

### Overview:

Addiction doesn't always look like what we expect. In the church, it often hides behind well-dressed appearances, smiles, and even service. A man may serve on the elder board while secretly addicted to painkillers. A young adult might lead worship while bound by pornography. These scenarios are not uncommon, and yet many churches are unprepared to identify or respond.

Recognizing addiction is more than spotting red eyes or slurred speech. It requires spiritual discernment and an understanding of the spiritual root of addiction: idolatry. The Bible teaches us to look for fruit. Is someone consistently avoiding fellowship, lacking joy, or stuck in cycles of secrecy and shame? These could be signs of deeper bondage.

As pastors and leaders, we are called to shepherd the whole flock—including those who are silently suffering. By developing a biblical understanding of addiction and being willing to ask hard questions, we can help bring what's hidden into the light and walk with people toward true freedom in Christ.

### Key Scriptures (ESV):

- Proverbs 14:12 - "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death."
- Matthew 7:16 - "You will recognize them by their fruits."
- Galatians 6:1 - "Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted."

### Warning Signs:

- Repeated cycles of failure, secrecy, or isolation
- Extreme mood swings or defensive behavior when questioned
- Absenteeism, withdrawal from fellowship, or burnout
- Financial irresponsibility or unexplained distress

### Questions to Ask:

- Are there ongoing behaviors inconsistent with a growing walk in Christ?
- Do I sense the presence of deception or a double life?
- Has the person expressed helplessness, shame, or exhaustion?
- Is there a high sense of manipulation surrounding this person?
- Is there a victim mindset that always blames others for problems?

### Steps to Take:

xxxiii. Pray for discernment and wisdom (James 1:5).

xxxiv. Observe patterns over time; do not rush to judgment.

xxxv. Lovingly initiate a private, grace-filled conversation.

xxxvi. Involve trusted elders or leaders as needed (Matthew 18:15-17).

## Recognizing and Responding to Addiction

# 2. Warning Signs of Behavioral vs. Substance Addictions

### Overview:

Not all addictions involve drugs or alcohol. In fact, many of the most destructive addictions within the Church today involve behaviors that are socially acceptable—like overeating, obsessive phone use, or compulsive video gaming. As pastors, we must be equipped to recognize both substance and behavioral addictions as forms of bondage that enslave the soul and hinder spiritual growth.

Substance addictions often come with physical signs—slurred speech, medical complications, withdrawal symptoms. Behavioral addictions, on the other hand, are often invisible. Yet they hijack the will in the same way. People addicted to pornography or social media often live double lives, trapped in shame and isolation.

The root issue in both types of addiction is the same: misplaced trust and worship. Both reveal a heart that runs to a counterfeit savior for comfort or control. We must be willing to look beneath the surface behaviors and guide people to the only One who can truly satisfy.

### Key Scriptures:

- 1 Corinthians 6:12 – “All things are lawful for me, but I will not be dominated by anything.”
- Romans 6:16 – “Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey...?”

### Substance Addiction Signs:

- Physical deterioration, medical complications
- Slurred speech, inebriation, withdrawal symptoms
- Secret stashes, detox attempts, or legal issues

### Behavioral Addiction Signs:

- Obsession, compulsive use despite consequences
- Hidden digital behaviors, sleep deprivation, irritability
- Escapism from emotional pain or real-world engagement

## **Questions to Ask:**

- What do they turn to when stressed, hurt, or bored?
- Do they hide or lie about their behavior?
- Does the behavior consume time, money, or focus?

## **Steps to Take:**

xxxvii. Recognize that all addictions are spiritual bondage (John 8:34).

xxxviii. Offer biblical alternatives: Christ as refuge, accountability, community.

xxxix. Normalize talking about behavioral addictions in church teaching.

## Recognizing and Responding to Addiction

# 3. Understanding Hidden Addictions (Porn, Food, Tech, Gaming)

### Overview:

Hidden addictions are often the most dangerous because they carry less stigma—and therefore go unchallenged. While no one would ignore a heroin overdose, few people confront a man glued to his phone or a woman compulsively binge eating. But these behaviors, too, can enslave the heart and hinder the soul.

The danger of hidden addictions is that they are culturally tolerated. In some cases, they're even celebrated. But Scripture is clear: anything that masters us—anything we run to instead of Christ—is a form of idolatry. Whether it's pornography, video games, or food, these addictions offer short-term relief but long-term bondage.

Pastors must create a safe environment where people can confess hidden struggles without shame—and be met with grace, truth, and accountability. These addictions may be quiet, but their spiritual effects are loud. Only the gospel can break their grip.

### Key Scriptures:

- Ephesians 5:11 - "Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them."
- Psalm 139:23-24 - "Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!"

### Hidden Addiction Markers:

- Secretive habits and shame cycles
- Rationalizing the behavior as "not as bad as others"
- Emotional dependence or identity tied to the addiction

### Questions to Ask:

- Is this person avoiding intimacy with God or others?
- Are they constantly fatigued, anxious, or distracted?
- Do they show signs of spiritual stagnation or defeat?

## **Steps to Take:**

- xl. Teach regularly on modern idols and media temptations.
- xli. Offer resources: internet accountability, pastoral counseling.
- xlii. Speak boldly from the pulpit—removing shame, not standards.

## Recognizing and Responding to Addiction

# 4. What the Bible Says About Addiction and Idolatry

### Overview:

The word “addiction” doesn’t appear in the Bible—but its spiritual roots are everywhere. Scripture speaks often of slavery, idolatry, strongholds, and sin that entangles. Addiction, at its core, is not just a habit—it’s misplaced worship. It’s when someone turns to a created thing instead of the Creator to find comfort, escape, identity, or worth.

In Romans 1, Paul describes humanity’s tragic exchange of truth for a lie and worship of the creation rather than the Creator. That’s addiction. It’s a soul-level disorder that affects our thinking, feeling, and behaving. It’s not just bad behavior—it’s spiritual bondage that requires supernatural intervention.

The good news is that the gospel has power not just to forgive, but to free. Jesus doesn’t just pardon our sin—He breaks the chains. Pastors must teach addiction through this lens: not primarily as a disease, but as a spiritual condition that Christ alone can heal. True freedom begins with repentance and the renewing of the mind.

### Key Scriptures:

- Romans 1:25 - “...they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator...”
- Galatians 5:1 - “For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.”
- Colossians 3:5 - “Put to death therefore what is earthly in you...” (including covetousness, which is idolatry)

### Biblical Themes:

- Idolatry is the root of all sinful addiction.
- The Gospel offers freedom through repentance and transformation.
- Freedom is not just abstinence, but full surrender to Christ.

### Questions to Ask:

- What does this person trust or run to instead of Jesus?
- What lies are they believing about themselves or God?

## **Steps to Take:**

- xliii. Preach Christ as the ultimate Savior and satisfier.
- xliv. Walk individuals through Romans 6-8 with pastoral care.
- xlv. Reframe addiction not as weakness alone, but as misplaced worship.

## Recognizing and Responding to Addiction

# 5. How to Minister to Someone Struggling with Addiction

### Overview:

Ministering to someone with addiction is not just about fixing behavior—it's about restoring a person to wholeness in Christ. Addiction is deeply spiritual, and those who struggle are often carrying immense shame, brokenness, and hopelessness. They don't just need advice—they need truth spoken in love, consistent encouragement, and a church that refuses to give up on them.

This kind of ministry requires patience. Rarely is healing instantaneous. Like the father in the parable of the prodigal son, pastors must be ready to receive the addict who repents—not with condemnation, but with open arms and a plan for restoration. We are not the Savior, but we are ambassadors of the Savior—and our posture should reflect His.

The goal is not just sobriety—it's sanctification. Help the struggling believer to see that Christ is better than their addiction, and that through His Spirit, they are no longer slaves to sin. Walk with them. Remind them who they are in Christ. Help them rebuild their identity on the foundation of the gospel.

### Key Scriptures:

- Isaiah 61:1 - "...He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives..."
- James 5:16 - "Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed."
- Galatians 6:2 - "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."

### Ministry Posture:

- Gentle truth-telling (Galatians 6:1)
- Persistent hope and patience (1 Corinthians 13:7)
- Spirit-led encouragement, not worldly sympathy

### Questions to Ask:

- Are they ready to repent and receive help?
- What is keeping them from surrender?
- What support system is in place?
- Ask what would happen if you stopped taking substance?

