

“How Can I Grow Through Addictions?”

1 Corinthians 6:9-14

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⁹Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, ¹⁰nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Flee Sexual Immorality

¹²“All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are helpful. “All things are lawful for me,” but I will not be dominated by anything. ¹³“Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food” – and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. ¹⁴And God raised the Lord and will also raise up by his power.

Introduction

A father and his son are conversing at a diner. The son is very defensive during the conversation and feels like his dad is controlling and not appreciative of who he is (the son seems to be on some sort of drug or at least incredibly anxious). Next, the dad is trying to look for his son who has now gone missing because he knows his son has a background with drugs. As the son chases different things from lust to drugs to trying to find his identity, the dad is looking for him with all that he has.

In the past couple of years, there have been a lot of movies highlighting different addictions. I wanted to start off by showing you a trailer for a movie that came out earlier in the fall called Beautiful Boy. The movie is based on a true story from 2 different books: the father and his perspective, and the son and his perspective. The father’s book is entitled Beautiful Boy, and I also wanted to read a segment from the book that he wrote. “Fortunately, I have a son, my beautiful boy. Unfortunately, he is a drug addict. Fortunately, he is in recovery. Unfortunately, he relapses. Fortunately, he is in recovery again. Unfortunately, he relapses. Fortunately, he is not dead.” And I think about that line. I don’t know if you caught it at the end of the trailer, “Do you know how much I love you? You are more to me than everything.” Regardless of what the son was going through and his different addictions, to this dad, he has been, and always will be his beautiful boy.

And I think this evening’s passage says a lot to us. We live with an addiction problem – there are many addictions in this U.S country that we live in. They say 14 million Americans abuse alcohol. 7 million that use regularly illegal drugs, 15 million gambling addictions – and they say gambling addictions are escalating at the highest rate. They say 60 million cigarette users, 40 million porn users, 8 million eating disorders. And this doesn’t even include things like video game addictions, entertainment, workaholics; the list of things people might be addicted to goes on and on.

But lest we think the addictions are out there but not in here – I believe that many of these things are prevalent even in this sanctuary. And the church of Corinth was full of people with addictions. The city they lived in didn’t help. It was a huge commercial center – it was in the crossroads of different transportation routes, so a lot of people passed through this city. It was very affluent, densely populated, and you could get anything you want, whenever you wanted, however you wanted. Sex and prostitution in this city was especially prominent. In fact, this city was known to be so immoral, it took on a verb. You could say to ‘Corinthianize’ and that meant to do something immoral. That’s how immoral and wicked this city was.

And Paul is writing to people in the Corinthian church; who in some ways are not any different than their city. They are people struggling and are chained with different addictions. To be honest with you, I really wrestled with this message's title. At first, I was thinking of using 'How can I grow in' like what other pastors used. So I was thinking, 'How Can I Grow in Addiction,' but I thought that sounded weird – like how can I grow to become more addicted? So I thought maybe I should title it 'How Can I Overcome Addiction.' But I didn't want to say that because you and I both know some of us may not overcome some of these addictions, and I didn't want to create a false hope. And so I settled on 'How Can I Grow Through Addictions.' As we fight through our addictions, the promise of Scripture is, we may not overcome it, but we will grow through it.

I. Truths about addictions [9-10]

⁹Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

A. Addiction is a heart issue [9]

⁹Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,

The first truth that we see is that addiction is a heart issue. I say this though it may not be popular, because modern day psychology says addiction is a brain disease. Addiction is a genetic issue. I don't deny the fact that some of us might have more of a predisposition for certain addictions. But at the end of the day, when we look at Scripture, it is a heart issue. When we look at Scripture, we see that we are born with desire. We are pleasure seekers to the core. We are always seeking for the highest pleasure in our heart – either maximum pleasure or minimum pain. And once we taste something pleasurable, we will want it again. That's how our hearts are wired.

