

Addiction – The Spiritual Perspective I am no more a slave to sin

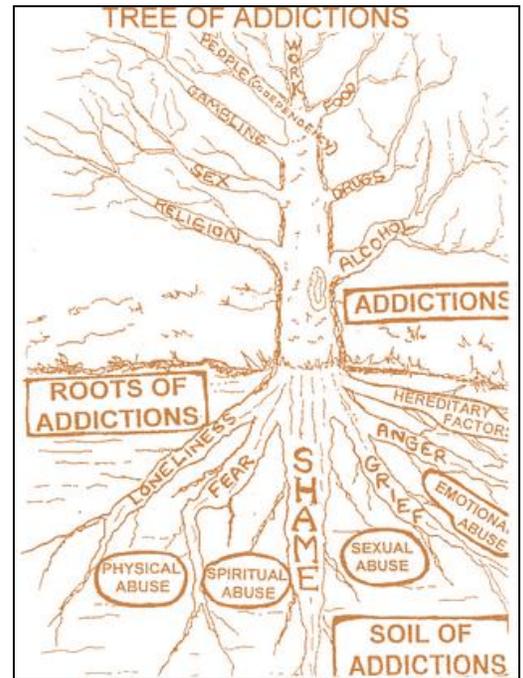
PURPOSE: Understand that temptations, such as addiction, can be overcome by standing firm in faith.

ADDICTION

Webster's Dictionary defines addiction as a chosen behavior by an individual "to obsessively or habitually surrender to something." **Addictions can take the form of an obsessive way of thinking, speaking or acting.**

Types of additions include but are not limited to: chemical dependencies (cigarettes, chewing tobacco, alcohol and illegal drugs), unhealthy natural highs (food, social networking, internet, video gaming, prescription drugs, texting, promiscuous activities etc).

Many Christians are struggling to break a variety of addictive strongholds in their lives and have become frustrated as they go through the process. The good news is: there is hope! Anyone can obtain freedom through a relationship with God.



Now you may argue, "We live in a free society." "I can do what I want." One has total freedom to do anything as St. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:23 "I have the right to do anything,"--but not everything is beneficial or constructive.

Parents, because of their love for their children and having been through the dangers of this tough world, try to caution their children and may, sometimes, use a lot of restraint. You, having the roots of a traditional home from South India, are caught up between the intense "freedom to choose" culture in America and the more value-oriented, restrained (so it may seem) culture at home.

What choices do you make? You have been made perfect, however, the choices you make shape whom you end up being. Everything is available, but that does not mean everything is good.



Ephesians 5:18 says, "Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to wickedness. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. The instruction for a child of God is simple and clear. The Bible has focused on getting drunk and not on getting "high" on drugs. Drugs were not as common in those days as it is now.

You may have been tempted an innumerable number of times with thoughts preventing you from attending the Holy Mass, participating in Church activities, being home on time, or obeying your parents. It is tough, but perseverance pays off, and you can overcome those temptations. Galatians 6:9 says, "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."

The purpose of this lesson is to empower you with the tools necessary to face the world of temptation around you.

Pause and Ponder

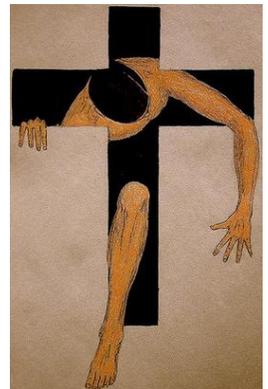
- Discuss the harmful effects of different types of addiction and addiction in general.
- Discuss with your peers and teacher some of the reasons that you or others around you would venture into things that are harmful to you or others?

Primary reasons for teens to tread the path of self – destruction

- The desire for freedom
- The feeling that you are in charge and that you know better than all those who advise you otherwise (parents, spiritual mentors, etc).
- The total disbelief of the adverse consequences of addiction. "I have a lot of self control, I can give it up any time."
- Seeking attention, comfort, or the pursuit of a utopian sense of well being
- Wanting to fit in, look "cool", feel high

Baby steps towards addiction: - Remember, every addiction begins with a small dosage and it continues progressively until you become dependent on it, whether it be computer games, internet, drugs, or alcohol. Please note that not all people who try out stuff once end up as addicts. Those who do not fall into the trap are the ones with self-control.

In the gospel according to St. Matthew 7: 13-14, Jesus says "Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few." There is no doubt that abstaining is hard. However, there is hope - the Bible states that you will not be tempted beyond what you can bear: "No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it." 1 Corinthians 10:13.



Pause and Ponder

Recollect one incident in which you gave into a temptation. What would it have taken to overcome it? What do you see now which you did not see before? Will you be willing to share with others so that they won't be victim of the same?

ACTIONS HAVE CONSEQUENCES, (INACTIONS TOO!)