## **Steps to Take:**

- xlvi. Offer biblical counseling and prayer immediately.
- xlvii. Provide accountability and resources (local programs, books, support groups).
- xlviii. If necessary, escalate to formal intervention or treatment referral.

## Recognizing and Responding to Addiction

# 6. How to Minister to the Family of Someone in Addiction

### Overview:

Addiction is a family illness. While the individual may be the one using, the ripple effects reach parents, spouses, children, and close friends. Families often carry deep wounds—emotional, spiritual, and relational. They've endured lies, broken trust, sleepless nights, and unrelenting anxiety. As pastors, we must remember that when someone in the church is struggling with addiction, their family is often suffering just as much, if not more.

Families of addicts often oscillate between anger, guilt, hope, and despair. Some have enabled without realizing it; others have become emotionally numb just to survive. Ministry to these families must be gentle and direct. They need biblical truth, compassionate presence, and practical wisdom for how to walk in love without compromising conviction.

Helping families understand biblical boundaries, grief, and their own need for healing is critical. The Church must offer them a path toward restoration—even if the addict never repents. Healing is available for the whole family, and it begins when the Church steps in with both truth and grace.

### Key Scriptures:

- 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 - "...God of all comfort... comforts us... so that we may be able to comfort those..."
- Romans 12:12 - "Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer."
- Proverbs 4:23 - "Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life."

### Ministry Priorities:

- Validate their pain, but steer them to truth
- Offer discipleship, not just sympathy
- Encourage healthy boundaries without guilt

### Questions to Ask:

- How are you caring for your soul in this storm?
- Are you enabling or helping them biblically?
- Have you had space to grieve, rest, and receive community?

## **Steps to Take:**

- xlix. Provide separate pastoral care or support groups.
  - I. Teach biblical boundaries and self-care.

## Recognizing and Responding to Addiction

# 7. When and How to Refer Someone to Treatment

### Overview:

Knowing when to refer someone to treatment can be one of the most difficult calls a pastor has to make. We want to help, walk alongside, and pray them through—but sometimes, what’s needed is a higher level of care. Treatment isn’t giving up on someone. It’s an act of love and wisdom—recognizing when someone needs an environment that the local church simply can’t provide.

In some cases, outpatient support or discipleship is sufficient. But when a person is in active addiction, unable to function spiritually or relationally, or caught in a pattern of relapse, it may be time to refer them to a trusted, Christ-centered recovery facility. This isn’t about handing them off—it’s about placing them in the care of a team trained to walk them through detox, stabilization, and restoration while you remain a spiritual support.

As leaders, we must partner with ministries and programs that align with biblical truth. We should never refer someone to a place that treats addiction purely as a medical or behavioral issue without addressing the soul. Our goal is full restoration—spiritual, emotional, and physical. Treatment can be the first step toward that wholeness.

### Key Scriptures:

- Proverbs 11:14 - “Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety.”
- Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 - “Two are better than one... Woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up!”
- James 1:5 - “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.”

### Referral Indicators:

- Chronic relapse, failed attempts to change alone
- Danger to self or others
- Inability to function spiritually or relationally

## **Questions to Ask:**

- Have you tried to quit before? What happened?
- Are you willing to remove yourself from temptation?
- Are you open to letting others guide you into recovery?

## **Steps to Take:**

- li. Build relationships with trusted Christ-centered programs.
- lii. Pray with the individual about the possibility of treatment.
- liii. Frame treatment as a courageous step toward surrender and restoration.
- liv. Follow up regularly to provide pastoral support before, during, and after treatment.

## Recognizing and Responding to Addiction

# 8. How to Have Hard Conversations About Getting Help

### Overview:

One of the most loving things a pastor or church leader can do is speak the truth, even when it's uncomfortable. Hard conversations about addiction and the need for help are often avoided out of fear of offending, damaging the relationship, or being rejected. But Scripture calls us to courageously speak truth in love, especially when someone's soul is at stake.

Addiction thrives in darkness, secrecy, and denial. A pastor's willingness to initiate a hard conversation can be the very spark that leads to repentance and transformation. These conversations are not about control or confrontation—they're about invitation. We are inviting someone to step into the light, to acknowledge their need, and to embrace the help that God is offering them through the body of Christ.

Approach these moments with humility and prayer. Don't lecture. Don't attack. Ask questions that draw out the heart, and speak words that reflect both conviction and compassion. Trust the Holy Spirit to soften hearts, and remember: you're not responsible for their response—you're responsible for your obedience.

### Key Scriptures:

- Ephesians 4:15 - "...speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ."
- Proverbs 27:6 - "Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy."
- 2 Timothy 2:25-26 - "...correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth..."

### Conversation Tips:

- Pray first and guard your own heart
- Start with love, not accusation
- Be specific, not vague
- Offer hope, not just criticism

### Questions to Ask:

- Can I share something I've noticed out of love for you?

- Do you feel stuck or alone?
- Would you be willing to take a step toward healing?
- What are you afraid might happen if you ask for help?

## **Steps to Take:**

- Iv. Prepare your words with Scripture and humility.
- Ivi. Offer to walk with them, not just point the way.
- Ivii. Be ready with referrals, resources, and spiritual support.
- Iviii. Follow up regularly, regardless of how they respond.

# 9. Creating a Church Culture That Welcomes the Addicted

## Overview:

For someone coming out of addiction, the past often feels like a shadow that won't let go. Years of sin, shame, broken relationships, and wasted time can create a burden that weighs heavily even after repentance begins. But the gospel speaks directly to this pain: in Christ, there is not only forgiveness—but healing.

Many in recovery wrestle with guilt and regret. They've hurt others, disappointed themselves, and often believe the lie that they are disqualified from being used by God. As pastors, we must remind them of what Scripture says: that in Christ, they are a new creation. The old has gone, the new has come. Healing is not the erasure of the past but the redemption of it.

Healing from the past is both a theological truth and a discipleship journey. It involves confession, renewing the mind, and trusting that God will use even the darkest parts of their story for His glory. The church must be a place where it's safe to deal with the past—not by ignoring it, but by placing it under the blood of Jesus and walking forward in faith.

## Key Scriptures:

- 2 Corinthians 5:17 - "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."
- Psalm 147:3 - "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds."
- Romans 8:1 - "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."
- Joel 2:25 - "I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten..."

## Discipleship Priorities:

- Reassure them of their identity in Christ
- Create space for honest confession and grief
- Teach them how to renew their minds through Scripture

## Questions to Ask:

- What parts of your past still weigh heavily on you?
- Do you believe God can redeem even this?
- What lies are you still believing about who you are?

## **Steps to Take:**

- lix. Walk them through key Scriptures on identity, healing, and redemption.
- lx. Encourage journaling prayers of confession and gratitude.
- lxi. Connect them with a mature believer for mentorship and accountability.
- lxii. Help them develop a testimony framework that highlights God's grace over their past.

## Practical Ministry Tools

# 10. How to Start a Recovery Ministry or Support Group

### Overview:

Starting a recovery ministry or support group in your church doesn't require a large budget or a background in counseling—it requires a heart for the hurting and a commitment to the gospel. People struggling with addiction need a place to bring their pain, confess their sin, and be disciplined in truth. The local church is called to be that place.

Every recovery ministry looks different depending on the needs of the congregation and community. Some churches launch full programs with curriculum, while others start with a small group of people meeting weekly for prayer, Scripture, and accountability. What matters most is a culture of grace, truth, and consistency.

Pastors don't have to do it all. God often raises up former addicts, counselors, and lay leaders with a burden to serve. Your role is to bless, guide, and support their efforts—while ensuring that the ministry stays anchored in sound doctrine and the mission of the church.

### Key Scriptures:

- Matthew 9:12-13 - “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick... For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”
- Romans 15:1 - “We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves.”
- 2 Timothy 2:2 - “...what you have heard from me... entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.”

### Ministry Priorities:

- Begin with prayer and a biblical vision for recovery
- Identify faithful, mature leaders to serve and support
- Create a space that balances vulnerability with accountability

### Questions to Ask:

- Who in our church or community has a heart for the addicted?
- What night and format would serve our people best?

- Do we need to start small with a group or launch a broader initiative?
- Who in our church is a strong leader with a rocky past?