In my family, we have four kids. And when they were younger, we had different stages where we would introduce different foods. We were very religious about this because we didn't want to introduce certain foods prematurely and ruin everything. When they were very, very young, we would expose them to vegetables. And after a few years, as they got a little older, we would introduce them to fruit. We didn't do fruit too early because if you ate the sweetness of the fruit, you would not want to eat the vegetable. And then after many years, we would slowly introduce some sweets. But it all went out the window when one of the aunts that regularly babysat wanted to get on the good side of some of our kids. They gave them some chocolate chip cookies – things they'd never had before – and it exposed their wicked, addictive hearts because after that moment, they would not eat vegetables. Fruit was out the window. All they wanted every moment was the cookie and sweets.

I think our hearts are very much like that. Once you taste something sweet, pleasurable, you will want it again. Our hearts are inclined toward addiction because we are pleasure seeking. Addiction is a heart issue. You want something – you crave something because it gives you pleasure – it gives you delight or it helps you to escape pain, and that is pleasurable to us. There's only one reason why we sin and are addicted to things – because it brings pleasure. We are all addicts to sin. In 1 Corinthians 6:9, Paul says this, "*Do you not know that the unrighteous*" he classifies the unrighteous. The unrighteous are born unrighteous because there's no desire for God. The pleasure that the unrighteous seek is self-fulfilling – self-glorifying, self-focused, self-exalting. The unrighteous here is referring to those that only have the sin desire in their heart but Christians, though we are born unrighteous with sinful desire, when we become a Christian, there is a birth of a spirit's desire, a new desire. It doesn't mean that we don't have a sin desire

anymore, but now there is a presence of a new desire – where we will want to find our fulfillment in God. God-focused, God-exalting, God-glorifying. But as long as we are on this side of heaven, we will still have sin desire in us, so we will continue to have addictions. A Christian is not somebody who does not sin – a Christian is somebody who fights the sin in their hearts.

B. Addictions may differ from person to person [9-10]

⁹Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, ¹⁰nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

When we look at this list, after Paul talks about the unrighteous he starts to list out seven different sins that come out of the unrighteous. “*Neither the sexually immoral.*” – Sexually immoral is a Greek word, *pornea*, which is where we get the English word, ‘pornography.’ It was a general word that represented all loose sexual, immoral actions. – “*Neither the sexually immoral, nor the idolaters.*” – people worshipped idols because those idols gave them exactly what they wanted – whether it was grain, produce, children – they worshipped the idols because it gave them what they wanted. “*Neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers.*” – people who broke the covenant of marriage – “*Nor men who practice homosexuality.*” – this is not talking about people who struggle with the desire of same sex attraction, but this is talking about people who acted upon those desires. This particular sin of homosexuality was rampant in this city. In fact, the Roman empire was clustered with so much of this – they say thirteen out of the fourteen Roman emperors struggled with homosexuality. They were openly homosexual – it was that kind of loose culture. Going on, “*Nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor revilers.*” – revilers are people who abuse people with their tongue. “*Nor swindlers.*” – swindlers are extortionists – people who rip off others.

Why does Paul list off seven of these sins? These are different sins that appeared in the culture and that had seeped into the church. In the previous point we said we are pleasure seeking people, but we will fulfill those pleasures differently. You and I have different ways that we fulfill the pleasure-seeking heart that we have. There can be a variety of addictions – we are all addicts to sin and that addiction will look different from person to person.

If we understand that we are addicts in our core – because we have sin nature – and if we understand that people will have different addictions, we cannot be critical of other people that struggle with certain sins and addictions. Every time we judge somebody for their addiction or are critical of people’s sins, we are doing it from a position where we are saying, ‘I don’t struggle with sin, I am not an addict.’ But if we really understand ourselves, we are all addicts to sins. A simple application: Do not belittle a person’s struggle because it may seem small to you. You may have no clue why they struggle with that, but that is their struggle. It is a deep struggle for them. When someone is struggling with a certain sin, don’t judge them, but try to understand them. Translate their addiction and their struggle with sin to your heart and your addiction. Translate the intensity they struggle with it to the intensity that you might struggle with sin and addiction. When you do that, you will be less critical and judgmental of people; you will be more compassionate and more prayerful for them.

