



## A Quick Reference and Lesson Guide

### Families Affected by Addiction

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# 1 Scenarios and Assessment

## Scenarios/Case Studies

### A. Scenario #1

1. Dominique had always come to her daughter's rescue during the years of her attempted recovery. Sasha would storm into the house at all hours of the night demanding her mother babysit her child and she give money for her next "fix." Consequently, Dominique developed high blood pressure because of her constant state of anxiety. She wanted to put an end to this cycle, but felt that she would be sending a message that she does not love her family if she refused to help anymore.

### B. Scenario #2

1. Michelle had a baby girl who tested positive for methamphetamines at birth. When her daughter was just eight months old, she was brought back to the hospital again, testing high on meth. At eighteen-months old, Michelle's baby girl was rushed to the hospital again and found to be suffering from malnutrition and missing teeth, still testing positive for meth. The little girl died of head injuries before she was two years old. Her mother, Michelle, was charged with involuntary manslaughter.

### C. Scenario #3

1. Marsha was a recovering addict who had been sober on-and-off for ten years. During her "dry periods" she was a loving, caring mother. However, during her bouts of alcoholism she was physically abusive towards her three children. Because of this, they are afraid to be touched, have trouble trusting adults or authority, and have developed low self-esteem.

## Definitions and Key Thoughts

### A. Effects of substance abuse on families

1. According to Robert J. Ackerman, a nationally recognized addiction specialist, "The person suffering from addiction isn't the only one who feels its effects. Any one person who abuses a substance jeopardizes at least four other people around him". This does not count extended families, friends or co-workers – in fact the number is far higher than four people.
2. Addiction has ripple effects – marriages fall apart, children grow up in violent households and negative emotions come to dominate.
3. Mental Health America states that codependency often affects a spouse, parent sibling, friend or co-worker of a person afflicted with alcohol or drug dependence.
4. Family members must take care of themselves, not only for the sake of their own well-being but also for the sake of the addict.
5. Some causes of addiction can include absent fathers, no discipline or structure, media influence generational values

6. Recent reports studies have shown that approximately 53 percent of adults in is United States have reported that one or more of their close relatives has a drinking problem.
- B. Effect of substance abuse on children
  1. It is estimated that 87% of all children removed from homes are removed due to the abuse of chemicals and drugs.
  2. Substance abuse blocks the powerful bond between parents and their child. Babies of substance abuse always have a difficult time ‘bonding’ to their mothers in the first eighteen months. These ‘unbounded’ children may have emotional problems the rest of their lives.
  3. Children who are raised by parents on drugs/alcohol often experience physical abuse and cannot trust adults or authority.
  4. They are often afraid to be touched. They have a ‘fight or flight’ mentality. They may have a low self-esteem; many have been called ‘stupid’. This treatment turns to resentment and anger allowing the cycle to continue encouraging the teen to escape reality through drugs and alcohol.
  5. The *Wichita Eagle* newspaper for Wichita, Kansas reports that substance abuse blocks the conscious and ability to make rational decisions.
  6. Alcohol (wine, beer, or liquor) is the leading known preventable cause of developmental and physical birth defects in the United States (FAS).
  7. It's estimated that each year in the United States, 1 in every 750 infants are born with a pattern of physical, developmental, and functional problems referred to as fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS), while another 40,000 are born with fetal alcohol effects (FAE).
  8. FAS children may be born with low birth weight and small heads. The babies experience developmental delay and later poor socialization skills. *Research shows that age nineteen is the time when most FAS children ‘hit the wall’.*
  9. Many children are born addicted to the substances their mothers ingested during pregnancy.

### **Assessment (Interview)**

#### **A. General Assessment (Interview)**

1. What prompted you to come here today?
2. What is the reason you feel the individual is abusing substances?
3. What is your relationship to the individual?
  - a) Family member/spouse/friend
    - (1) Does the person live with you?
    - (2) What is the home environment like?
    - (3) Does addiction run in the addict’s family?
      - (a) Who is the family member?
      - (b) What is the substance and how long did he/she use?
      - (c) What was the result of the exposure?
4. Can you describe the relationship between the two of you (close, distant, etc.)?
5. How often does the addict come to you for help and what is your response?
6. Are there times you have placed the addict’s needs above your own?