## **Steps to Take:**

- lxiii. Meet with key leaders to pray and plan.
- lxiv. Choose a curriculum or structure that is biblical and Christ-centered.
- lxv. Publicly promote the group with clarity and compassion.
- lxvi. Evaluate the ministry regularly and celebrate fruit, not just attendance.

## Practical Ministry Tools

# 11. Discipling Recovering Addicts: A Pastor's Role

### Overview:

Pastors are not therapists—but they are shepherds. And in the life of a recovering addict, the pastor's role is uniquely powerful. While counselors may help with behavior and feelings, pastors minister to the soul. Discipling a recovering addict means leading them into deeper maturity in Christ—teaching them to obey everything Jesus commanded and to walk in step with the Spirit.

This role requires more than knowledge—it requires compassion, commitment, and consistency. Recovering addicts often wrestle with shame, spiritual confusion, and a weak theological foundation. They need someone who will lovingly challenge them, ground them in the Word, and walk with them when relapse or discouragement strike.

Discipling doesn't have to be complex. Start with weekly conversations around Scripture, identity in Christ, and obedience. Ask questions. Speak truth. Pray together. As they grow stronger, involve them in serving, testifying, and mentoring others. This is how the church multiplies freedom.

### Key Scriptures:

- Matthew 28:19-20 - "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations... teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."
- Colossians 1:28 - "Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ."
- 2 Timothy 3:16-17 - "All Scripture is breathed out by God... that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."

### Ministry Priorities:

- Build a foundation of biblical identity and discipleship habits
- Be consistent and relational, not just informational
- Equip them to disciple others as they grow

### Questions to Ask:

- What are you learning about God's character?
- How are you fighting temptation and staying in the Word?
- Who can you encourage with your journey?

## **Steps to Take:**

- lxvii. Meet weekly with a clear plan: Scripture, prayer, application.
- lxviii. Challenge them to memorize key verses.
- lxix. Share your own walk—model transparency and growth.
- lxx. Encourage serving and testifying as part of their spiritual formation.

## Practical Ministry Tools

# 12. Building a Wraparound Team for Support and Accountability

### Overview:

Addiction recovery isn't a solo mission—it requires a team. Scripture paints a picture of the Body of Christ working together to restore, disciple, protect, and empower those who are weak. For someone coming out of addiction, this team—what we call a “wraparound support system”—can mean the difference between relapse and long-term transformation.

A wraparound team includes more than just the pastor. It might consist of a mentor, a small group leader, a counselor, a family member, or a recovery peer. Each plays a role in helping the person navigate spiritual, emotional, relational, and practical challenges. This approach reflects God's design for the church as a family—not a platform.

Pastors can initiate the team but don't have to lead every part. The goal is shared responsibility under gospel unity, creating a web of grace and accountability that strengthens the recovering believer.

### Key Scriptures:

- Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 - “Two are better than one... if they fall, one will lift up his fellow.”
- Galatians 6:1-2 - “...restore him in a spirit of gentleness... Bear one another's burdens.”
- 1 Corinthians 12:25-26 - “...the members may have the same care for one another.”

### Ministry Priorities:

- Identify trustworthy, mature believers to serve in various roles
- Ensure theological unity and a shared vision of restoration
- Build relational consistency and spiritual accountability into the team rhythm

### Questions to Ask:

- Who are the people already speaking into their life?
- What roles are missing: encouragement, wisdom, truth-telling?
- Are team members clear on their purpose and boundaries?

## **Steps to Take:**

- lxxi. Prayerfully select 2-4 spiritually mature individuals to form the team.
- lxxii. Meet together with the recovering person to cast vision and set goals.
- lxxiii. Assign roles: primary contact, prayer partner, mentor, etc.
- lxxiv. Schedule regular check-ins as a team and communicate openly.

## Practical Ministry Tools

# 13. What to Look for in a Christ-Centered Treatment Program

### Overview:

Not all treatment programs are created equal—and not all are compatible with biblical truth. When helping someone find treatment, pastors and church leaders must be discerning. A truly Christ-centered program doesn't just help someone get sober; it leads them to the cross, renews their mind in Scripture, and grounds their identity in Christ.

Many secular programs focus only on behavior modification, labeling individuals as victims of disease and encouraging lifelong identification with addiction. While they may offer structure, they often lack the spiritual truth necessary for full restoration. A biblical program prioritizes repentance, discipleship, accountability, and hope through Jesus Christ.

Churches should vet recovery centers before recommending them. Know what they teach. Understand how they define freedom. Make sure the gospel is central. Because true transformation doesn't come from therapy alone—it comes from the renewing power of God's Word and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

### Key Scriptures:

- Romans 12:2 - "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind..."
- Psalm 19:7 - "The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul..."
- John 8:36 - "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."

### Ministry Priorities:

- Vet any treatment center for gospel clarity and biblical alignment
- Educate families about what makes a program truly Christ-centered
- Partner only with programs that prioritize spiritual renewal, not just sobriety

### Questions to Ask:

- Does the program teach the Bible and present Jesus as Savior?
- Is there a local church partnership or discipleship path post-treatment?
- What's their stance on sin, repentance, and identity in Christ?

## **Steps to Take:**

- lxxv. Research and visit local or national biblical treatment programs.
- lxxvi. Build partnerships with those who share your theological convictions.
- lxxvii. Offer a list of trusted referrals to those seeking help.
- lxxviii. Stay in touch with the individual and treatment center for pastoral care.

# 14. How to Help Congregants Evaluate Secular vs. Biblical Recovery Options

## Overview:

When people in your church reach out for help, they're often overwhelmed by choices: counseling, rehab, 12-step groups, and self-help resources—many of which carry conflicting messages. One of the most important roles pastors can play is helping congregants evaluate recovery options through a biblical lens.

Secular recovery models may provide structure and coping strategies, but they often miss the root of the issue: sin, idolatry, and the need for repentance and rebirth. While some programs promote lifelong identity as an addict, Scripture declares that those in Christ are new creations. Helping people discern between human wisdom and godly wisdom is critical.

Rather than rejecting everything secular, pastors can teach discernment. What aligns with Scripture? What undermines it? Point your people to the gospel and help them choose recovery pathways that reinforce—not replace—their faith.

## Key Scriptures:

- Colossians 2:8 - “See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit... rather than according to Christ.”
- Proverbs 3:5-6 - “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.”
- 2 Peter 1:3 - “His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness...”

## Ministry Priorities:

- Teach biblical discernment around recovery philosophies
- Provide comparison tools and talking points for families
- Keep the gospel central in all guidance you give

## Questions to Ask:

- Does this approach reinforce or contradict what Scripture teaches?
- Are they being pointed to Jesus or to human strength?
- What fruit is evident in those who have gone through it?

## **Steps to Take:**

- lxxix. Offer teaching sessions or handouts comparing biblical and secular approaches.
- lxxx. Help families ask the right questions when researching programs.
- lxxxi. Provide referrals to Christ-centered options whenever possible.
- lxxxii. Follow up with the individual and family to help them process their experience.

## Practical Ministry Tools

# 15. Crafting a Church Policy on Addiction & Restoration for Leaders/Volunteers

### Overview:

Churches need clarity when addiction affects leadership or volunteer teams. When a pastor relapses, or a youth volunteer admits to a hidden struggle, how does the church respond biblically and consistently? Without a clear policy, responses can be emotional, inconsistent, or even unjust.

Crafting a written, gospel-centered restoration policy helps your church lead with both conviction and compassion. It protects the church's witness, honors Christ's call to holiness, and offers a redemptive pathway for restoration. The goal is not punishment—it's restoration through repentance, accountability, and discipleship.

Your policy should reflect the weight of spiritual leadership (James 3:1), the process of church discipline (Matthew 18), and the heart of God toward the fallen (Galatians 6:1). It should differentiate between disqualification and disuse—knowing when someone needs rest, and when someone needs to step down. Most importantly, it should offer a plan for healing and hope.

### Key Scriptures:

- Galatians 6:1 - "...if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness..."
- 1 Timothy 3:2 - "Therefore an overseer must be above reproach..."
- Matthew 18:15-17 - "If your brother sins against you..."

### Ministry Priorities:

- Clarify standards for leadership, including sobriety and character
- Define steps for reporting, care, removal, and restoration
- Promote confidentiality, accountability, and grace

### Questions to Ask:

- What steps should be taken if a leader confesses to addiction?
- How can we uphold holiness and offer grace at the same time?
- What boundaries protect the church and offer a path to healing?

