Editor’s View

God’s Commitment to the Addicted Person

If we were honest with ourselves, we’d admit that each of us struggles with some type of addictive attachment, some habit, compulsion or practice that we have given ourselves over to. We use them to manage our own pain, disappointments and longings. In doing so, we effectively become our own gods and tell God that we don’t need Him. While I am certain that God is tremendously pained by how we treat Him, He has not left us to ourselves. He has given us a Savior from our addictive tendencies in the person and righteousness of Jesus Christ. In His love for us (Ephesians 3:17), He could not let us go or leave us to ourselves. He has doing everything possible to save us from ourselves.

It is touching to read the testimonials that show the specific ways that God has intervened in the lives of His wayward children to bring them back home. Grace is at work slowly and at times imperceptibly working through circumstances opening the heart to the work of the Holy Spirit. Don’t you love God for not giving up on you?

But one of the most powerful truths about God’s commitment to the addict is the power of transformation. God does more than save us and cover us with His righteousness. He also has the power to change us. He starts by loving us and embracing us just where we are. Then He helps us to begin seeing areas of our lives that are self destructive: thoughts, emotions and behaviors. The Holy Spirit is always speaking to us letting us know when we need correction and reassuring us when we have victory.

God’s commitment to us is so strong that He will finish the work of sanctification (Philippians 1:6 and 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24) unless we tell Him to stop. He does not violate our free will even to heal our addiction. He knows why we hang onto our idols. As Ray Nelson points out in his piece on Step 5, it is important to admit not only what we do, but why we do it. Are we comforting a hurt or meeting a perceived need? God wants us to know Him as Comforter (2 Corinthians 1:3) and the Supplier of all of our needs (Philippians 4:19). If we allow Him, God will not stop His work of cleansing our soul temples until He gets to the bottom root of the sin problem in us. He knows how to work with each of us as individuals using the methods that we need. Don’t you love that kind of a God?

Please continue to send your testimonials of recovery and feedback on the newsletter. We are looking for pieces on recent and future recovery events. If you would like to write about your experience with working the steps, contact me.

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ARMin Mission and Vision

Our Mission:
Promote healing and freedom from harmful practices by providing resources and training to facilitate recovery.

Our Vision:
Healthy people growing in a relationship with Christ by using principles of God’s Word and choosing healthful practices aimed at finding freedom from harmful habits and addictive behaviors.

Potential Objectives/Goals:
• Promote healing (individually and corporately) utilizing the healthy, balanced principles of God’s Word
• Provide resources to churches and individuals in order to raise awareness and educate regarding the root of dysfunctions that create disunity within individuals, families, churches and communities through unresolved trials, troubles and tragedies
• Train individuals to facilitate ongoing support groups and mentoring in a safe, nurturing environment

We believe that as we heal from life’s trials, troubles and tragedies, we become inspired and committed to reach out to others as a result of gratitude for our personal healing; to care for others because our lives are so enriched by Christ’s forgiveness; and the blessing of the freedom we have experienced due to His unending grace and mercy.
12 STEPS to Recovery

STEP #5

If all the steps, this one is perhaps the most misunderstood by sincere Christians, who believe admission and/or confession of sin is to be made only to God. Many years ago, an early Adventist church leader wrote: “…many conceal sins of selfishness, overreaching, dishonesty toward God and their neighbor, sins in the family, and many others which it is proper to confess in public.” Signs of the Times, May 5, 1881.

Notice that this step doesn’t specifically mention confession. Admitting “the exact nature of our wrongs” is what is referred to. This will mean revealing answers to not just the ‘what’ question. Where, when, and most importantly, why questions and answers will also be admitted. “Why do I keep doing the wrong?” What are the motives involved in the wrong action and the attempts to deny and justify the wrong?

“Sins that are especially offensive to God” are “pride, selfishness, and covetousness” (see Steps to Christ, p. 30). These sins involve reasons (the whys, the motives) for other more obvious “wrongs.”

For instance, a food addict might mention that they crave and eat candy bars whenever they feel discouraged or feel bad because they made a mistake. Then they might go on to say that this helps them forget their negative feelings. They could also describe various rituals related to their harmful habit, such as maintaining a stash of their favorite candy in various hiding places in their house, car and office. In their admission to God, themselves, and another person, they would most likely include their various attempts to hide, minimize, blame others, and justify their “wrongs.”

Two important questions to answer, before sharing wrongs with another human being are: is this the right person and the right time?

Following the instructions in this step will result in freedom from the negative emotions associated with secret sins. As we acknowledge the truth about ourselves and admit our sins and wrongs, we will find freedom from guilt and shame in and through Jesus Christ (see John 8:31-36).

Ray Nelson

Testimonial

From Drunk to Deacon

As a young man, I enlisted in the Air Force and received orders to Viet Nam. I had questions about a “loving God” after seeing and doing the things I did in Viet Nam. I was discharged in March of 1970. I could feel a difference in how I related to things in the world after Viet Nam. People would ask me about Viet Nam but I couldn’t seem to explain it to them. This is the connection veterans have with each other - no explanation needed.