C. Addictions will enslave

1 Corinthians 6:12 – ¹²*“All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are helpful. “All things are lawful for me,” but I will not be dominated by anything.*

Addictions will enslave. Paul says in verse 12, *“I will not be dominated by anything.”* He’s saying that because sin itself is dominating over us – that word ‘dominate’ literally means having authority over. Paul says, ‘I will not let my addiction, my sin have authority over me, I will not let it be my master.’ Addictions can enslave us. We get a taste for something, it gives us pleasure – we crave it more. As we turn to it for more pleasure, and after some time, we realize that we are not in control of it, but it is in control of us. When we are addicted to something, it shows our allegiance; it shows where our heart is – that something else is the master over us, more than God. How do I know if I’m addicted to something? Well, I would say one of the best ways to know you are addicted is when you remove it. When you remove it, then you can start to ask, ‘Do I have control over it, or is it controlling me? Am I always thinking about it? Is it limiting the way that I can function?’ When we are enslaved to something, it becomes increasingly harder for us to live for the Lord. When Jesus, our master, says to do something, we can’t say yes because we can’t say no to our addicted master.

D. Addictions can have consequences [9-10]

⁹Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, ¹⁰nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

Addictions can have consequences. Verse 9, *“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.”* Whenever there’s a repetition of a phrase, the author is trying to emphasize a point. Twice Paul says, ‘Those without Jesus will not inherit the kingdom of God.’ If you are a nonbeliever, we are so glad that you are here. We welcome you, and we hope that you feel a level of closeness – that you always feel welcome. We love that you are here, and we hope and pray that during your time with CFC, at some point, you will see what the Christians around you see, maybe even today. Because when we die, what Scripture says, what Christians believe – if we do not trust in Jesus Christ – even though we physically die, we will be in hell, separated from God. In hell, people’s desires and cravings will always remain, but there will be no ability to satisfy them. It will be comparable to a drug addict that has no opportunity to satisfy that craving.

But for Christians, if you are in Jesus Christ, no matter where we’ve been, no matter what we’ve done, there is no wrath for us because all of that wrath fell on Jesus. With that being said – though there is no condemnation, no punishment, no wrath – the natural consequences of sin that we may experience on this side of heaven are not negated. Families can still be torn apart because of addictions. The scars of hurting others may remain. Lost money will not magically appear in the account again. I’ve talked to some families that have been devastated by parents of addiction to gambling where they spent and liquidated their entire savings, and those consequences still remain. Poor performance at a job will still be there; we cannot reclaim lost time. Integrity and character that we may have lost will take time to earn back. Even though there is no punishment there are still natural consequences, to always remind us of the sting of sin, reminding us to learn to hate sin. Sometimes, when we think about the consequences, that can help us to fight. Occasionally, I might talk to brothers and sisters that struggle with pornography. And what I will tell them to do is to think about ten to fifteen consequences that can happen because of that addiction. And as people think of the consequences, as they think about what can happen, for some people that’s very helpful in learning to overcome.

II. Lies about addictions [12-14]

¹²“All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are helpful. “All things are lawful for me,” but I will not be dominated by anything. ¹³“Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food” – and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. ¹⁴And God raised the Lord and will also raise up by his power.

A. “All things are lawful to me” [12]

¹²“All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are helpful. “All things are lawful for me,” but I will not be dominated by anything.