## **Steps to Take:**

lxxxiii. Assemble a team of elders or key leaders to draft a policy.

lxxxiv. Base your language in Scripture, not just legal or clinical terms.

lxxxv. Include tiers of response based on role and severity.

lxxxvi. Educate staff and volunteers on the process, and revisit annually.

## Understanding the Nature of Addiction

# 16. Addiction: Sin, Suffering, Disease—or All Three?

### Overview:

One of the greatest points of confusion for Christians is how to define addiction. Is it a sin problem? A disease? A form of suffering? The biblical answer may not fit neatly into one category—but it does provide clarity. Addiction involves all three dimensions: it is the result of sinful choices, it brings deep suffering, and it often produces physical and neurological changes that resemble disease.

Scripture is clear that sin leads to bondage (Romans 6:16). Addiction is the fruit of disordered worship—repeated acts of the will that become strongholds in the soul. At the same time, addicts often carry trauma, loss, and pain that makes them vulnerable to the pull of escape. And yes, addiction can produce physical dependencies that mimic illness—but that doesn't mean people are helpless. It means they need spiritual transformation, not just treatment.

This holistic view allows pastors to minister with both truth and compassion. We do not excuse sin—but we do recognize suffering. We call people to repentance, but we also walk patiently through relapse and healing. The gospel offers freedom in every dimension—spiritual, emotional, and even physical.

### Key Scriptures:

- Romans 6:16 - "...you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death..."
- James 1:14-15 - "But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire..."
- Hebrews 4:15 - "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses..."
- 1 Thessalonians 5:23 - "May your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless..."

### Ministry Priorities:

- Teach a biblically integrated view of addiction
- Call for repentance while acknowledging trauma and struggle
- Provide support for body, soul, and spirit

### Questions to Ask:

- Are we teaching about addiction as both sin and suffering?
- How are we equipping leaders to minister holistically?
- Are we avoiding either harsh judgment or unbiblical compassion?

## **Steps to Take:**

lxxxvii. Educate leaders on the multidimensional nature of addiction.

lxxxviii. Use language that reflects both spiritual truth and pastoral grace.

lxxxix. Refer to programs and professionals who honor biblical frameworks.

xc. Balance truth-telling with long-term support.

# Understanding the Nature of Addiction

## 17. The Limitations of the Brain Disease Model

### Overview:

The brain disease model of addiction teaches that addiction is primarily a chronic, relapsing condition rooted in the brain's neurological dysfunction. While this perspective can explain physical dependency, it often undermines human responsibility, repentance, and the soul's spiritual needs. The danger is not in acknowledging biology—it's in reducing a soul-deep struggle to just biology.

This model frequently labels people as powerless, destined to be addicts for life. But Scripture offers a different message: we are responsible for our choices, and through Christ, we can be transformed. The gospel does not ignore physical suffering, but it does reject the fatalism of secular frameworks that deny the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit.

Pastors must help people see the whole picture. Addiction may involve the brain, but it originates in the heart. When the brain disease model is elevated above Scripture, people may seek relief without repentance, coping without confession, or therapy without transformation. The Church must be clear: only Christ can set captives free.

### Key Scriptures:

- Proverbs 14:12 - "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death."
- Romans 6:6 - "...that we would no longer be enslaved to sin."
- 1 Corinthians 10:13 - "No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man..."

### Ministry Priorities:

- Challenge unbiblical recovery philosophies with truth and compassion
- Teach that spiritual responsibility is not erased by physical struggle
- Emphasize the power of regeneration over re-labeling

### Questions to Ask:

- Is this individual being taught to identify as an addict or as a new creation?
- Do they believe change is possible in Christ?
- Is the program they are in minimizing the need for repentance?

## **Steps to Take:**

- xc. Offer teaching on the spiritual nature of addiction.
- xcii. Help congregants and families evaluate language and assumptions.
- xciii. Recommend Christ-centered programs that integrate truth with grace.

## Understanding the Nature of Addiction

# 18. Addiction and Spiritual Strongholds: What Scripture Reveals

### Overview:

Addiction is not just a behavior problem—it's a spiritual war. Scripture teaches that strongholds form in the mind and heart when lies are believed and sin becomes entrenched. These strongholds are spiritual footholds where the enemy works to keep people bound. For those in addiction, these patterns are not only mental and emotional—they are deeply spiritual.

A stronghold is anything that sets itself up against the knowledge of God (2 Corinthians 10:4-5). This could be a lie ("I can't change"), a wound ("God doesn't care"), or a vow ("I'll never trust anyone again"). When these become the lens through which someone sees life, the enemy has power to deceive, distract, and destroy. Addiction becomes a fortress where demonic oppression can hide behind trauma, habits, or pain.

The Church must speak clearly on this. Healing is not just about detox or new habits—it's about spiritual warfare and surrender. People must learn to tear down strongholds through truth, repentance, and spiritual disciplines. The Holy Spirit doesn't just comfort—He delivers.

### Key Scriptures:

- 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 - "For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds..."
- Ephesians 6:12 - "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood..."
- John 8:36 - "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."
- James 4:7 - "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

### Ministry Priorities:

- Help identify spiritual lies, vows, and wounds
- Teach how to use Scripture, prayer, fasting, and worship as spiritual weapons
- Encourage deliverance ministry as part of pastoral care—not spectacle, but biblical truth

### Questions to Ask:

- What recurring lies or patterns keep them in bondage?
- Are they engaging in spiritual disciplines that break strongholds?
- Do they understand the role of the Holy Spirit in spiritual warfare?

## **Steps to Take:**

- xciv. Teach a foundational series on spiritual strongholds and biblical warfare.
- xcv. Offer prayer ministry for deliverance, not just comfort.
- xcvi. Equip mentors to help identify and tear down lies with Scripture.
- xcvii. Cultivate a church atmosphere where spiritual battles are normalized, not stigmatized

## Understanding the Nature of Addiction

# 19. The Root of Idolatry: How Addiction Replaces Worship of God

### Overview:

Addiction is, at its core, a worship issue. Every person was created to worship God—but when that worship is redirected toward a created thing, it becomes idolatry. Addiction replaces the worship of God with a craving, a substance, or a behavior that promises peace but delivers bondage. The Bible calls this spiritual adultery.

In Romans 1, Paul describes people exchanging the truth of God for a lie and worshiping created things rather than the Creator. This exchange is what lies at the heart of addiction. It's not simply a disease to be treated or a habit to be broken—it's a false god that must be dethroned through repentance and renewed worship.

Pastors must help individuals see their addiction not only as harmful behavior but as misplaced worship. Only when Christ is exalted above all other loves can freedom take root. Recovery, then, is not simply about abstinence—it's about restoring God to His rightful place in the heart.

### Key Scriptures:

- Romans 1:25 - "They exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator..."
- Exodus 20:3 - "You shall have no other gods before me."
- Matthew 6:24 - "No one can serve two masters... You cannot serve God and money."
- Colossians 3:5 - "Put to death... what is earthly in you... covetousness, which is idolatry."

### Discipleship Priorities:

- Help them identify what they have been worshiping instead of God
- Teach how to redirect longing toward Christ through the Word and worship
- Cultivate habits of gratitude, surrender, and renewed dependence on God

### Questions to Ask:

- What has become too important to you—something you can't imagine life without?
- What do you turn to when you're hurt, stressed, or bored?
- Is Christ the supreme treasure of your heart—or has something else taken His place?

## **Steps to Take:**

- xcviii. Preach and teach on biblical idolatry regularly, not just when addiction arises.
- xcix. Use Scripture to help individuals trace their patterns back to misplaced worship.
  - c. Lead them to replace false gods with true worship—through Scripture, prayer, and community.
  - ci. Encourage accountability and reflection around what rules their heart each day.

## Understanding the Nature of Addiction

# 20. Trauma and Addiction: A Biblical Understanding of Healing

### Overview:

Trauma and addiction are closely linked. Many who struggle with addiction have experienced deep wounds—abuse, neglect, abandonment, or betrayal—that have shaped how they see God, themselves, and others. Addiction often becomes a way to self-soothe the pain, numb the memories, or feel a false sense of control.

While secular psychology may address trauma through therapy and medication alone, Scripture offers a deeper path to healing: redemption. God is near to the brokenhearted (Psalm 34:18), and His Word speaks directly to our pain. The gospel doesn't minimize trauma—it redefines it. In Christ, no pain is wasted. He binds up wounds, renews minds, and makes all things new.