I got heavily into the world of alcohol and drugs. I could feel my life was getting out of control and I needed to do something to change. On a vacation in 1978, God put a lady in my life who would eventually become my wife and she would also lead me to know Him. After ten more years of drugs abuse, my wife was getting ready to leave me. I got really messed up one afternoon on pills and blacked out on our couch. My wife called one of the guys who worked for me and he brought over a man who led us back to the SDA Church. Since then, we started an addiction recovery program. God was not talked about in this program, but the next day my wife and I entered a 90 day outpatient program. We found out that many veterans were suffering from the same It had been a rehab program. He told me all about it and the next day my wife and I entered a 90 day outpatient program. God was not talked about in this program, but the 12 step meetings we went to talked about the “higher power”. After 18 years of sobriety, a curiosity about God started to form in my mind, but I was still blaming God for most of my problems.

My wife was baptized a Seventh-day Adventist but she had been away from the church for 30 years. Through a series of God-ordained circumstances, God led us back to the SDA Church. Since then, we started an addiction recovery program.

God has blessed us greatly to take and use all the insanity we went thru in the past to help others with our testimony. I am now the head Deacon at the church. From a drunk to a deacon-what a journey-and it has only begun. Praise God!

John
It’s So Hard to Say Goodbye

I kissed my father goodbye as I left that January morning to spend the day with friends. When I got back home that evening, my sister greeted me at the door with the news that dad was dead. Less than two months before, the cardiologist, a relative, had told him: “The cigarette you smoked before you came in is to be your last one, if you want to live much longer.” Some forty years of smoking had caused too much damage, and on this January day a massive heart attack took his life. With his death, he joined his father and four of his brothers, all of whom died of the same condition.

You would think that with that family background one would never touch a cigarette, and yet, within a few weeks of his death, I smoked for the first time. I was nauseous, dizzy, the color drained from my face. My mother saw me and asked if I was OK; I lied: “Yes,” I told her, “I’m fine…must have been something I ate.” I didn’t like that feeling; and yet, that was the first of hundreds of cigarettes I smoked during the next few years. I did my best to quit several times, only to begin again. I could echo the words of Mark Twain: “It’s easy to quit smoking. I’ve done it hundreds of times.” Within a few hours of making that resolution, and of throwing the last pack of cigarettes away, I was driving to the store to buy a new pack before I would go crazy. I can’t count the times I followed that ritual: Quit, throw pack away, buy a new pack, start again.

I never went to a Five Day Plan to Stop Smoking, or any type of treatment program. I tried to do it alone... and continued to fail alone... until the Spring of 1976 when I started attending the Seventh-day Adventist Church. No one told me I needed to quit; I knew it. No one told me how to do it; but this time, for the first time, I wasn’t doing it alone! This time there was no struggle! This time I didn’t quit for myself; I quit for Jesus – or Jesus quit for me! For the first time in three or so years I was free, no longer an addict to nicotine. Jesus removed the addiction, and more importantly, the desire.

Nicotine is the tobacco plant’s natural protection from being eaten by insects. Its widespread use as a farm crop insecticide is now being blamed for killing honey bees. A super toxin, drop for drop nicotine is more lethal than strychnine or diamondback rattlesnake venom and three times deadlier than arsenic. Each puff on a cigarette sends nicotine to the brain within 10 seconds. Soon the brain’s chemical structure actually changes; it becomes hooked into wanting more and more nicotine to make the effects last. Over 13 million smokers try to quit each year, yet less than 5% of those who attempt to quit unaided are cigarette-free after 6-12 months for one simple reason: a nicotine addiction is harder to beat than most people realize. Nicotine from smoking changes the structure and function of your...
The Maple Plain SDA Church (MN) outreach team is hosting and presenting a community Addiction & Recovery Seminar from September 25-November 13, 2012. At the initial meeting, we had approximately 15 guests attend and four were non-members. The meeting went very well. We continue to receive inquiries, so keep us on your prayer list!

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brain. When the brain stops getting the nicotine it’s used to, you begin feeling strong withdrawal cravings. You think you want a cigarette when, actually, your brain wants nicotine.

More difficult to break than the chemical dependence is the psychological addiction because the repeated action has built very strong pathways between the neurons in the brain causing the person to continue to reach for the cigarettes in their purse or in their pocket even when they know there aren’t any there.

As a pastor, I had the great honor of helping many people win their victory over cigarette addiction as they prepared for their baptism. I encouraged them with several texts from the Bible, beginning with the words of John: “Whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith” (1 John 5:4). Because God gives us the victory, we must accept it as a fact. Paul wrote, “Reckon (consider) yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus, our Lord” (Romans 6:11). At the same time, because God has given them the victory when they ask (Matthew 7:7-8), they must dispose of all cigarette materials and paraphernalia (cigarettes, ashtrays, matches, etc.), or as Paul writes, “Make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts” (Romans 13:14).

Yes, for those addicted to cigarettes it’s hard to say goodbye to that deadly habit; and yet, as a young orphan I can testify that it is much harder to have to say goodbye to a loved one who has died because of their addiction. Think of what it would have to say goodbye to a loved one who has died because of their addiction. Think of what making this choice will do to you and to your family.

**Claudio Consuegra, DMin**

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