

## THE SINS OF ADDICTION

THE PURPOSE OF THIS TEACHING - This will be the second of the three weeks in which we deal with the ugly sins that underlie addictions. They all relate to how we learned to cope with a sinful world—sinfully. Stress occasionally that each person should not take onto himself every one of these sins, but that we need to examine prayerfully where the Lord would have us convicted. In Session 1-7, we will deal with repentance, and that will end the “cleaning up” process that is necessary before we start to discover the man or woman we truly are.

1. This is going to be another potentially heavy session, dealing again with sins - what we have chosen to call the sins of addiction: self-protection, self-pity and self-centeredness.
2. Obviously, these sins are not confined to people dealing with addictions. Self-centeredness is probably the core of every sin, and is therefore universal on this earth. But these are sins that have special applicability to wounded people in general, and to addicted people in particular.
3. You might call these “natural” sins. For fallen man, living in a difficult world absent of Jesus Christ, they are natural responses to the world around us. With Jesus, we no longer need them, and we have the capacity to overcome them.
4. I want to mention that each of these is not going to be a major problem with every one of you. Use some discernment. Ask the Holy Spirit which you need to deal with. Trust your other Christian friends to give you guidance.
5. One or more of these sins probably appeared to be your friend going way back to the time when you first felt the pain of rejection, or of abuse, or of not being affirmed, whatever pain lay at the root of your addiction:
  - a. Self-protection might have been your way of trying to never be hurt again.
  - b. Self-pity was your way of comforting yourself in your hurts.
  - c. Self-centeredness may have been your way of controlling, as much as possible, a cruel and hostile world—or at least your part of it.
6. They are all ways of dealing with pain, and they are all sinful because they cut us off from the One who can truly ease our pain and meet our needs. They are ultimately destructive because they cut us off from real human love. They are sinful because they place us at the center of our universe, and we don't belong there.

## SELF-PROTECTION

Some of the thoughts here come from a highly recommended book - Larry Crabb's, Inside Out.

1. One of the core issues of addictions is that of self-protection. Our response to rejection, or perceived rejection was one of self-protection; so that we would not be hurt again, or would stop hurting so much, we learned not to feel and to stuff our feelings.
2. It is not hard to understand this kind of response. If you are in a war and you want to protect your city from destruction, or your country from being overrun, you have two options:
  - a. You can attack the enemy directly or
  - b. You can build a wall to defend your territory - like the wall of Jerusalem or the Maginot line.
3. It is the same in relationships that have the potential of bringing us pain, which, if we are deeply wounded, could be any kind of close relationship. To keep from being hurt, we assume either an offensive or defensive stance.
4. I don't want to carry the war analogy too far, because war usually brings to mind courage, and what we are talking about here is rooted in fear - the fear of further pain - pain that can come from rejection, humiliation or abuse.
5. I would like to discuss two types of behavior that are clear signs that we are living out our lives in the mode of self-protection.
  - a. The first is an unwillingness to be vulnerable. This is characterized by:
    - (1). Superficiality - If anyone truly knew me, they would reject me.
    - (2). Control - if I let anyone get the upper hand, they will devastate me. Both running away and domination are means of control.
    - (3). Lacking a capacity to love - To love is to remove the five inch thick shell from around my heart, and that's too risky.

TEACHER'S TESTIMONY
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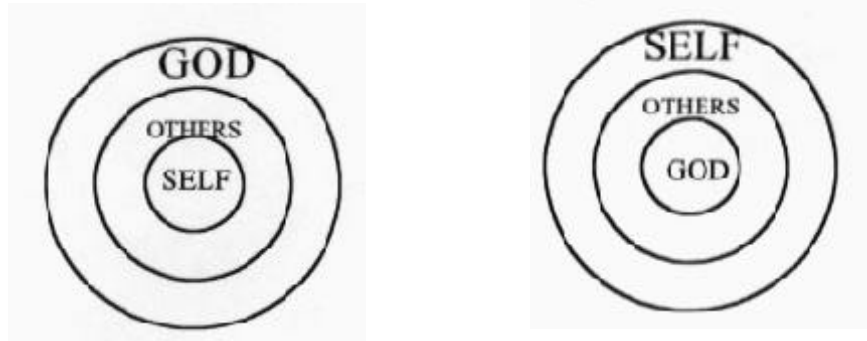
- b. The second sign of a life controlled by self-protection is dishonesty.
  - (1). You are a people pleaser - Please give me your approval.
  - (2). You are unable to speak the truth - Larry Crabb, addressing an example, in his book says, "But when the soft answer is designed to protect the speaker from facing an anger that threatens to undo him, then it is not love. It's self-protecting sin."
  - (3). Unwillingness to voice opinions - A woman from Regeneration tells how at the Exodus Conference in San Antonio she stood on a corner for almost half an hour with five or six ex-gay men trying to decide where to go to dinner. They couldn't decide because none of them wanted to express an opinion. She finally did, and most of them followed her.
  
- 6. Let's look at some of the consequences of living in a self-protective mode.
  - a. First and foremost, we are cut off from real and satisfying relationships—from real love.
  - b. But we are relational creatures, made for love, and so we will be driven to seek substitutes: with a bottle of liquor, with a bout on the internet, with a high.
  - c. Very likely, we are also cut off from God. Those who cannot relate honestly and openly with their fellow man, usually have the same difficulties with God.
  
