

# WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT ADDICTIONS?

Sometimes we hear the word “addiction” and think solely of some of the most destructive avenues of addiction found in drugs or alcohol. The reality of addiction is that many of us have struggled similarly and significantly with serious, long-lasting consequences in our own lives and relationships.

Proverbs 25:28 “A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls.” (ESV)

In Christ we can find victory over our addictions through God’s Spirit producing self-control within us. Here are 9 areas in which many of us, or our loved ones, have struggled with addictions:

**1. Substances.** Smoking, dipping, alcohol, marijuana, caffeine, illegal drugs, prescription abuse. A legal avenue can quickly lead to more harmful and illegal routes for chemical highs. A seemingly innocent “gateway” can harm our health and guide one towards poor decisions (Proverbs 20:1) and demonic enslavement (Galatians 5:19-21).

Check out “What does the Bible really say about alcohol?” : [www.trustworthyword.com/alcohol](http://www.trustworthyword.com/alcohol)

- Proverbs 20:1 “Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise.”
- Proverbs 23:29–35 “Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaining? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who tarry long over wine; those who go to try mixed wine. Do not look at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup and goes down smoothly. In the end it bites like a serpent and stings like an adder. Your eyes will see strange things, and your heart utter perverse things. You will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, like one who lies on the top of a mast. “They struck me,” you will say, “but I was not hurt; they beat me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake? I must have another drink.”
- Proverbs 31:4–5 “It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, or for rulers to take strong drink, lest they drink and forget what has been decreed and pervert the rights of all the afflicted.”
- Romans 14:21 “It is good not to...drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble.”
- Isaiah 5:11–12 “Woe to those who rise early in the morning, that they may run after strong drink, who tarry late into the evening as wine inflames them! They have lyre and harp, tambourine & flute & wine at their feasts, but they do not regard the deeds of the LORD, or see the work of his hands.”
- Isaiah 5:22 “Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine, and valiant men in mixing strong drink”
- 1 Peter 4:3–5 “For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.”
- Ephesians 5:18 “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit”
- Galatians 5:19–21 “Now the works of the flesh are evident: ... drunkenness ...and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”
- 1 Corinthians 6:9–11 “Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither ... drunkard s... will inherit the kingdom of God. 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.”

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**2. Sexual Pleasure.** Objectification, lust, pornography, sexual sin, fornication, homosexuality, transgenderism, and adultery. God designed sexual pleasure as a good gift within a lifelong marriage between a biological man and woman. When we short-circuit that plan by pursuing sexual sin on our own terms we can become easily entrapped in a lifelong struggle that leads to Hell. (Revelation 21:8)

- Job 31:1 “I have made a covenant with my eyes; how then could I gaze at a virgin?”
- Matthew 5:27–28 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

**3. Entertainment.** Sports, pets, TV, movies, social media, video games, sports, and hobbies. Many “good things” in the world can become “god things” in our lives when we allocate them too much time, attention, or resources. God has given us many enjoyable avenues within life, but they can easily become out-of-balance if we choose (Exodus 32:6).

- Exodus 32:6 “And the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.”
- Proverbs 21:17 “Whoever loves pleasure will be a poor man”

**4. Appearance.** Vanity, pride, perception, selfies, scales, mirrors, makeup, clothes, and the fear-of-man. Although “the Lord looks on the heart”, we can be easily tempted to look “on the outward appearance” (1 Samuel 16:7). We should care more for the Lord’s perception of us than what others think of us (Proverbs 29:25).

- 1 Samuel 16:7 “For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.”
- Proverbs 29:25 “The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is safe.”

**5. Food.** Over-eating, sugar, eating disorders, and gluttony. Our unhealthy relationships with food can lead to shortened lives with less energy and more health concerns. May we discipline ourselves to eat healthy portions of quality food.

- Proverbs 23:1–3 “When you sit down to eat with a ruler, observe carefully what is before you, and put a knife to your throat if you are given to appetite. Do not desire his delicacies, for they are deceptive food.”
- Proverbs 28:7 “a companion of gluttons shames his father.”

**6. Money and Materialism.** Shopping, comparison, over-spending, under-saving, gambling, investments, insurance, and hoarding. We can easily pursue pleasure through accumulation and the idolatry of covetousness. May we learn contentment with the Lord’s provision (1 Timothy 6:10, Luke 12:15).

- 1 Timothy 6:10 “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.”
- Luke 12:15 “And he said to them, “Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”

**7. Emotions.** Thrill-seeking, pleasure, desire, impulsiveness, cutting, depression, co-dependency, fear, anger, and grief. While emotions are unavoidable and helpful at times, they can also become an unhelpful place of pursuit or retreat. We must seek a biblical balance to our emotional state and choices (Jeremiah 17:9, 2 Corinthians 10:5).

- Jeremiah 17:9 “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?”
- 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”

**8. Work.** Laziness or over-working. The Bible references the dangers of laziness (Proverbs 6:9–11) as well as the perils of finding our identity or seeking our salvation in our works or achievements (Luke 12:13-21). Let's not over-sleep nor over-work to the neglect of our responsibilities or relationships!

- Proverbs 6:9–11 “How long will you lie there, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, and poverty will come upon you like a robber, and want like an armed man.”
- Luke 12:15 “And he said to them, ‘Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.’”

**9. Words.** Gossips, busybodies, and the opinionated. The Bible warns about the dangers of over-talking and under-listening. May we avoid the foolish addiction to our own voice and be wise in and slow with our words.

- 1 Timothy 5:13 “Besides that, they learn to be idlers, going about from house to house, and not only idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not.”
- James 1:19 “Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger”
- Proverbs 18:2 “A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion.”

Through the power of God may we recognize and resist our addictive temptations and grow in self-control!

## **10 Questions to Ask When Evaluating a Possible Addiction in Your Life:**

1. The Word’s Work: What does the Bible say?
2. The Prayer Test: Have I sincerely, openly, honestly prayed about it?
3. The Spirit’s Work: Am I ashamed? Convicted? Should I be?
4. Godly Counsel: What do my godly friends and family think?
5. Government’s Work: Is it legal or illegal?
6. The Transparency Test: Am I hiding this behavior from anyone? Why?
7. Gospel-Harm: Does it harm my Gospel witness to others?
8. Others-Harm: Is it helpful or harmful to others? Put others at risk?
9. Self-Harm: Is it helpful or harmful to me? Use of time/talent/treasures?
10. Offensive: Does it offend others around me? Set a good example?

*“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.  
(1 Corinthians 6:12)*

*Sometimes with addictions we can become judgmental or compromise our Christian witness. Romans 14 helps guide us with 5 principles in evaluating our own lives as well as how to best come alongside others.*

**1. Understand the difference between truth and opinion; it is OK to have differing opinions on debatable issues.**

Romans 14:1 "As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions."

**2. Exercise grace towards others and avoid being judgmental.**

Romans 14:3 "Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him."

**3. Make a truth & spirit-filled decision for yourself.**

Romans 14:5 Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.

Romans 14:21-23 But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.

**4. Be prepared to stand before God, we must answer for our decisions in life.**

Romans 14:12 So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.

**5. Care more about your Gospel witness to others than your personal pleasures/freedoms.**

Romans 14:13 Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother.

Romans 14:15-19 For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. ... So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual up building.