Pastors must create a culture where trauma is acknowledged, not ignored—and where healing is pursued not only through counseling, but through truth, community, prayer, and the love of Christ. We are not just treating pain—we are shepherding souls.

### Key Scriptures:

- Psalm 34:18 - “The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.”
- Isaiah 61:1 - “He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted... to proclaim liberty to the captives.”
- 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 - “...the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction...”
- Romans 12:2 - “...be transformed by the renewal of your mind...”

### Ministry Priorities:

- Normalize conversations about trauma and its spiritual effects
- Offer pastoral care that integrates truth, compassion, and discipleship
- Encourage biblical counseling and trauma-informed small groups

### Questions to Ask:

- What pain in your past still shapes your present?
- Have you invited Jesus into those memories or wounds?
- Are you allowing trusted community to walk with you toward healing?

## **Steps to Take:**

- cii. Offer classes or sermons that address trauma biblically.
- ciii. Train leaders in trauma-informed discipleship.
- civ. Partner with biblically sound counselors for deeper care.
- cv. Encourage practices like journaling, lament, and forgiveness through Scripture.

## Ministering to the Family

# 21. The Spouse's Pain: When Love Meets Addiction

### Overview:

When addiction enters a marriage, it doesn't just affect one person—it shatters trust, strains intimacy, and often breaks the very foundation of what God intended marriage to be. The spouse of an addict is not just a bystander. They are a wounded partner navigating confusion, betrayal, fear, and sometimes even danger.

Many spouses try to carry the burden silently, thinking they must “just pray harder” or “be strong.” But Scripture calls the church to bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2), and that includes walking with spouses who are suffering. Pastors must create space where these individuals can speak honestly, receive biblical guidance, and know they are not alone.

Spouses need clarity and comfort. They need to know how to love well without enabling, how to set boundaries without guilt, and how to trust God even if their partner does not repent. Ministering to them is not about fixing the addict—it's about pointing the spouse to Christ as their ultimate refuge, healer, and strength.

### Key Scriptures:

- 1 Peter 5:10 - “And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace... will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.”
- Psalm 34:18 - “The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.”
- Galatians 6:2 - “Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”
- Romans 15:13 - “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing...”

### Ministry Priorities:

- Offer ongoing pastoral care and trauma-informed discipleship
- Help spouses understand biblical boundaries and healthy expectations
- Encourage spiritual identity apart from the addict's condition

### Questions to Ask:

- What are you carrying that you need to surrender to Christ?
- Are there boundaries God is prompting you to set?
- Who is walking with you in this season?

## **Steps to Take:**

- cvi. Create a support group or mentoring environment for spouses.
- cvii. Provide teaching on forgiveness, boundaries, and biblical hope.
- cviii. Encourage rest, counseling, and spiritual self-care.
- cix. Reaffirm their value and identity in Christ, not their circumstances.

## Ministering to the Family

# 22. When a Teen is Struggling: Guidance for Parents and Leaders

### Overview:

When a teenager begins showing signs of addiction—whether to substances, pornography, or technology—it sends a wave of fear and confusion through their family and church community. Parents feel powerless, and church leaders often feel unqualified to intervene. Yet this is precisely when the body of Christ must respond—not with fear, but with clarity, conviction, and care.

Teens struggling with addiction are often acting out deeper pain or identity confusion. They are navigating immense spiritual pressure in a culture that normalizes rebellion and numbs conviction. The church must see these youth not as problems to be solved but as souls to be shepherded.

Pastors and parents alike must be equipped to spot the warning signs, open honest conversations, and provide structure without shame. Teens need clear boundaries, loving discipline, and most of all, hope. This is not about controlling behavior—it's about guiding hearts back to truth.

### Key Scriptures:

- Proverbs 1:10 - “My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent.”
- Psalm 119:9 - “How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word.”
- 1 Timothy 4:12 - “Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example...”
- Isaiah 54:13 - “All your children shall be taught by the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children.”

### Ministry Priorities:

- Partner with parents to respond with unity and biblical wisdom
- Equip youth leaders to disciple teens beyond surface behaviors
- Avoid shame-based responses and cultivate trust

### Questions to Ask:

- What do you believe is drawing them into this behavior?
- How are you modeling grace and truth in your relationship?
- Who else can speak into this teen's life with love and accountability?

## **Steps to Take:**

- cx. Train youth staff and volunteers in addiction awareness and response.
- cxii. Open lines of communication between church and parents.
- cxiii. Offer biblical counseling options tailored for teens.
- cxiii. Provide discipleship resources that address identity, freedom, and purpose.

# 23. Parenting a Child in Addiction (or Recovery)

### Overview:

Parenting a child caught in addiction is one of the most painful experiences a parent can endure. The hopes and prayers for their future collide with the heartbreak of watching them spiral into bondage. Whether the child is a teen or an adult, the emotional toll is deep: fear, anger, guilt, grief, and helplessness.

Many Christian parents feel shame or confusion. “Where did we go wrong?” “Why didn’t we see it sooner?” But Scripture offers comfort, wisdom, and hope. The prodigal son story (Luke 15) reminds us that rebellion is part of the human heart—and that the Father’s love never fails. Pastors must walk with these parents, offering a place for lament, prayer, and biblical direction.

Parenting an addicted child requires supernatural wisdom. How do you set boundaries without closing the door? When do you show mercy—and when do you allow consequences? The goal is not control—but faithfulness. And even when the child does not respond, God honors the faith of parents who continue to pray, love, and trust Him through the storm.

### Key Scriptures:

- Luke 15:20 - “But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion...”
- Proverbs 22:6 - “Train up a child in the way he should go...”
- Isaiah 49:25 - “...I will save your children.”
- Psalm 126:5-6 - “Those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy.”

### Ministry Priorities:

- Create a safe space for grieving, praying, and processing
- Equip parents to release shame and walk in wisdom
- Teach biblical boundaries and the balance of grace and truth

### Questions to Ask:

- What fears or guilt are weighing most heavily on you?
- How have you seen God sustain you in this season?
- What support or clarity do you need most right now?

## **Steps to Take:**

- cxiv. Provide or recommend Christian counseling and parent support groups.
- cxv. Offer one-on-one pastoral care for prayer, grief, and wisdom.
- cxvi. Equip parents with Scriptures and prayers for spiritual warfare.
- cxvii. Encourage faithfulness—not perfection—in their parenting journey.

## Ministering to the Family

# 24. How to Biblically Address Collateral Damage to the Family

### Overview:

Addiction doesn't just harm the individual—it damages the whole family. Spouses, children, siblings, and even extended relatives often suffer emotional, spiritual, and relational consequences. This collateral damage can take the form of fear, shame, broken trust, spiritual fatigue, and years of unresolved trauma. While churches often focus on the addict, families need intentional care as well.

Collateral damage can show up in unexpected ways: a spouse becomes emotionally numb, a child acts out, or family members begin to resent the church or God. If left unaddressed, these wounds fester into bitterness and spiritual apathy. But Scripture is full of stories of restoration, healing, and hope for families who have walked through pain.

Churches must create a discipleship pathway for affected family members—not just support groups, but intentional shepherding. Families need to be invited into healing, reminded that their pain matters to God, and shown how to rebuild trust, faith, and relationships through Christ.

### Key Scriptures:

- Joel 2:25 - “I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten...”
- Psalm 147:3 - “He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.”
- Hebrews 12:15 - “See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God...”
- Romans 12:21 - “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

### Ministry Priorities:

- Recognize and validate the trauma family members carry
- Provide healing environments: counseling, mentorship, support groups
- Equip families with Scripture, tools, and community for long-term restoration

### Questions to Ask:

- How has your loved one's addiction affected your own spiritual walk?
- Are there wounds or emotions you haven't had space to express?
- What would healing look like for you in this season?

## **Steps to Take:**

- cxviii. Offer pastoral care and trauma-informed discipleship for family members.
- cxix. Preach and teach regularly on whole-family restoration.
- cxx. Equip small groups and mentors to walk with hurting families.
- cxxi. Celebrate stories of family restoration to build faith and vision.

## Ministering to the Family

# 25. Boundaries, Enabling, and Grace: A Biblical Balance

### Overview:

One of the greatest challenges for families of addicts is knowing when to say yes, when to say no, and when to let go. Enabling, often driven by fear or guilt, may feel like love—but it can actually hinder healing. On the other hand, harsh boundaries without grace can lead to isolation and resentment. The key is balance: truth and love, grace and wisdom.