In verse 12, he says all things are lawful to me, a slogan that has seeped into the church. It has a connotation of, ‘It’s not that bad. What I’m doing, it’s not that bad.’ I don’t know if you ever say that to yourself. ‘Well, what that person’s doing is bad but what I’m struggling with, it’s not that bad.’ Paul is combatting that idea. Basically they were saying this, ‘The Bible doesn’t say that this is wrong so it’s okay to do. It’s not illegal. That’s why he’s saying all things are lawful for me – it’s not illegal, so it should be fine. That videogame that I stay up at night playing for multiple hours. I mean, I’m not hurting anybody. It’s not that bad. It’s not a major drug thing that I’m struggling with.’ Paul addresses, succinctly, two reasons why it might hurt.

He says, ‘Though it may not be wrong to do, it may not be helpful.’ “All things are lawful for me but not all things are helpful.” A better translation might be, ‘All things are lawful, but not all things are beneficial.’ It may not benefit me eternally, it may not help me in my walk with Christ. And the second reason why he shoots this down – though it may not be wrong, it might enslave me more. He says, ‘All things are lawful for me, I will not be dominated by anything.’ – like what we talked about in the first point. Even neutral things might enslave us because it’s a heart issue. It’s the pleasure that we get addicted to. Can you do some of these things you may struggle with? Well, maybe. But should you do it? That’s the better question. Don’t ask yourself, ‘Will this hurt me if I do this?’ but ask yourself, ‘Will this help me if I do this?’

In your notes, there’s 3 questions that Alistair Begg – a pastor in Cleveland – says. Ask yourself some of these things before you do things. How helpful will this be in my witness of Christ? How helpful will this be to build up the body of Christ? And how helpful will this be in my love for Christ? Because the goal of Christian life is maximum love and maximum glory for God.

B. “Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food” [13]

¹³“Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food” – and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.

Basically, what he’s saying with that phrase is, ‘This is who I am. This is how God has made me.’ And it’s legitimizing their addiction – ‘This is who I am.’ One of the biggest addictions in this city – and possibly in this church – was sex outside of marriage. This was a slogan that people were using to promote that idea, “Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food.” The thinking goes like this: ‘Food is natural for the body. I have a hunger and appetite so I have to eat food.’ And just like that, sex is natural for the body too, so I have this appetite, so I’m going to gratify it however I want. ‘This is who I am, I have these urges, it’s only natural.’ That’s what they’re saying.

Paul succinctly addresses and combats this idea. He says, ‘Yes we are physical beings but we are spiritual beings too.’ Verse 13: ‘The body is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord and the Lord for the body.’ Many people give this same excuse as a license to sin: ‘This is who I am.’ You know, being real. That’s a big thing these days, being real. You hear it a lot. It legitimizes

people in their sin by saying, 'Well I can do whatever I want, I can say whatever I want because I'm being real.' And sometimes people who try to live obedient to the Lord feel fake, because it's not true to how they feel they are. But I would say this: When we live out of our spirit's nature, even though you feel fake, it is fake to your sinful nature but you are being totally real to your spirit's nature. Live out of your spirit's desire. We are spiritual beings, and what we do and how we live will have implications now, and implications eternally.

Not only does it impact us, but it impacts others. Some people will say, 'Well this isn't hurting anybody.' But they don't have a proper understanding of the union of Christ and the unity among believers, like what we've been going through in Ephesians. We are spiritual beings, when one person is struggling with sin and addiction, it affects the whole body. Somebody might say, 'Well I'll do whatever I want, it's not hurting anybody, it's in the privacy of my room, nobody knows.' But when they participate in certain addictions, they are losing love for God. They are getting more enslaved, more addicted, and because we are so united to one another, it is impacting the body of Christ. Our body is for the Lord and the Lord for the body.

I know right now it seems kind of like a heavy message as we go through some of these truths and some of these lies. But this is not what God has called us to be, this is not your identity – you are a beautiful child of God.