- a) What was the situation?
- b) What was the outcome?
7. When was the last time you assisted in helping the addict? What did you do?
8. Did you try to refuse to help? What was the outcome and how did that make you feel afterwards?
9. When you think about this individual what thoughts, feelings and emotions do you experience (this is to assess the degree of connection to the individual)
10. What activities do you enjoy doing or how do you care for yourself when the addicted is not present?

#### A. Red Flags

1. Look for signs of co-dependency
2. Supporting addicted despite cost of emotional, mental and financial stress
3. Unable to find satisfaction outside of being with addicted individual
4. Remain connected despite toxic relationship
5. Enabling
  - a) Making excuses for the addicted
  - b) Taking over addict's responsibilities
  - c) Giving money for "emergencies"
  - d) Micromanaging addict's life (escorting places, double-checking appointments, etc.)

## 2

## Critique and Counsel

### **Biblical Insight**

The Bible does not explicitly address relationships as they pertain to addiction or codependency. What is addressed are the thoughts and feelings loved ones of an addict can experience as it relates to the need of being responsible because of either Christian or family duty.

#### A. Burden Bearing

1. ***"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, lest thou also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ"*** (Galatians 6:1-2)
  - a) There is instruction to shoulder and be concerned for those who are entrapped in sin; to help them take on their circumstances for improvement. In doing this the love of God is being shown towards those in need.
  - b) The call to help those in need of deliverance does require love and maybe even help carry the load, but it should never cause someone to take on all of the responsibility of that individual.

#### B. Feeling obligated to take care of an addict

1. ***“But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”*** (1 Timothy 5:8)
  - a) Christians who provide housing, money, and other resources for an addict take this verse and apply it to themselves. However, Paul was talking about the treatment of widows in this portion of Scripture.
  - b) When individuals remain in toxic situations for fear of disappointing the addicted, they place themselves at their mercy.
  - c) It is understandable that a loved one would desire to help in an addictive situation. However, when feelings of guilt override appropriate responses the helper becomes an enabler. This harms the giver and the receiver.
- C. Conflicting thoughts of helping the addict
  1. ***“For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.”*** (Romans 7:19-20)
    - a) Paul verbalizes his struggle to do what is pleasing in the sight of God. There is an internal war that exists between doing what is right and wrong.
    - b) The loved one of an addict deals with internal conflict as it pertains to whether he or she should help the addicted or not. Although one cannot attribute providing for the addict to sin, the notion of being human and not wanting to see a loved one in that condition can ignite feelings of this internal struggle.
    - c) It is normal for the loved one to feel this way; however, the action must benefit the family member and not the addict.

### **Wise Counsel**

- A. Remind the loved one in order to help in the recovery process he or she will need to be strong. Practice self-care by putting his or her needs first.
- B. Reflect on how the relationship with the addicted is affecting the family member
  1. How has the situation shaped the loved one’s life?
  2. What would it look like if the addict continued to receive support?
  3. What would it look like if the addict did not receive support?
- C. Normalize feelings of wanting to help the individual; however, explore with the loved one the pros and cons continuing to provide for the addict.
- D. Encourage the loved one to stay close to God and the church.
  1. This will allow the individual to remain strong through the power of God to respond appropriately.
  2. Be connected to a positive and uplifting environment where the individual’s soul can be fed.
- E. Stop supporting the addicted with money. If needed suggest individual to attend Al-Anon or Nar-Anon meetings for external support.
- F. Keep the responsibility where it belongs.
  1. Do not cover for the addict. It may take multiple times and/or relapses for him/her to see the seriousness of the situation when there is repeated failure.
  2. Do not make excuses to others for the addict’s behavior as this can lead him or her to believe the loved one is in favor of the substance abuse.
- G. If the addict steals from the loved one-send them away

1. Allowing the addict to stay allows a greater opportunity for other items to be taken.
  2. Anyone living in the house could be placed in a dangerous situation if the addict believes he or she can come back.
- H. Remind the loved on that addicted will try to get family members to support their habit by:
1. Praising you
  2. Making you feel guilty
  3. Making you feel sorry for them
  4. Getting angry and scaring you
  5. Lying to you