The Bible is clear that boundaries are not unloving—they are wise and necessary. God Himself sets boundaries in relationships (Galatians 6:5), and Jesus modeled when to walk away from toxic patterns. Families need to understand that helping someone doesn't mean shielding them from consequences. Grace doesn't excuse sin—it invites repentance.

Pastors must help families discern where they are rescuing versus where they are truly supporting. Clear boundaries, established in prayer and maintained with love, can be the very thing God uses to awaken a heart to repentance.

### Key Scriptures:

- Galatians 6:5 - “For each will have to bear his own load.”
- Proverbs 19:19 - “A man of great wrath will pay the penalty, for if you deliver him, you will only have to do it again.”
- John 1:14 - “...full of grace and truth.”
- Ephesians 4:15 - “...speaking the truth in love...”

### Ministry Priorities:

- Teach families the difference between enabling and biblical love
- Provide frameworks for setting and communicating boundaries
- Encourage prayer, patience, and unity in family decisions

### Questions to Ask:

- Are your actions leading them toward God—or delaying surrender?
- Do you feel guilt when you say no? Why?
- What would it look like to walk in grace and truth at the same time?

## **Steps to Take:**

- cxxii. Offer biblical teaching on boundaries in counseling or classes.
- cxxiii. Help families draft specific, prayerful boundary plans.
- cxxiv. Encourage support groups where families can process these decisions.
- cxxv. Reassure them that love is not always agreement—it's faithfulness.

## Ministering to the Family

# 26. How to Minister When the Addict Refuses Help

### Overview:

Few things are as discouraging as watching someone you love spiral deeper into addiction while rejecting every offer of help. For pastors and family members alike, this can feel like spiritual heartbreak. You want to see breakthrough. You've prayed, pleaded, and pointed them to hope. But their heart remains hard, their decisions reckless, and their denial thick.

The Bible is not silent about this. In fact, God Himself deals with prodigals who resist correction. In Luke 15, the Father does not chase the son into the far country—but he watches, prays, and prepares for his return. Sometimes the most powerful thing we can do is to stop rescuing and start releasing—into the hands of God, into the consequences of sin, and into the process of surrender.

Pastors must equip families and church members with both patience and boundaries. Ministering to someone who refuses help is not about forcing change—it's about modeling grace and truth, standing firm in prayer, and staying ready for when the Holy Spirit softens their heart.

### Key Scriptures:

- Luke 15:17 - "But when he came to himself, he said..."
- Romans 2:4 - "God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance."
- Proverbs 9:8 - "Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you..."
- 2 Timothy 2:24-26 - "...that they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil."

### Ministry Priorities:

- Teach the role of consequences in God's redemptive plan
- Equip people to set boundaries without guilt
- Emphasize the power of intercessory prayer and spiritual readiness

### Questions to Ask:

- Are you trusting God to do what only He can?
- What boundaries have you set—and are you keeping them?
- Who is supporting you so you don't walk this alone?

## **Steps to Take:**

cxxvi. Help families and leaders develop boundary-based action plans.

cxxvii. Create prayer teams committed to covering unrepentant addicts.

cxxviii. Disciple the church in how to love without enabling.

cxxix. Prepare the church for how to respond when the addict finally asks for help.

## Healing, Restoration, and Discipleship

# 27. How to Biblically Address Healing and Dealing with the Past

### Overview:

For someone coming out of addiction, the past often feels like a shadow that won't let go. Years of sin, shame, broken relationships, and wasted time can create a burden that weighs heavily even after repentance begins. But the gospel speaks directly to this pain: in Christ, there is not only forgiveness—but healing.

Many in recovery wrestle with guilt and regret. They've hurt others, disappointed themselves, and often believe the lie that they are disqualified from being used by God. As pastors, we must remind them of what Scripture says: that in Christ, they are a new creation. The old has gone, the new has come. Healing is not the erasure of the past but the redemption of it.

Healing from the past is both a theological truth and a discipleship journey. It involves confession, renewing the mind, and trusting that God will use even the darkest parts of their story for His glory. The church must be a place where it's safe to deal with the past—not by ignoring it, but by placing it under the blood of Jesus and walking forward in faith.

### Key Scriptures:

- 2 Corinthians 5:17 - "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."
- Psalm 147:3 - "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds."
- Romans 8:1 - "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."
- Joel 2:25 - "I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten..."

### Discipleship Priorities:

- Reassure them of their identity in Christ
- Create space for honest confession and grief
- Teach them how to renew their minds through Scripture

### Questions to Ask:

- What parts of your past still weigh heavily on you?
- Do you believe God can redeem even this?
- What lies are you still believing about who you are?

## **Steps to Take:**

cxxx. Walk them through key Scriptures on identity, healing, and redemption.

cxxxii. Encourage journaling prayers of confession and gratitude.

cxxxiii. Connect them with a mature believer for mentorship and accountability.

cxxxiiii. Help them develop a testimony framework that highlights God's grace over their past.

## Healing, Restoration, and Discipleship

# 28. How to Biblically Approach Restoration of Relationships

### Overview:

Addiction leaves a trail of broken relationships. Trust is shattered, communication is strained, and wounds—both seen and unseen—are left behind. Restoration is possible, but it is not automatic. It requires humility, repentance, wisdom, and time. And above all, it must be built on a foundation of biblical truth, not emotional pressure.

Scripture calls us to be ministers of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18), but reconciliation is not the same as blind restoration. Some relationships can and should be restored to full closeness. Others may need to be redefined with boundaries, or left in God's hands if the other party is not willing. The goal is not forced closeness—it's Christlike love, forgiveness, and peace wherever possible (Romans 12:18).

Pastors can guide recovering individuals and their families in discerning what restoration should look like in each case. This includes helping them pursue forgiveness, walk in accountability, and take intentional steps to rebuild trust. The path forward may be slow, but when Christ is at the center, even the most broken relationships can become testimonies of redemption.

### Key Scriptures:

- 2 Corinthians 5:18 - "All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation."
- Romans 12:18 - "If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all."
- Matthew 5:23-24 - "...first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift."
- Colossians 3:13 - "...as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive."

### Discipleship Priorities:

- Teach the difference between forgiveness, reconciliation, and restoration
- Encourage transparency and healthy accountability
- Equip with biblical communication and conflict resolution skills

### Questions to Ask:

- Have you sought forgiveness from those you've harmed?
- Are you willing to walk patiently as trust is rebuilt?
- Are you seeking God's guidance before re-entering strained relationships?

## **Steps to Take:**

cxxxiv. Encourage a written or face-to-face apology when appropriate.

cxxxv. Provide resources for biblical conflict resolution.

cxxxvi. Help both parties establish clear boundaries and expectations.

cxxxvii. Disciple them through relational reconciliation as a spiritual journey, not just a checklist.

## Healing, Restoration, and Discipleship

# 29. Forgiveness, Repentance, and Rebuilding Trust

### Overview:

Forgiveness is essential to healing, but it does not erase the need for repentance or the process of rebuilding trust. Many in recovery assume that saying “I’m sorry” should restore everything instantly. Likewise, families may be pressured to “just forgive and forget.” But Scripture calls us to a deeper path—one that includes confession, change, and the steady work of restoration.

Biblical forgiveness is not denial or dismissal of wrong. It’s a conscious act of releasing vengeance and entrusting justice to God (Romans 12:19). Repentance, likewise, is more than words—it’s a turning of the heart and life. Trust, once broken, must be rebuilt through consistent truthfulness, humility, and accountability over time.

Pastors must help both sides—those offering forgiveness and those seeking it—understand their role. The forgiver must let go of bitterness; the repentant must take responsibility without defensiveness. In this journey, grace does not remove standards; it empowers people to walk in them.

### Key Scriptures:

- Luke 17:3-4 - “...if he repents, forgive him.”
- Acts 26:20 - “...that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance.”
- Romans 12:17-19 - “Repay no one evil for evil... Beloved, never avenge yourselves...”
- Proverbs 20:6 - “Many a man proclaims his own steadfast love, but a faithful man who can find?”

