

FINDING TRUE REST PRT 4 – OVERCOMING YOUR ADDICTIONS PRT 1

1. Introduction

- For the past 10 years, Thendo has developed a bingeing habit in which she eats 20 times a day. Her compulsive eating has developed a life of its own, in which her mood is determined by what she eats.
- Thabang has a love his wife knows nothing about. As a teen, he discovered Playboy, which exposed him to pornography. As things stand, Thabang consumes illicit porn material every time he is by himself.
- What started as a casual habit of one glass of wine with meals has developed into a full-blown alcoholism for Stephany. No one saw it coming, and now that she is pregnant, she is finding it difficult to stop. In fact, she is struggling to sleep without taking a glass of wine.
- What started as mere recreational online betting, Peter has developed into a compulsive gambler, with weekly visits to the local casino. As it stands, Peter has sold all his gym equipment to feed his habit.
- You might be wondering what I am on about – as you might have noticed, the examples I have outlined are different types of addictions.
- Increasingly, many people have become addicted to different things as a coping mechanism.
- This is happening among Christians as well, and we need to address the issue of addiction from a Biblical perspective.
- For the past three weeks, we have been talking about **FINDING TRUE REST PRT 4**, and this morning, I want to talk to you on the subject matter **VICTORY OVER ADDICTION PRT 1**.
- In the pursuit of rest, many people have sought it in the wrong places, which results in unhealthy habits.
- True rest can only be found in Jesus, as we have been learning all along. But the reality is that many people are still seeking rest in alternative ways, resulting in addictions.

2. What is addiction

- Addiction is one of the most powerful strongholds a person can face. Whether it's alcohol, nicotine, opioids, or other substances, the grip of addiction entangles the mind, emotions, relationships, and ultimately, the spirit.

2.1 General definition

- An addiction is an enslaving, destructive dependency. Random House Publishers defines addiction as “the state of being enslaved to a habit or practice or to something that is

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psychologically or physically habit-forming, to such an extent that stopping it will cause severe trauma.”

- A person can be physically predisposed to an addiction, but most addictions are also rooted in moral choices and spiritual needs.

2.2 Biblical definition

- While the term “addiction” may not explicitly appear in Scripture, the Bible clearly addresses the reality of being enslaved, controlled, and in need of deliverance.
- Though there might be a physiological basis to addiction, the biblical approach to “addiction” is to address it based on the “sinful nature” of mankind.
- In other words, the sinful nature of mankind is at the center of most addictions.

Ephesians 4:22 For you ought to put off the old man (according to your way of living before) who is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, 23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind. 24 And you should put on the new man, who according to God was created in righteousness and true holiness.

- Christ died on the cross for our sins so that we can become new creations in Christ. There is a change of nature when you are in Christ, which comes through transformation.
- Whilst Christ gives you power over sin, you are expected to make a choice, definitely and forever put away the old man; that is, our old manners and customs in so far as they are contrary to the Spirit of Christ.
- As you decide to let go of the old man, you are called to seek the daily renewal of your spirit man.
- According to the Bible, victory over addiction is not a recovery process but rather a transformation process. Transformation is a total restructuring of your life and not a cosmetic modification.

Ezekiel. 36:26 And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

- It is a change that takes place at a heart level and not an emotion level. That is why an addict might want to change at an emotional level but remains stuck because there might no change at a heart level.
- Sin is powerful to the extent that when it is at work in your life, no human effort can overcome it.

Romans 7:18 For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. 19 For I do not do the good I want

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to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. 20 Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

- This verse tells us that without Christ, sin is inescapable and no one can overcome it. Sin is by and large man rebelling against God, by choosing to live a lawless life.

1 John 3:4 Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.

- Addiction is anything that masters you. This opens a can of worms because it then means if you are mastered by social media, then you are a social media addict, if you can't sleep without talking to someone, then you are addicted to that person.

Romans 6:16 – "Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?"

- What you obey becomes your master.

1 Corinthians 6:12 – "'I have the right to do anything,' you say—but not everything is beneficial. 'I have the right to do anything'—but I will not be mastered by anything."

- Jesus came to break every chain – including addiction.

Galatians 5:1 – "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."

Titus 2:11–12 – "For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age."