Newton's third law of motion states, "Every action has an equal and opposite reaction." The euphoria of drugs which seems so good has the opposite reaction- there are bad consequences and the effects continue long term, same with alcohol abuse, excessive time on computers, overeating etc. You are a creation of God. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 says, "Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; ²⁰ you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your bodies.

Putting it simply, addiction is a sin. The consequence of sin is death. "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23)

Pause and Ponder

Discuss who loses and who gains in the "game of addiction"

WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

"For as he thinks in his heart, so is he..." (Proverbs 23:7). For example, when you feel worthless, you strive hard to prove you are worthy. You are scared to be "different", you strive to be accepted, and succumb to "peer pressure". You do not realize that it is your inner fallen state that is driving your actions and not others around you. You present yourself to others in the way you think you are.

Do you think/feel: -

Your parents do not love you – how do you compensate that?

Your peers think you are a fool – how do you prove or disprove it?

You consider yourself to be worthless – how do you behave?

Pause and Ponder

Close your eyes for 3 minutes. Just be present to all the thoughts that go through your mind. Where do they stem from: past experiences, the conversations you had, the books you read, the movies you saw, the websites you browsed...Would it be something you would want others to know about?

Being Responsible

Teenage or adolescent years are a time of physical, emotional and psychological changes. There is stress, confusion, and the sense of being independent. The strong desire for independence tries to break free from adult supervision and advice. The urge for freedom drives individuals to try out things which are not always good.

God gave Adam and Eve the freedom to live a "happy ever after" life. Adam and Eve had sound minds and it was a personal choice that they made. They did not take responsibility for their actions (Adam blamed Eve, and Eve blamed the serpent) and thus paid a great price – being kicked out of the Garden of Eden, away from God. No man can escape the consequences of their actions whether it is good or bad. You

may not initially realize the negative impacts coming at you, but one day, everything will quickly fall apart.

There are innumerable circumstances where we blame others. It may seem appropriate to blame others in many circumstances; however, this is not the right thing to do.

What responsibility do you have? "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." Ephesians 2:10 Everyone is God's creation. God has given you the freedom to be happy. It is entirely up to you to see life as "a cup half full or half empty".

Consider the amount of gravity around you and how it pulls you down, the atmospheric pressure on your shoulders, and the quantity of friction that slows you down. Considering these things, mere existence would be a Herculean task, but one is equipped with the energy to get past all of these forces.



Similarly in life, one is subjected to a lot of social pressures. For example, peer pressure, sibling pressure, parental (controls) pressure, pressure from a boss, colleagues, and sometimes even strangers.

If you are dealing with any of those try this exercise:

- List the advantages of friction and the disadvantages of friction
- List the disadvantages of the "pressure" you are dealing with.

Have an authentic discussion with your classmates and Sunday school teacher.

It is natural for many teenagers to doubt God's presence or to be confronted with thoughts that faith is not important. Psalm 14:1 says, "Fools say to themselves, "There is no God." They are corrupt and commit evil deeds; not one of them practices what is good."

Pause and Ponder

Truthfully list all the positive qualities and negative qualities you think of yourself. Then constructively figure out ways to utilize the strengths and minimize the negatives.

Talk them through with parents, spiritual mentors or trusted advisors if you need help.

THE POWER TO CONQUER

Knowing you cannot escape being tempted what can you do?

PRAYER: Pray for guidance to be able to identify temptation. Jesus was tempted, what did He do? He lived by the scripture and used it as a weapon against the devil. Living deeply rooted in the scripture will equip you with the tools to recognize and overcome temptation.

SPIRITUAL SUPPORT SYSTEM: Never think you can win on your own. The Bible says in Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up. Again, if two lie together, they are warm; but how can one be warm alone? And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him. A threefold cord is not quickly broken."



Create a support system – have adult mentors whom you feel you can trust to guide you. Parents seek the best for their children – develop a rapport, a relationship that helps you communicate your thoughts, joys, and sorrows effectively. In all this, seek guidance from God and the anointment of the Holy Spirit, for God is in control of everything. Your parents, teachers and priests are all willing to help you.

ABSTINENCE: Stay away from the 'high risk situations' where you know that you will be offered a bottle of beer or a puff. Learn to say no and surround yourself with people who impact you positively and have the same morals as you. Abstinence is the key. Observance of Lent/Fasting is a great tool to practice abstinences

SCRIPTURE STUDY –

Read the Verse, **Write** the verse and **Explain** how the verse applies to addictions and temptations experienced in daily life.

1. Corinthians 6:19-20
2. Isaiah 28:7-8
3. Galatians 5:19-21
4. Isaiah 5: 11-12, 22
5. Habakkuk 2:15-16
6. Proverbs 20:1
7. 1 Peter 4:1-3
8. Isaiah 41:10
9. Isaiah 40: 31
10. Philipians 4:13
11. Romans 13:13