### Discipleship Priorities:

- Clarify the biblical meaning and limits of forgiveness
- Encourage real repentance marked by fruit and change
- Teach how to rebuild trust slowly and wisely

### Questions to Ask:

- What does forgiveness mean to you—and what does it not mean?
- Are you seeing consistent fruit of repentance?
- Are you willing to give trust as it is re-earned, not demanded?

## **Steps to Take:**

cxxxviii. Teach on forgiveness, repentance, and restoration as a series or study.

cxxxix. Offer personal discipleship or mentoring to walk through relational healing.

cxl. Help both parties set realistic expectations and timeframes.

cxli. Encourage transparency, accountability, and community throughout the process.

## Healing, Restoration, and Discipleship

# 30. Renewing the Mind: Biblical Transformation Post-Recovery

### Overview:

Recovery is not just about breaking habits—it's about becoming new. Even after sobriety is established, many individuals wrestle with old thought patterns, shame cycles, and self-defeating lies. This is why Scripture calls us to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. Without this deep change, lasting freedom will remain elusive.

The mind is a battlefield. Addicts often carry years of mental ruts: “I’ll never change,” “I’m still broken,” “I have to earn love.” These are not just thoughts—they are strongholds. Renewal happens when the truth of God’s Word is planted, watered, and believed over time. Discipleship must include helping recovering believers learn to meditate on Scripture, reject lies, and walk in the identity Christ has given them.

Pastors and mentors play a vital role here—not just encouraging right behavior, but training for right thinking. The goal is not moral performance. It’s gospel transformation—where grace doesn’t just forgive, but rewires the heart and mind.

### Key Scriptures:

- Romans 12:2 - “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind...”
- 2 Corinthians 10:5 - “...take every thought captive to obey Christ.”
- Philippians 4:8 - “Whatever is true... think about these things.”
- Psalm 119:11 - “I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.”

### Discipleship Priorities:

- Help them recognize toxic thought patterns and replace them with truth
- Teach them how to read, meditate on, and speak God’s Word
- Encourage journaling, Scripture memorization, and daily renewal habits

### Questions to Ask:

- What lies or labels from your past still shape your thinking?
- What truth from God’s Word can you use to confront those lies?
- Are you building habits that reinforce biblical thinking?

## **Steps to Take:**

- cxlii. Walk through a Bible study focused on identity and transformation.
- cxliii. Provide daily or weekly renewal tools (e.g., devotionals, scripture cards).
- cxliv. Model transparency and personal growth in your own thought life.
- cxlv. Celebrate internal victories—not just external milestones.

## Healing, Restoration, and Discipleship

# 31. The Role of the Holy Spirit in Deliverance and Sanctification

### Overview:

True transformation is not self-powered—it's Spirit-powered. While recovery programs and biblical disciplines are important, they cannot produce heart change without the active work of the Holy Spirit. Deliverance from addiction and progressive sanctification both rely on the Spirit's presence, conviction, guidance, and power.

The Holy Spirit does not simply help us cope—He helps us overcome. He convicts of sin, comforts the broken, and strengthens us to walk in obedience. For someone coming out of addiction, understanding and relying on the Spirit is vital. Many have relied on willpower for years; now, they must learn to depend on God's power in them.

Pastors must teach a balanced view of the Holy Spirit's role—not just dramatic deliverance, but daily sanctifying work. Yes, God can break chains in an instant—but He also invites believers to walk in step with the Spirit every day, resisting temptation and being conformed to the image of Christ.

### Key Scriptures:

- Galatians 5:16 - "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh."
- Romans 8:13 - "...if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live."
- 2 Corinthians 3:17-18 - "...where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom."
- John 14:26 - "...the Holy Spirit... will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you."

### Discipleship Priorities:

- Teach dependency on the Spirit for strength and guidance
- Disciple believers in prayer, worship, and spiritual sensitivity
- Encourage expectation for both breakthrough and daily obedience

### Questions to Ask:

- Are you walking in your own strength or in the Spirit's?
- How do you recognize His voice and leadership?
- Are you surrendering daily to His power and direction?

## **Steps to Take:**

- cxlvi. Preach and teach on the Holy Spirit's role in recovery and sanctification.
- cxlvii. Encourage personal and corporate prayer as essential.
- cxlviii. Model Spirit-led leadership and invite testimonies of His work.
- cxlix. Provide environments for worship, reflection, and spiritual renewal.

## Healing, Restoration, and Discipleship

# 32. Restoring Spiritual Disciplines in a Recovering Believer

### Overview:

Spiritual disciplines are often neglected or distorted during seasons of addiction. Individuals may have abandoned prayer, stopped reading Scripture, avoided fellowship, or even blamed God for their pain. Recovery is not just about detoxing from destructive behaviors—it's about reordering life around Christ. Spiritual disciplines are the scaffolding that support lasting transformation.

When restoring these habits, pastors and mentors should focus on grace over guilt. The goal is not legalism—it's renewal. A recovering believer doesn't need more performance pressure; they need invitation into intimacy with God. Help them start small, stay consistent, and understand why these disciplines matter: they are how we abide in Christ (John 15).

By reintroducing spiritual disciplines—prayer, Bible study, fasting, community, solitude, and worship—recovering believers begin to reestablish spiritual rhythms that shape their identity, renew their mind, and protect their freedom.

### Key Scriptures:

- John 15:5 - “Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit...”
- Psalm 1:2-3 - “...his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.”
- 1 Timothy 4:7 - “...train yourself for godliness.”
- Matthew 6:6 - “But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father...”

### Discipleship Priorities:

- Emphasize grace-based re-engagement with spiritual habits
- Help them find joy and consistency in spiritual rhythms
- Offer accountability without legalism or shame

### Questions to Ask:

- What spiritual habits were lost during your addiction?
- What discipline is God inviting you to rebuild today?
- Who can walk with you to help strengthen your spiritual foundation?

## **Steps to Take:**

- cl. Provide a daily/weekly discipleship guide or spiritual journal.
- cli. Teach on each spiritual discipline with practical examples.
- clii. Pair them with a mentor for regular encouragement.
- cliii. Celebrate progress, not perfection, as they grow in discipline and joy.

## Healing, Restoration, and Discipleship

# 33. Understanding Relapse Through a Biblical Lens

### Overview:

Relapse is often misunderstood—both by those in recovery and by the church. It's seen as total failure, a sign of weakness, or the end of the road. But from a biblical perspective, relapse is not the final word. It's a moment that can either lead to deeper despair or deeper repentance. How we respond to relapse—as individuals, families, and leaders—matters greatly.

Relapse exposes where spiritual strongholds still exist. It reveals where truth has not yet taken root or where accountability has lapsed. But it also opens a door for God's grace to do a deeper work. Instead of condemning, we must restore (Galatians 6:1). Instead of minimizing, we must disciple. The goal isn't just returning to sobriety—it's learning what went wrong and growing stronger in Christ.

Pastors and mentors must walk wisely here. Relapse is serious, but it is not the end of the story. The cross is still sufficient. And for those who fall, we must be ready to help them rise again—with truth, love, and a plan.

### Key Scriptures:

- Galatians 6:1 - "...restore him in a spirit of gentleness."
- Proverbs 24:16 - "The righteous falls seven times and rises again..."
- Psalm 37:23-24 - "...though he fall, he shall not be cast headlong, for the Lord upholds his hand."
- 1 John 1:9 - "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins..."

### Discipleship Priorities:

- Create a shame-free environment for confession and healing
- Help them identify triggers, lies, and heart-level idols
- Provide structure for re-entry, renewed accountability, and continued growth

### Questions to Ask:

- What led to the relapse—emotionally, spiritually, and practically?
- What safeguards were missing or ignored?
- Are you willing to start again with deeper surrender?

## **Steps to Take:**

- cliv. Respond with grace, clarity, and truth—not panic or shame.
- clv. Reevaluate their support system and discipleship path.
- clvi. Provide Scripture-based counseling to uncover the root issues.
- clvii. Encourage a testimony of God's mercy and power in recovery.

## The Church's Role in Long-Term Recovery

# 34. Church as the Long-Term Discipleship Hub After Treatment

### Overview:

For individuals, the end of a treatment program is not the finish line—it's the starting line. While detox and structured programs are important, they are only the beginning of a lifelong journey of sanctification. The local church is God's design for that journey. It's not the backup plan—it's the primary place where healing becomes discipleship, and sobriety becomes sanctification. Church history shows us that the Bride has always marched into the storms and not passed issues to the secular world.