# 3

## Application and Prayer

### Application

#### A. Communicate effectively (Barnett, 2016, pg. 37)

1. What does not work
  - a) Pleading with the addict to abstain from the substance
  - b) Demanding the addict to change his/her behavior
  - c) Blaming the addict for interruptions caused in other's lives
  - d) Threatening the addict with isolation techniques ("you will never see me again", etc.)
  - e) Judging the addict based on present characteristics ("you will never be a good...")
  - f) Berating the addict for his/her actions
  - g) Exaggerating the behavior of the addict to have them acknowledge/realize his/her conduct
2. What does work (Barnett, 2016, pgs. 41-44)
  - a) Be truthful about your experience with the addict. Talk about your feelings, but do not take them out on the addict.
  - b) Ask them to get help, but not to quit as this can seem like a petition or an ultimatum.
  - c) Identify specific forms of help, but do not hound them about it. This shifts the responsibility to the addict and takes it off of the family member/friend.
  - d) Listen to them, but do not advise. Giving advice for personal problems takes focus off of the addiction.
  - e) Acknowledge positive signs, but be careful with praise. Commend the addict for completed actions taken towards recovery and not promises or plans to abstain from using.
  - f) Express love, but do not try to soothe from pain caused by addiction.

- g) Choose a good time to talk about substance use, but do not try and wait for the perfect moment. Do not try and schedule a meeting as this allows time for the addiction to progress.
- B. Set healthy boundaries for you and for them (Barnett, 2016, pgs. 55-56)
  - 1. Ensure boundaries are related to your goals and priorities.
  - 2. Seven qualities of a strong boundary:
    - a) It is sustainable. You can uphold the boundary even when addict complains about it.
    - b) It is clear. Boundary is unmistakable, simple and nonnegotiable.
    - c) It is about you, not the addict. It is about life as you experience it with the addict.
    - d) It lightens your load. The boundary gives you a feeling of relief, even if it is hard to keep.
    - e) It helps you in tough moments. It helps you avoid saying yes to requests that might not help the addict.
    - f) It is in effect now, not at some point in the future. A true boundary is neither a threat nor a promise. It is a report of your present reality.
    - g) You can change it later if you want to. You should be able to adjust or remove it when it no longer fits your need or when you decide immediate danger outweighs it.
  - 3. Come up with an action plan for the loved one to do when he or she feels the need to continue to support the unhealthy behavior of the addict.
    - a) Call someone trustworthy and talk to them.
    - b) Have a prayer partner/accountability to someone else to help them stick to plan.
    - c) Participate in a hobby or other activity that will take his or her mind off of helping the addicted.
    - d) Help other in more productive ways by volunteering.

### **Prayer**

- A. Begin by thanking/applauding individual/family member(s) for having courage to seek help and support.
- B. Address in prayer the struggles that have been addressed in the meeting.
- C. Acknowledge individual/family member(s) is/are striving to live for God and do things God's way.
- D. Pray for change/intervention by the Holy Spirit.
  - 1. **(Optional prayer)** God, we thank you for touching the heart of this individual with concern for their loved one to free them from the slavery of addiction. Thank You for allowing this individual to have the courage to come in seek support in dealing with this situation. You said in Your Word when we are weak You are strong. That Your strength is made perfect in our weaknesses. We pray right now that You will give this individual strength when their loved one comes to them asking for money to support their habit, needing a place to stay or any other requests that may be asked when it comes to enabling the addiction. God, You have not given Your children the spirit of fear neither are we to be anxious and worry about things that are out of our control.

We give this situation over to You, we place the one who is addicted into Your hands that You will deal mercifully and graciously with them. We pray that You give peace to the heart and mind of this individual as well as any other family members that are affected by this situation. Give them the stamina and the strength to overcome this situation and that Your Holy Spirit will intervene when and where necessary. We ask all of these things in Jesus name. Amen. (optional)

## 4 Recommended Resources

- A. Barnett, R. (2016). Addict in the house: A no-nonsense family guide through addiction and recovery. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, Inc.
- B. Bevere, J. (2004). The bait of Satan. Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House
- C. May, G. (1988). Addiction & grace: Love and spirituality in the healing of addictions. New York: NY. HarperOne Collins Publishers
- D. Sheff, D. (2008). Beautiful Boy: A father's journey through his son's addiction. New York, NY: First Mariner Books
- E. Mental Health America. Retrieved from <http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/co-dependency>

## 5 Taking it to the Church

### *“Casting All Our Addicts on Him”*

*By Nicole Jones*

**Focus:** Release the weight of trying to “fix” the addict. Instead of depending on the self, trust that God will handle what the human heart and spirit cannot. Individuals who deal with addicted family members fall sometimes into state of codependency and war within themselves bearing the burden. God is meant to carry the burden, not the loved one.



**1 Peter 5:7 KJV**

Casting all of your cares on him because he cares for you.