- 7. So what do we do when self-protection is the guiding force in our lives? I don't have the answer.
  - a. I know Jesus wants to bring you out of it, and I know He is usually gentle. He will not take away all of your defenses before you are ready. He will not let you be devastated.
  - b. Maybe the answer isn't easy because every part of this program is involved in bringing you out of self-protection:
    - (1). Surely, you do have to repent.
    - (2). Likely, God wants to do some healing in the area that first caused you to erect that wall.
    - (3). And you are going to have to step out and take risks - risks of rejection, humiliation, even the risk of being abused physically or emotionally. You are going to have to grow up. More about this later.

## SELF-PITY

1. Some people find that self-pity is at the heart of their addiction. He sees an inferiority complex (not so different from low self-esteem) as coming out of some real shortcoming or disadvantages in the child, but rather than accepting them as part of his fate, the child generalizes his condition until he sees himself as a poor, pitiable creature. Then to comfort himself in his miserable state, he resorts to self-pity.
2. I think everyone can see that self-pity is a form of self-nurturing, or self-comforting - an unhealthy self-love. Maybe you can also see that it is essentially an immature form of behavior. In fact, this author sees the complaining child inside each adult addict.
3. The destructiveness of self-pity, either in our childhood, or continued now, is quite apparent:
  - a. There is a withdrawal into fantasy.
  - b. An “I deserve something” attitude can develop, which can be the trigger and justification for going out and having a binge or entering into a destructive emotional relationship. It justifies our rebellion.
4. Self-pity can be a chronic state or a periodic mood. If it is periodic, we need to be alert to it, because it is often the link between feelings of loneliness or rejection, even just feeling tired and acting out. The acting out is comforting the poor little boy or girl; he or she deserves something.
5. One interesting remedy for self-pity is self-ridicule. Voice the “poor, little baby” talk aloud and listen to yourself. He says that self-dramatization is often a part of self-pity—casting yourself in the role of the tragic hero (or heroine). That also is ripe territory for self-ridicule.
6. If it is chronic, certainly deep repentance is needed; but this is, again, likely to be a fairly long and difficult process. The self-pitying child will have to be replaced with a grateful man or woman. Praising and thanking God regularly can nourish this new person.

## SELF-CENTEREDNESS

1. I am not going to say an awful lot about this because it is at the root of most all sin, and therefore all of our growth as Christians is a process of overcoming self-centeredness. Also, it overlaps with self-protection and self-pity, and some of what we have covered there applies to self-centeredness also.
2. But we need to discuss it briefly. Sinful man is like this. (Draw on the board.)



3. At conversion, this changes and the places change like the second circle.
4. At least that is what happens spiritually and potentially. The act of accepting Jesus Christ is the act of saying, “I will no longer be at the center of my universe. Jesus, you belong there,” and we step aside. For a while, we may even actually function that way. But usually, not for long—especially if we carry with us deep, unhealed areas. We will almost inevitably step back into the center of that circle. My needs are so great; my will must be done.
5. And so all relationships are thrown askew. We have difficulty connecting with God because He is not where He is supposed to be; never mind that we deposed Him. And self-centeredness, of course, damages our relationships with others. Who wants a self-centered person for a friend?
6. Alan Medinger tells how he came into a recognition of his self-centeredness in a powerful way. The conviction came from reading another Lany Crabb book, Men and Women: Enjoying the Difference. Larry Crabb adds one word before self-centered - “justified”. Alan says that hit him like a bolt of lightning. He says that before this he could not see his self-centeredness. It was logic; it was justice; it was all right. He recalls his justifications:

“I’m not going to call him tonight; I’ve done enough.”

“Let her make the bed; I have more on me than she does.”

“I’m not going where he wants to go; I’m the one who really needs the rest and relaxation.”

He says, “I justified what I did, and therefore it wasn’t self-centeredness.”

7. To summarize: We have referred to these things as sins of addiction for several reasons:
  - a. A struggle to use isn’t a sin; it’s a condition of brokenness, but many of our responses to

what happened to us, and to what is happening to us, now are sins. These three things are our responses, and they are sinful.

- b. These patterns of dealing with life will keep us bound in addictions because they are major obstacles to our coming into a deeper, personal relationship with Jesus, the primary source of our healing.
- c. These patterns also present obstacles to ever achieving pure, wholesome, loving relationships with other men and women - a second source of our healing.

#### A PRAYER:

Father, as we try to take an honest look at ourselves, and as we seek to discover the sins that stand in the way of our healing and growth, let us see only what you know we are ready to deal with at this time, and with every sin that we confront, no matter how huge and ugly, may we see how much greater is your grace and mercy. God, continue the cleansing process. Set us free that we may become the men and women you created us to be. In Jesus' name. AMEN

#### **Scripture Memory Verse:**

**1 John 1:9 (NASB)** If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

#### **Assignment for the Week:**

1. A key point in every 12-Step program is a "fearless moral inventory". Do that this week with respect to where you are as regards:

- Self-protection
- Self-pity
- Self-centeredness.

Write in your Prayer Journal anything new that the Lord shows you, and then discuss it with your group next week.

2. Read the story of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32), and when you have read it and meditated on it, thank your Heavenly Father for loving and accepting you just as you are today.