



SERIES:	Jesus Loves People
MESSAGE:	Jesus Loves Addicts
SPEAKER:	Skip Heitzig
SCRIPTURE:	Luke 4; Matthew 11

MESSAGE SUMMARY

When a person ingests a substance or engages in an activity that provides temporary pleasure and then such acts become compulsive and interfere with ordinary life responsibilities, he or she is said to be an addict. Addictive behavior is widespread and is one of the reasons many addicts turn to Christ for help. Jesus has a special message for them and a special plan to help them. As the body of Christ to our generation, shouldn't the church be part of that plan?

STUDY GUIDE

We are talking about addiction for two reasons. First, because the church usually doesn't, choosing to remain silent on the issue or opting only to condemn. And second, sin is never a private matter; it impacts those around us emotionally and physically. Consider how King David's lust affected Bathsheba, her husband, and his own children. What about us? What behaviors do we repeat over and over again expecting a different result? Just one more swig, one more hit, one more look on the Internet? *Webster's Dictionary* defines *addiction* as *the surrender of oneself to something obsessively and habitually*. While addiction as we know it doesn't appear in the Bible, its meaning is present in other words: *captive*, *slave*, and *prisoner*. Interestingly, the only time the Bible uses the word *addicted* is when Paul described how the house of Stephanas was "devoted"—translated *addicted* in the King James Version—"to the ministry of the saints" (1 Corinthians 16:15). In other words, God's priorities were their priorities. The Bible says that our own nature—the flesh—poses the greatest danger when it comes to getting addicted to something that will pull us away from God and His priorities. **Read Ephesians 2:1-3, 1 Peter 2:11-12, and James 1:13-15. We are all captives of sin whom Christ has set free. How are the before and after pictures of our lives presented?**

Jesus has good news for addicts (see Luke 4:16-20). In the first public sermon of His ministry, Jesus quoted Isaiah 61, a prophecy that described everyone Jesus came to set free: the poor, brokenhearted, captive, blind, and oppressed. We all arrived in this world flawed. For some, the fleshly pull is profound and manifests itself in life-dominating sin that "so easily ensnares us" (Hebrews 12:1). Fortunately, Jesus made it clear that He came to "preach the gospel to the poor" (Luke 4:18). The gospel is good news! Jesus died, was buried, rose from the dead, and ascended to heaven...for us (see 1 Corinthians 15)! He was sent to "proclaim liberty to the captives" (Luke 4:18). *Captives* refers to prisoners of war; Jesus has a special message for those who have been shelled by the enemy, taken captive in the bondage of addiction. **Hope is the message—liberty and healing. Living the gospel is important, but when was the last time you actually proclaimed it to someone? How do you proclaim it?**

Jesus also has a good plan for addicts (see Luke 4:18). In verse 18, Jesus described two related aspects of His mission: "to proclaim liberty" and "to set at liberty." In other words, He came to preach the

good news and to promise a good plan. Jesus doesn't just have a nice sermon for addicts; He actually has a plan for their lives—freedom from addiction. How does He break the cycle? While He allows some people to be supernaturally and instantaneously freed from all addiction, it is more common for Him to set people free in a supernaturally natural way—His supernatural power working through natural processes. He cooperates with us to box in and shut down addictive behaviors. This "box" has four sides:

1. Accurate assessment: Don't underestimate your addiction. Be honest about the extent of your bondage. It will be an intense emotional roller coaster and a lifetime struggle.
2. Use overwhelming force: Use however many resources you need to overwhelm it. If you need 200 soldiers to capture the enemy base, use 8,000 so that there is no chance of failure.
3. Zero tolerance: Recovery is pass or fail. Everything depends on it. Make an agreement with yourself that you can never use again, drink again, or watch that stuff again—no matter what! For this third side of the box to be effective, the first two sides must be in place.
4. Trust in the *highest* power: Recovery programs talk of a higher power, but we must be more specific. Effectiveness in recovery is not just based on saying "no" to the menace, but saying "yes" to your Maker. As you learn of His love, experience His power, and interact with healthy believers, your trust in Him will grow. Addiction is like a light-sensitive virus—exposure to the pure light of Christ will kill it.

This four-sided box is a strategy of release to break the cycle of addiction. How can you apply it to an area in your life? Maybe it's time for you to change your playmates and your playground.

Lastly, Jesus has a good reputation among addicts (see Matthew 11:16-19). He was known for spending time with robbers, murderers, drunkards, and prostitutes (see Matthew 9:10). The religious leaders of the day wouldn't have been caught dead socializing with drunkards and prostitutes. Jesus, on the other hand, not only wanted to spend time with them—He died for them! They loved Him for that. We are called the body of Christ for a reason: just as His hands touched hurting people, so should ours. Just as His mouth spoke words of truth and healing, so should ours. Just as He listened to the cries of the captives, so should we. Jesus said, "As I have loved you...you also love one another" (John 13:34). We must become His army of love, addicted to loving all who are addicts! **We must feed our spirit rather than our flesh and encourage others to do the same. Pray that God will use you to be the person an addict trusts enough to break their isolation. Listen well, and encourage them to build that four-sided box.**