III. How can I grow through addictions?

A. Always go to the LORD

1 Corinthians 6:11 – *“And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”*

Always go to the Lord. You fail, you've fallen to your addiction – you get up and you always go to the Lord. Verse 11 says this, *“Such were some of you but you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified.”* He says, 'You used to be this, you used to be like that – but.' In the English language, it says *“you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified.”* But in the Greek – *“But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified.”* Three times that word 'but' comes out. Always go to the Lord because we were washed. Notice it's in past tense – it's a completed action. It doesn't say you are being washed/you will be washed; it says you were washed, it was a completed action.

Of the three phrases, Paul starts by saying, *'You were washed.'* He just listed out seven sins of filth. And he says, 'That used to be you, but you were washed.' The blood of Jesus is more powerful than any sin that you or I could ever commit. Do not be so proud, do not be so arrogant as to say that my sin is greater than the blood of Jesus. Because one drop of the pure, precious blood of Jesus can wash away any sin.

Secondly, he says, *'But you were sanctified.'* You were not only washed, you were sanctified. Literally, you were made holy. From the washing, there was a birth of a spirit's nature. When the spirit of God in verse 11 birthed a spirit's desire in you – we have a spirit of God in us and He is making us more like Jesus. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified. We are declared righteous – not because we've earned it, not because we are righteous, but because his righteousness becomes ours. When Jesus died on the cross, He not only died for you – He died as you. All of His righteousness is given to you and all of your sin is given to Him. When I see you, I see a forgiven sinner. You have sinned, but you have received the forgiveness of God. But when God the Father sees you in Jesus Christ, He does not see a forgiven sinner – He looks at you as if you have never sinned because you have the righteousness of Jesus Christ. He only sees Jesus. So keep going to him – if you've fallen in your addiction, you can always receive

the forgiveness of God because we have been washed, we have been sanctified, and we have been justified. You can always go to the Lord and receive the forgiveness of God.

*But you were washed
[but] you were sanctified
[but] you were justified*

B. Take captive every thought

2 Corinthians 10:5 – *We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,*

We heard a wonderful message last Sunday where Pastor Min walked us through the implications of our thoughts. Our thoughts stimulate our hearts, and our hearts stimulate our minds. So we have to be careful of what we think about – we have to take captive – that’s what 2 Corinthians 10:5 says – a second letter that went to this church. Paul says, *“Take every thought captive to obey Christ.”* Guard your thoughts, guard your minds – past memories can trigger our heart. That’s why we have to be careful about what we think about. We need to learn to think biblically. What we think about will stimulate our desire. Biblical thought will stimulate good desire. Through your encounters with God, through the Bible, through prayer, let your strongest past pleasure be memories of Jesus, and as you think about those memories – as you think about those times where you got blessed and as you dwell on it – that will stimulate your spirit’s desire.

C. Flee

1 Corinthians 6:18 – *Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.*

Verse 18: *“Flee from sexual immorality.”* To the church where promiscuity and temptation has flooded into the church, Paul says, ‘Flee.’ He does not say fight. He does not say reason it out. He does not say test yourself and see who you are – no, he says flee. Get out of there. Get rid of the opportunities to sin. The problem is that a lot of times, we overestimate ourselves and we underestimate the power of sin. Beware whenever there is temptation, desire, and opportunity because those three are the perfect storm for compromise and falling into addiction. Whenever one of those three are absent, you have a fighting chance. If there is a temptation that is present there, you have an opportunity to sin but there is no desire – you don’t care about it – you have a fighting chance. If there is a desire in you, the temptation is there but there is no opportunity to satisfy that desire, you have a fighting chance. But beware, when there is temptation, desire, and opportunity. That’s why Paul is saying, ‘Flee.’ Get rid of one of those three components so that you can overcome. Flee.