- Biblically, addiction is a spiritual problem, but the problem must first be re-labeled as sin in order for the Bible to make sense and for the real remedy to be available.
- Blaming a theoretical disease or a demon for this idolatrous problem of the heart will fail to bring any confession of sin and repentance and renders the Bible useless in the so-called victim's eyes.

3 The prevalence of addiction

- You will be surprised by the number of things you can become irresistibly attached to – there is a list of over 105 items:
 - Drugs and alcohol – mood-altering chemicals are the prime protagonists.
 - Food – to satisfy insatiable emotional and spiritual needs
 - Sexual pleasure – objectifying sexual conduct

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- Work – turning work into a satisfier of a longing. Your sense of well-being is tied to work. You get depressed when you attempt to stop.
- Gambling – A craving for financial freedom fuels the need for “one more chance.”
- What is the state of addiction in South Africa
- At least 15% of the South African population has a drug or alcohol problem. Some estimates suggest that up to 20% are substance abusers.
- South Africa's drug consumption is estimated to be twice the world norm.
- Over 30% of the population has an alcohol problem or is at risk. South Africans who drink consume an average of 35 litres of pure alcohol annually.
- Based on recent reports from the National Gambling Board (NGB) for the 2024/25 financial year, the prevalence of gambling in South Africa is significant and growing, with key statistics indicating:
- Overall Prevalence: An estimated 65.7% of South Africans engage in some form of gambling.
- Problem Gambling: The prevalence of "problem gambling" has increased substantially, reaching 31%.
- Participation Frequency: Just over 60% of gamblers participate at least once a week, with close to 40% gambling even more frequently, and around 10% gambling every day.
- Gambling activity is most prevalent and intense among adults aged 18 to 34 (often referred to as millennials/young adults).
- One recent study involving adults in South Africa reported a pornography use prevalence rate of 95.10%.
- The average age of a child's first exposure to hardcore pornography in South Africa is reportedly 10 years old.
- More than half of young South African children are regularly watching pornography.

4 What drives addiction

- Addictions give us something we believe we must have in order to live.
- They provide predictable relief and power in an unpredictable and painful world.
- This is what the Bible calls putting your trust in the arm of flesh. You look to the flesh to give you only what God can give you.

Isaiah 31: 1 What sorrow awaits those who look to Egypt for help, trusting their horses, chariots, and charioteers and depending on the strength of human armies instead of looking to the LORD, the Holy One of Israel.

4.1 The pursuit of relief

- When faced with pain, loss, and harm, it is human nature to look for means and ways to relieve the pain.
- There is no better way than going for substance and behaviours that provide such. Your addictions then offer an opportunity for you to forget the pain temporarily.
- When you have the pain of lack of finances, gambling gives you an illusion of a great possibility of hitting a big win.
- That expectation numbs the pain of your debt for a moment.
- Drugs give you an immediate high from your current emotional low, and compulsive eating fills your emptiness.
- Addictions often begin as a pursuit of pleasure to numb the discomfort of painful losses. But you soon discover that addictions multiply the pain.
- In time, it becomes worse than the pain you were trying to relieve.
- Addictions are generally unacceptable in any society, such that after getting addicted, you have a sense of shame.
- Shame then forces you to hide your addiction, and the more you hide, the deeper you sink.
- Every time you remain in hiding, the intensity of your addiction will continue. Your starting point for overcoming addiction is to expose it to the light.

4.2 The pursuit of power and control

- When you are going through a tough time, you tend to feel helpless and powerless.
- With a perceived loss of power of control, addictions tend to provide an illusion of control.
- Since life is unpredictable and you can't control outcomes, addictions tend to transport you into a world where you can control the way you feel about yourself and others.
- When you take drugs, you know that you will feel high for a moment; when you gamble, you know that you can feel expectant of a possible win.
- Pornography gives you the pleasure you want in the way you want, which your wife or your husband cannot.
- In that regard, addictions can give you control and power over outcomes.
- Though addictions promise a predictable outcome, they eventually trap you in and you become entirely dependent on them.
- For a moment, it feels like you are in control, but in reality, you lose control of yourself, and the addiction will start dictating how you should feel and live your life.

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