When family members are in close contact with those who are addicted to a substance, it can become a situation that turns into a downward spiral. The family member can start off with good intentions in helping the addicted abstain from the substance; however, the more a sober person looks after the addicted the more he or she begins to take on the responsibility of the addicted. This in turn develops into a co-dependency relationship which can affect the sober person more than the addicted.

Mental Health America states that codependency leads to losing a sense of one's own needs, desires and identity. They look for external fulfillment to try and make themselves feel better. They develop low self-esteem and find it difficult being themselves, Because of this they too can cultivate an addiction that is not substance-related. As the addict relies more on them, they become dependent on the unhealthy caretaking and develop a satisfaction of being "needed."

**Matthew 6:25-34 KJV**

25 "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?

26 Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

27 Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?

28 "So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin;

29 and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

30 Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

31 "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'

32 For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

Christians are called to help others, but not in a codependent manner. Taking on the responsibility while allowing the self to deteriorate is not how God called His children to love others. Individuals who have loved ones addicted to substances often become reliant on the power of the self instead of depending on the power of God for transformation of the addicted. There are practical things family members can participate in during recovery, but only after the addict has decided himself to change.

The focus verses instruct believers to lay their worries at the feet of Jesus as they are not called to take on a burden to the degree that they self-destruct. Scripture does make a charge to help when possible; however, sometimes human power is not enough. When the disciples could not cast out the demon of the child brought before them, Jesus told them it was only by prayer and fasting that the demon could be cast out. These instructions can be related to addicts of substance

abuse. The power of addiction cannot be destroyed by human will alone but requires the intervention of the Holy Spirit. Even in the 12-step program of Alcoholics Anonymous, reliance and relinquishment of control to a “higher being” is recognized and even encouraged for the substance abuser to be successful.

If Matthew 6:25-34 could be rewritten to fit the loved one of the addicted it may sound like this:

“Therefore I say do not worry about their life, what they will eat, what they will drink or put on. Is not life more than worrying about others? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are they not of more value than them? Which of you by worrying can make your loved one abstain from abusing substances? So why do you become drained and self-annihilate worrying about them? Even those who are not able to do for themselves I take care of and those who are without resources I make provision for and led the children of Israel in the wilderness for forty years and they never lacked. So if I have taken care of those who are marginalized and those who were resistant in following my voice, how much more will I care for your loved one? Therefore, do not worry about where they will sleep or what they will eat or drink. Do not neglect yourselves nor your relationship with me, for only through my power can they be delivered if they are willing.”

The loved one needs to release control to the One who is in control. When human ability is not sufficient God’s power provides what is lacking. In 2 Corinthians 12:9-10, Paul states that Jesus answered him, “My grace is sufficient for you. My strength is made perfect in your weakness.” Paul continues to say, “for when I am weak, then I am strong” therefore he glorified God in his shortcomings because he knew God’s power would supply what he did not possess. Loved ones who are dealing with family members who abuse substances must recognize they do not have the ability alone to “save” the individual.

### **Proverbs 3:5 KJV**

Trust in the Lord with all of your heart and lean not unto your own understanding, in your ways acknowledge him and he will direct your paths.

Loved ones of addicts should free themselves from the burden and stress of trying to beg, plead, bargain and threaten the individual into getting help and trust that the Lord is sovereign in their situation. Depending on human tactics and plans will only produce human results. Self-destruction for both the family member and the addict comes from human ability. The family member’s primary job becomes exhausting energy and resources in keeping the addict away from substances. The addict continues abusing substances and manipulating others to help with the next purchase. Two people, with two different goals in one relationship. One cannot control his or her ability to self-destruct, but the other can trust in the Lord to prevent self-destruction. This is not to say that the loved one stops caring about the individual, but they can stop relying on their tricks and tactics and trust God will work in the life of the addict. The job of family members is to assist in the recovery process and help the individual to stay on path of recovery.

It may seem with all of the emotions and struggles involved in helping a loved one with an addiction that the countless attempts seem to be of no avail. It is only when God is given the

chance to be God that His power can truly be seen. Just as Jesus responded to the disciples concerning the salvation of man, “with man it is impossible, but with God all things are possible” so it can be said with our strength alone it is impossible to help someone whose mind has been chemically altered, but with God all things are possible. There is no greater freedom than knowing that a loved one is released into the hands of the Creator of the universe and at any point that individual can call to God for help and He will be there waiting with arms open wide.

**Matthew 11:28-30 KJV**

28 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”