D. Keep making commitments

We say it in our church all the time: “Life is not about perfection, but it is about progression.” From one commitment to the next, we have grown. I think there are two components to addiction; I think addictions are linear and I think addictions are cyclical. Linear in the sense that it has a starting point – addiction has a history. But it is also cyclical. You have a thought in your mind and it stimulates a desire. You take that desire and you act upon it. You might feel guilty and you repent. Then another thought comes and it’s a cycle. We’ve got to learn as Christians to break that cycle – and the way that you have to do that is through making commitments. Just as addiction and sin has a history – I tell you now – obedience, love for the Lord – it has a history too. And when you make a commitment, that is a starting point of a new linear progression elsewhere. And just like sin is cyclical, when you make a commitment, it is putting a stop to that cycle. It might be temporary, it might be permanent, but commitments are breaking the linear and

cyclical nature of addictions. Each fight is your spirit's nature/desire growing. And to the degree that we fight – to the degree that our spirit's nature grows – that is the degree that we will enjoy Jesus for eternity. So keep making commitments.

E. Receive empowerment

1 Corinthians 6:14 – ¹⁴*And God raised the Lord and will also raise up by his power.*

Verse 14 says this, 'God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power.' Yes, the body will decay after we die, but that is not our final destiny. We will be raised; verse 14 says, 'By the same power that raised Jesus from the dead.' Our destiny is not the grave, but one day when Jesus returns, he will take you and I into our glorified bodies, and that same power that raised Jesus from the dead – that will one day raise us from the dead – is available to us every time we pray. Through the miraculous power of the Lord, as we pray, we can receive His strength to say no to our highest pleasure. The bible says deny yourself, to say no to your highest pleasure, to deny your addictions – we can do that by the grace of God when we receive His empowerment.

F. Develop good addictions

We must learn to develop good addictions because unless we do, we will go deeper in our addiction to sin. We said we are pleasure seeking beings – the only way we can overcome our addiction is when there is a greater pleasure, a greater desire that we have. That's what Thomas Chalmers calls the expulsive power of a new affection. There's a quote here that I think is very helpful about the 'expulsive power of new affection.' Even if you forget everything, remember this quote. It says this, "The heart is not so constituted; and the only way to dispossess it of an old affection is by the expulsive power of a new one." What he's saying is this: We are pleasure-seeking beings and the only way you can get rid of one desire is by the presence of a greater desire.

During this Lenten season, some of us have given up certain things – we've said no to some things. But you also have to say yes to other things. Just saying no – once Easter comes – you might go back to indulging in some of these addictions. What we have to learn to do while we've said no to certain things is to spend time with and develop a greater addiction for Jesus. Learn to draw from the sap of His word, learn to experience a resurrection power when you pray.

I will say this: I think there are seasons when certain addictions come. And there are seasons where it passes, and seasons when it comes back. We've got to learn to take advantage of those seasons where those addictions may not be as strong. Don't just ride it out. Enjoy the times where we're not as addicted to something because that is the moment when you can develop good addictions for other things. We've got to learn to develop good addictions – to stay where you are in your walk with God and to not move on until God blesses you. I remember when I was really young, when I was in college, I remember the heart I used to have whenever I used to read the Bible or do quiet time. It was a skewed, immature perspective, but that was the attitude I had. 'God I'm not going to get up from this quiet time until I felt like I met with You.' It's not a very theologically appropriate perspective in some sense because God is always with you. You're always receiving from Him, it's just a matter if you can receive. But that was my attitude. And there'd be some times, sitting in a particular chapel where I would do my quiet times, having stayed up all night I'd fall asleep in the sanctuary. And then I'd wake up – but I still in my heart hadn't met with God so I would stay in that sanctuary for another hour or so – just, 'God, I want to meet with You, God I want to meet with you.' There would be moments where I would walk to that sanctuary about a mile from where I lived at FARPAR – because it was such a desire that I just wanted to meet with Him. Sometimes I would do quiet time in the basement of FAR; I don't know if they still have it, but it was a dungeon with these carrels. And in that little carrel, I would

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still have that same attitude. I would say, 'God, in this time I'm not going to get up. I'm not going to leave until I meet with you.' For me, that was where my addiction started with the Lord.

