

“Our God is in the Heavens”:
Praying Through Addiction
Sermon Notes

➤ **Only the biblical worldview levels with us about the cold hard fact that addiction is idolatry**

So, if you find yourself on the inside of addiction - **pray, confident that...*

1. Worshipping false gods got you in this mess (vv.4-8, 17)

2. Worshipping the true God gets you out (vv.1-3, 9-16, 18)

Next Week: Psalm 130 - “Out of the Depths”:
Praying Through Confession

MEFC Community Group Study Guide

For the week of August 23rd-29th

Getting Started

1. Have you (or anyone close to you) ever wrestled with an addiction? If so - and if it would be wise to do so – share your experience with the group. Remember, addictions can involve chemical addiction (drug and alcohol abuse) but also can include behavioral addictions (food, pornography, gambling, shopping, phone use, etc.).

Digging Deeper

2. It is one of the great griefs of the Christian church that she has been so slow to respond to and develop solid, Scripture-saturated, gospel-grounded resources for the world of addiction. In fact, the emergence of organizations such as Alcoholics Anonymous (birthed in 1935) signaled the poverty of the answers the church was providing in the first half of the 20th century. That all began to change in the 1970s with the advent of the biblical counseling movement. These days, the evangelical church lays claim a number of incredibly helpful resources in this area.¹ Why do you think it took so long? If you know a bit about American church history, can you speculate as to some of the reasons?

Open Your Bible to James 4:4...

3. We'll search in vain for the word "addiction" to appear in the concordance at the back of our Bible. Not unlike the word "trinity", the term "addiction" simply isn't there. On the other hand, if we look under "s" for "sin", then we begin to find a fund of vocabulary for addiction that is far greater and more sophisticated than anything the world has to offer.² For example, James 4:4 tells us that our sin is never a victimless crime - rather, it is always **spiritual adultery** against God (see, too, Hosea 1:1-3:5). How does this image of addiction as spiritual adultery change the playing field of how we typically think about this problem? Why is it a helpful way to speak of addiction?
4. Another common category to describe our sin (and thus, our addictions) is **foolishness**. Walk through the following references from the book of Proverbs (9:13-18; 14:8; 15:3; 17:24-25; 26:11; 27:22 and 28:26) and each time you see the word "fool" substitute "addict". Each time you encounter the word "folly" swap it out for "addiction". What insights about the world of addiction do we gain when we do this? If you're familiar with addiction, do these verses ring any bells for you? If so, in what way?
5. Yet another picture for sin / addiction in the Bible is the experience of being **attacked by a beast**.

1 From landmark courses that mirror 12-step programs (like Ed Welch's Crossroads: A Step-By-Step Guide Away from Addiction. New Growth Press: Greensboro, NC. 2008), to rich book-length studies (such as Matt Chandler and Michael Snetzer's Recovering Redemption: A Gospel-Saturated Perspective on How to Change. B&H Books: Nashville, TN. 2014), to biblically-functioning residential communities (like Redemption House - right next door in Minnetrista <http://www.redemptionhouse.net/>).

2 For greater depth and detail on each of these addiction metaphors, see Ed Welch, Addictions: A Banquet in the Grave. P&R Publishing: Philipsburg, PA. 2001.

Take a look at the Lord's words to Cain in Genesis 4:7, Peter's instruction in 1 Peter 5:8, and James' teaching in James 4:7-8. Why is it important to take spiritual warfare into account when we approach addiction? What triumphantly encouraging promise do we see in Romans 16:20 in this connection?

6. There is one image in Scripture for sin that dovetails pretty well with current secular thought on addiction. The image is that of **disease**. What does God tell his ancient covenant people about their sin in Isaiah 1:5-7? At the same time, how does the Lord speak of the remedy over in Isaiah 53:5-6? Why is that last word in Isaiah 53:6 so important here? What does the cure imply about the nature of our sin?
7. Obviously, a strong case can be made that the master-image for sin in the Bible is **idolatry**. Walk back carefully through Psalm 115 (as well as the points from this week's sermon as well as any additional notes you took). Why does idolatry so fittingly capture the essence of addiction? Consider, too, some other biblical passages on idolatry including: Deuteronomy 5:7-10; Ezekiel 14:1-11; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 10:1-14; 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10; 1 John 5:21.
8. One final description of sin that that is incredibly important to consider in any discussion of addiction is that of **slavery**. Examine the following passages that present sin as pitiable slavery and at the same time signal the glorious possibility of emancipation for anyone who will turn to Christ for their redemption: Luke 16:13; Romans 6:15-23; John 8:31-36. As you close your group in prayer, please be sure to pray for another as well as our broader community as it relates to this area of addiction. Remember, also, to hold up the Harbor Center for Biblical Counseling in your prayers as our church seeks to minister to persons in the midst of addiction.