The church must see itself not as a crisis responder, but as a long-term spiritual home. Recovering individuals need consistent preaching, gospel community, accountability, and opportunities to grow. They need to see that they're not second-class Christians—they're part of the family. Programs may provide structure, but only the church can offer identity, worship, and spiritual formation rooted in Christ.

Pastors should cast vision for their church as a discipleship hub—not a rehab center, but a place of restoration, truth, and transformation. Recovery ministries should not be isolated silos—they should be integrated into the life of the whole church.

### Key Scriptures:

- Acts 2:42 - "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship..."
- Ephesians 4:11-13 - "...to equip the saints for the work of ministry... until we all attain... maturity."
- Colossians 1:28 - "Him we proclaim, warning everyone... that we may present everyone mature in Christ."
- Hebrews 10:24-25 - "...not neglecting to meet together... but encouraging one another..."

### Ministry Priorities:

- Integrate recovering individuals into the life of the full church body
- Provide ongoing mentoring and spiritual accountability
- Offer service opportunities that reinforce identity and growth

### Questions to Ask:

- How is your church discipling those who come out of treatment?
- Are they being welcomed into the community—or isolated into programs?
- Do they have opportunities to serve, grow, and be known?

## **Steps to Take:**

- clviii. Appoint leaders to mentor those returning from treatment.
- clix. Equip small groups to walk with recovering believers.
- clx. Preach and model a culture of grace, growth, and inclusion.
- clxi. Celebrate testimonies to strengthen the church's vision and unity.

## The Church's Role in Long-Term Recovery

# 35. What Pastors Need to Know About Post-Treatment Recovery

### Overview:

When someone finishes a treatment program, it's tempting to assume the hardest part is over. But for many recovering individuals, the post-treatment season is when the true battle begins. Temptation returns, support systems shift, and the structure of treatment gives way to the unpredictable rhythms of everyday life. This is where the local church plays a vital role—and pastors must understand what's really happening beneath the surface.

Post-treatment recovery is a season of vulnerability. The individual may appear healthy on the outside, but they are often still sorting through trauma, shame, broken relationships, and spiritual confusion. They need patient discipleship, not performance pressure. Recovery is not just about staying sober—it's about being sanctified.

Pastors need to know how to shepherd recovering believers with both grace and truth. They must understand relapse triggers, avoid moralistic language, and reinforce identity in Christ. Most importantly, they must equip the church to walk alongside—not with suspicion or stigma, but with consistent, prayerful support.

### Key Scriptures:

- Galatians 6:1-2 - "...restore him in a spirit of gentleness... Bear one another's burdens..."
- Romans 15:1 - "We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak..."
- Philippians 1:6 - "...he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion..."
- John 15:5 - "...apart from me you can do nothing."

### Ministry Priorities:

- Train leaders to understand the spiritual and emotional realities of post-treatment life
- Normalize long-term discipleship as part of recovery—not a fast-track solution
- Protect recovering individuals from isolation, shame, or overexposure

### Questions to Ask:

- What kind of follow-up support is in place for people coming out of treatment?
- Are you and your leaders prepared for setbacks or spiritual warfare?
- How does your church define success in the recovery journey?

## **Steps to Take:**

- clxii. Host workshops or trainings for staff and volunteers on post-treatment dynamics.
- clxiii. Partner with biblical counselors for referrals and care plans.
- clxiv. Assign mentors or discipleship partners for ongoing support.
- clxv. Preach regularly on grace, sanctification, and the gospel's power to restore.

## The Church's Role in Long-Term Recovery

# 36. How to Walk with Someone Through Years of Sanctification

### Overview:

Sanctification isn't quick or clean—it's long, often slow, and filled with both victories and setbacks. For recovering individuals, the years after treatment are a sacred journey of growth, identity formation, and learning to walk in obedience. The church must be ready not just to welcome them—but to walk with them, year after year.

This requires patience. Many in recovery will stumble. They'll need to process deep wounds, build new habits, and rebuild broken trust. Some wounds won't be fully healed this side of heaven. That's why the church's role is not to demand perfection, but to model perseverance. The goal isn't just sobriety—it's conformity to Christ.

Walking with someone through years of sanctification means embracing their story, offering steady accountability, encouraging small victories, and constantly pointing them back to the grace of the gospel. The pastor or mentor doesn't carry them—but walks beside them, reminding them again and again that God finishes what He starts.

### Key Scriptures:

- Philippians 1:6 - "He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion..."
- Galatians 6:9 - "Let us not grow weary of doing good... for in due season we will reap..."
- Hebrews 12:1-2 - "Let us run with endurance the race... looking to Jesus..."
- 1 Thessalonians 5:14 - "...help the weak, be patient with them all."

### Ministry Priorities:

- Equip mentors and leaders for long-term investment—not quick fixes
- Normalize the slow, faithful journey of growth
- Celebrate progress, not just perfection

### Questions to Ask:

- What does growth look like over the next six months, not just today?
- Who is walking consistently with this person?
- Are we creating space for long-term healing and discipleship?

## **Steps to Take:**

clxvi. Train leaders to walk with recovering individuals for the long haul.

clxvii. Structure mentorship around grace, milestones, and consistency.

clxviii. Build a discipleship pathway that doesn't assume quick results.

clxix. Offer spiritual check-ins that encourage, challenge, and sustain.

## The Church's Role in Long-Term Recovery

# 37. How to Encourage Church Involvement Without Shame or Stigma

### Overview:

Church can be both a place of healing—and a source of deep shame for someone in recovery. Many recovering addicts carry wounds from legalism, judgment, or being overlooked. Others fear being “found out” or treated as projects instead of people. As a result, they remain on the fringes of community—desiring involvement but afraid to take a step.

The church must create a culture where shame doesn't thrive, and stigma is crushed by grace. This begins with leadership modeling transparency and confession. It continues with intentional language from the pulpit, stories of transformation shared openly, and spaces where those in recovery are seen, valued, and disciplined like any other believer.

The goal is not to hide someone's past, nor to parade it—but to integrate each person into the body of Christ as a fully loved, fully equipped member. When shame is displaced by gospel identity, true involvement and spiritual maturity can flourish.

### Key Scriptures:

- Romans 8:1 - “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”
- 1 Corinthians 12:22 - “...the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable.”
- James 2:1 - “Show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ...”
- Galatians 3:28 - “...you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

### Ministry Priorities:

- Preach and model the gospel's power to restore identity
- Address stigma and shame directly in teaching and discipleship
- Include recovering believers in visible and meaningful service roles

### Questions to Ask:

- What assumptions exist in our church culture about people in recovery?
- Are we using language that reflects grace—or judgment?
- How are we helping people move from the margins to the center of church life?

## **Steps to Take:**

clxx. Share testimonies from the pulpit and small groups.

clxxi. Train volunteers and leaders to respond to recovery stories with grace.

clxxii. Identify ministry roles suited to recovering believers and help them engage.

clxxiii. Cultivate a culture of belonging—not based on the past, but on identity in Christ.

## The Church's Role in Long-Term Recovery

# 38. Faith, Works, and Accountability: Walking the Long Road Together

### Overview:

Recovery is not a sprint—it's a marathon. Many recovering believers are eager for change, but when the excitement fades and old struggles creep back in, they need more than encouragement—they need structure, support, and a biblical framework that holds faith and accountability together.

The Bible teaches that faith without works is dead (James 2:17). But it also teaches that works without love and grace are powerless. Churches must hold both truths together: affirming salvation by grace through faith while calling believers to walk in holiness, obedience, and transformation. Accountability is a gift—not a punishment. It reinforces that we are not alone, and it gives structure to grace.

The church must create clear, relational pathways for accountability that feel like brotherhood, not bondage. This long road is not meant to be walked alone—and when done well, it becomes a testimony of God's ongoing faithfulness.

### Key Scriptures:

- James 2:17 - "Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead."
- Hebrews 10:24-25 - "...stir up one another to love and good works... encouraging one another..."
- Proverbs 27:17 - "Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another."
- Galatians 5:13 - "...do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh..."

### Ministry Priorities:

- Balance grace and truth in discipleship relationships
- Establish regular, loving accountability systems
- Encourage perseverance through hard seasons, not just emotional highs

### Questions to Ask:

- Are you growing in grace and obedience—or only one?
- Who knows the real you and challenges you to grow?
- Are your accountability structures driven by fear—or by love?