I don't know what that will look like for you. Some of us can't do that because we have different responsibilities, but can I challenge you to make that your attitude? 'God, I need to meet with you. I need to see you.' Don't just come to churches as a habit – come expecting. 'I'm coming into this sanctuary, I'm going to meet with the living God.' Anytime you go to Bible study or small group and you're going to read the Bible – don't just do a study, meet with the author of that Scripture. Every time you engage, have that attitude, 'God I need to meet with You.' Because I tell you, as you have that attitude, your addictions will grow. We've got to learn to develop good addictions.

Conclusion

1 Corinthians 6:11 – ¹¹*And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*

1 Corinthians 15:54-56 – ⁵⁴*When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:*

"Death is swallowed up in victory."

⁵⁵*"O death, where is your victory?"*

O death, where is your sting?"

⁵⁶*The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.*

It is possible by the grace of God to change. Some of you may not believe it – some of you may have struggled with your particular sin for ten years, twenty years, but it is possible by the grace of God to change. There's one word that I love in these verses that we read, and it pops up in verse 11. It's the word 'were.' Paul says right in verse 9, "*Neither sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuality, thieves, greedy, drunkards, revilers, swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.*" Verse 11, "*And such were some of you.*" Meaning, you used to be that – you used to be sexually immoral, idolater, adulterer, homosexual, thief, greedy, drunkard, reviler, swindler. I am not any more. Our church is full of people that were formerly addicted to something. Were – something that we are no longer addicted to. It is possible by the grace of God to overcome.

Just a quick activity – how many of you, just a raising of hands, doesn't have to be a huge, big thing, but how many of you, in your Christian life, have overcome a sin? Just a show of hands, raise your hands high. This is a witness/testimony to the power of Jesus that is working through us. It is possible by the grace of God to overcome on this side of eternity, but I fear this: when we say something like that, others of us might be discouraged. Others of us might say, 'Well it doesn't seem like I will ever overcome.' And I wish I could preach to you what the prosperity gospel says. The prosperity gospel says, 'Well if you believe in Jesus, all of your problems will go away. You believe in Jesus, you will get healed. You believe in Jesus, you will get everything that you want. You don't have the finances – you put your hopes in Jesus and you will get it in your bank account.' To some degree, I wish I could say that, 'Well, if you believe in Jesus, you have enough faith and that addiction will be plucked out.'

But the truth is, some of us might struggle with certain addictions our whole lives. I cannot promise you that you will overcome that sin – that if you do these seven steps or six steps you will be victorious. But I can promise you this – that as you fight in this process, that you will grow to become more like Christ. And I can promise you this – that your fight is never in vain. Because as you learn to fight, your spirit's nature grows. And to the degree that you fight on earth – the degree your spirit's nature grows – that will be the magnitude to which you will enjoy him forever. And I can promise you this – you will not always

have that addiction. Because there will come a time when our resurrected Jesus comes back. He will completely eradicate, pull out, remove that sin desire.

1 Corinthians 15:54-56 – as Paul comes to the close of his letter to a church that is struggling with different sins – and probably continued to struggle (because he wrote a second letter to them) – he says this, ‘Oh death, death is swallowed up in victory,’ *“O death where is your sting, o death where is your victory, o death where is your sting. The sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law, but thanks be to god who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

This is a passage that is traditionally read on Easter – that Jesus will conquer death, that there will be no sting of death when Jesus returns. And I would also say this: There will be no addiction when Jesus returns. You can replace ‘death’ with ‘addiction’ and it is theologically true too, because death, addiction, those are effects of the fall. And when Jesus comes back, addiction is swallowed up in victory. ‘O addiction where is your victory, addiction where is your sting? The sting of addiction is sin and the power of sin is law, but thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.’ Death, addiction, effects of sin will not have the last word. There will come a time where that desire will become completely plucked out – when all we will want is Jesus – and all we will get is Jesus. And our heavenly Father will say to us, “My beautiful boy, my beautiful girl, you are home.”