Adapted from Pastor Skip's teaching

The BIG Idea

"The power of the gospel in four words: Christ died for me!" –C.H. Spurgeon

DETAILED NOTES

- I. Introduction
 - A. Why would you want to talk about addiction in church?
 1. Because it's not talked about in church
 2. Sin is never private

- a. It always affects other people
 - b. David's sexual addiction (see 2 Samuel 11)
 - B. "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result" — Albert Einstein, attributed
 - C. What do you repeat over and over again and expect a different result with?
 - D. The word *addiction* is only found in the King James Bible
 - 1. Mentioned in a positive sense
 - 2. I Corinthians 16:15
 - E. *Webster's Dictionary*: addiction is a surrender of one's self to something obsessively and habitually
 - F. The idea of addiction shows up in the Bible
 - 1. *Captives*: those held prisoner by repetitive, ongoing behavior
 - 2. I Corinthians 6:12
 - G. Addiction is always a present danger posed by our own nature
 - 1. The flesh
 - 2. Ephesians 2:3; I Peter 2:11; James 1:14
 - H. What words of hope would Christ have for those with addictive behavior?
 - 1. What role model would He have for us in how to treat addicts?
- II. Jesus Has Good News for Addicts (Luke 4:16-19)
 - A. This marked the beginning of Jesus' public ministry
 - 1. Isaiah 61
 - 2. John Wesley began his ministry using the same Scripture
 - B. The audience Jesus was sent to: the messiest bunch of folks you can imagine
 - 1. Poor, brokenhearted, captive, blind, oppressed
 - 2. We were all born flawed
 - 3. For some people, that fleshly pull is so profound that it shows itself in life-dominating sins; Hebrews 12:1
 - C. Jesus has a special message for such people
 - 1. *Gospel* means *good news*
 - 2. We need to remember that our message ought to be a message of good news
 - 3. What is the gospel?
 - a. I Corinthians 15
 - b. Jesus came, died, was buried, and rose again from the dead—and He did it for you
 - c. Charles Spurgeon: the gospel in four words: Christ died for me
 - D. *Captives* (v. 18)
 - 1. Refers to prisoners of war
 - 2. Jesus has a special message for those who have been barraged by the enemy, who are in bondage of addiction
- III. Jesus Has a Good Plan for Addicts (Luke 4:18)
 - A. "To proclaim liberty" and "to set at liberty"
 - 1. To proclaim liberty is to preach
 - 2. To set at liberty is to do what you proclaim
 - 3. Jesus doesn't just have a nice sermon for addicts; He has a great strategy for them
 - B. How?
 - 1. He can do anything; He can instantly take away a bad desire

2. Usually He does it supernaturally naturally
 - a. Supernatural power that comes through natural processes
 - b. The principle of cooperation
- C. Process of isolating an addiction: four-sided box
 1. Accurate assessment
 - a. Don't underestimate your addiction
 - b. Addiction is the struggle of a lifetime
 2. Overwhelming force
 - a. If it takes 200 soldiers to take over an enemy base, bring 800
 - b. No chance for failure
 - c. Change your playground and your playmates
 3. Zero tolerance
 - a. Recovery is pass or fail
 - b. This principle, along with the first two principles, will be of great help
 4. Highest power
 - a. Only comes through one source: Jesus Christ
 - b. Effectiveness in recovery is more than just saying "no" to the menace; it's saying "yes" to the Maker
 - c. Addictions are like a virus that must be exposed to the light to be cured
 - d. John 3:19-21
 - e. Matthew 8:2-3; Mark 1:40-41; Luke 5:12-13
- IV. Jesus Has a Good Reputation among Addicts (Matthew 11:19)
 - A. By this time, Jesus had visited the house of Matthew the tax collector
 1. Matthew 9:9-13
 2. John MacArthur: included robbers, murderers, drunkards, and prostitutes
 - B. Luke 15:1
 1. Luke 19:1-7
 2. Most religious Jews would never socialize with that group of people—but Jesus did
 - C. The Bible calls the church the body of Christ
 1. We are the representatives of Jesus Christ as if we are His physical body
 2. Our hands reach out to people in His name
 3. Our feet go out to people in His name
 4. Our mouths bring a message of hope and love in His name
 5. John 13:34
 6. We could become an army of love
- V. Closing
 - A. May more of us become addicted to Christ and to loving people
 - B. "He breaks the power of canceled sin, He sets the prisoner free; His blood can make the foulest clean, His blood availed for me" —Charles Wesley, "O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing"

Figures referenced: Albert Einstein, John Wesley, Charles Spurgeon, John MacArthur, Charles Wesley

Cross references: 2 Samuel 11; Isaiah 61; Matthew 8:2-3; 9:9-13; 11; Mark 1:40-41; Luke 4; 5:12-13; 15:1; 19:1-7; John 3:19-21; 13:34; 1 Corinthians 6:12; 15; 16:15; Ephesians 2:3; Hebrews 12:1; James 1:14; 1 Peter 2:11

Topic: Addiction

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