

SUMMER SERMONS

JOHN 8:34

FREEDOM FOR ADDICTS



FIRST BYRON CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

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INTRODUCTION

"I'm going to become an addict." Said by no one ever. No one ever sets out to become an addict. So how does it happen? It's helpful to know the answer to this so that we can look out for warning signs in ourselves and others. As we do so, remember addictions usually involve substances (e.g. alcohol, drugs, food) or behavior (e.g. porn, social media, gambling)

So, what is addiction? We could answer the question by looking at behavioral science. It begins with someone losing control over the amount and frequency. Then it becomes a craving and compulsive. Finally, there is continued use even in the face of adverse consequences. That's a simplification of some really complicated science.

Or we could answer the question from a medical/psychological perspective that takes account of genetics, background, social setting, trauma, etc. But again, we end up with an extremely complex answer that only professionals can understand and use.

I want to answer the question from a biblical and theological perspective using John 8:31-38, because that's how Jesus approached the question of addiction. We'll see that his answer to 'What is addiction?' is not only simple but also provides a solution to the problem that we can use ourselves or use to help others.

CONTEXT

Jesus offered freedom through truth to the Jews (31-32). The Jews rejected any suggestion that they were in bondage to anything or anyone (33). Jesus then explains that anyone who continues in a pattern of sin is a slave to sin (34). It's clear that Jesus is talking about them, especially as he goes on to re-offer them true and total freedom (8:35-36). Only the Son is truly free and therefore only he can liberate slaves and make them sons.

It's the connection between addiction and lies, freedom and truth that we want to examine in this sermon. There's a lie at the core of every addiction. Addicts lie to themselves more than to anyone else. It doesn't matter what kind of addiction it is, lies are at the heart of them all. That's why Jesus said to these religious addicts, "You will know the truth and the truth will make you free" (32)

Every addict tells four kinds of lies: lies about God, lies about themselves, lies about the sin, and lies about others. The only way to deliver addicts is to rip out these lies and replace them with truth. That's what we want to do now. Here's a sampling, and it's just a sampling, of the lies that addicts tell; and a sampling of the truths that can root them out and replace them.



What lies do addicts tell about God?



1. THE ADDICT LIES ABOUT GOD

Lie: God is not good. He's just being a spoilsport in forbidding this sin. The sin is good and God is bad.

Truth: God is good to all and does good to all. His law is an expression of his goodness (Ps. 145:9; 119:68; Rom. 7:12).

Lie: God is not all-seeing. He can't really see me when I do this.

Truth: God sees all people, things, events, times (Ps. 139:1-16; Prov. 15:3)

Lie: God is not judge. He will not call me to account for this.

Truth: We will give account for every deed done or not done, in public and in private (2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 2:16)

Lie: God is not Savior. I've sinned too much for God to save me. There's no point in even trying to be saved.

Truth: Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. (Rom. 10:13; 1 John 1:9; John 6:37)

Lie: God is not enough. God will not satisfy me as sin does.

Truth: There is more than enough in God to satisfy the hungriest and thirstiest soul (Ps. 63:3-5; John 7:37)

THE ADDICT TELLS LIES
ABOUT THE GOD OF TRUTH.

2. THE ADDICT LIES ABOUT SELF

Lie: I don't have a problem (denial). I mean I sin, quite a lot, but it's not an addiction.

Truth: Whoever commits sin (*lit.* continues to practice sin) is a slave of sin (Rom. 6:16; John 8:34).

Lie: I'm not as bad as others (downplaying). I can stop when I want.

Truth: Our standard of comparison is God's Word, not other people (2 Cor. 10:12).

Lie: It's not harming me.

Truth: Every sin hardens our hearts (Heb. 3:13) and ultimately ends in death (James 1:15).

Lie: If only you knew how hard and exceptional my circumstances are (deflect).

Truth: Your situation is common to many and they don't do such sins (1 Cor. 10:13).

Lie: I cannot change and I cannot escape (despair).

Truth: God always provides an escape route and he can give real freedom to anyone (1 Cor. 10:13; John 8:36).

THE ADDICT LIES
TO HIMSELF ABOUT HIMSELF.



3. THE ADDICT LIES ABOUT SIN

Lie: This habit makes me happy. Sin is filling and freeing.

Truth: It's a very brief and fleeting happiness that leaves you in chains with a bitter taste (Heb. 11:24-26).

Lie: This helps me forget my past.

Truth: The most important thing is for God to forget your past (Heb. 8:12).

Lie: Now is not a good time to stop.

Truth: Now is the accepted time, today is the day of salvation (2 Cor. 6:2).

Lie: This sin is harmless

Truth: Every sin pays the same wages - Death (Rom. 6:23).

THE ADDICT LIES ABOUT SIN
BECAUSE SIN LIES TO THE ADDICT.

4. THE ADDICT LIES ABOUT OTHERS

Lie: Those condemning me and trying to stop me are my enemies.

Truth: Those who try to stop you sinning are actually your best friends and they're doing you a great kindness (Prov. 27:6; Ps. 141:5).

Lie: It's my parents'/abuser's/husband's/wife's fault.

Truth: When Adam blamed Eve, and Eve blamed the snake, God blamed and punished all of them (Gen 3:14-19; Ezek. 18:20). The soul that sins, it shall die.

Lie: This doesn't affect others.

Truth: Do you need a Bible verse for this? Just ask those around you what the truth is.

Lie: You're just as bad as I am. You're no better.

Truth: True but I've reached out to God for forgiveness and freedom.

ADDICT HATE MOST
THOSE WHO LOVE THEM MOST

♥ As long as we tell and believe lies about God, self, sin, others, we will remain in bondage. Go through these four areas asking yourself or the addict, "What lies am I telling that are keeping me enslaved?"

♥ Use the truth of God's Word to break the bonds of lies and addiction. For every lie, you can find a truth in God's Word that can defeat the lie and burst the bonds

♥ Praise Jesus who came to release the captives and is still doing so. There's no lie stronger than truth. There's n bond he cannot break.



CONCLUSION



FURTHER STUDY

Online Articles

- [9 Things You Should Know About Pornography and the Brain](#)
- [Two Underused Strategies for Addiction](#)
- [10 Effects of Living with Addiction](#)
- [Stopping addictive behavior: What works?](#)

Books

- [Free eBook: Your Brain on Porn](#)
- [The Heart of Addiction](#) by Mark Shaw
- [Addictions: Finding Hope in the Power of the Gospel](#) by Ed Welch

Discussion Questions

- What factors contributed to your addictions or those of others you know?
- Why did Jesus speak to the Jews as addicts? What was their addiction?
- What are the main addictions you see today? What are the lies at the heart of these addictions?
- What truths do the addicts you know need to hear to experience freedom from their addiction?
- What other verses in the Bible speak of sin as an addiction?
- What songs can you think of that celebrate the freeing power of Jesus and his Word?

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FREEDOM FOR ADDICTS



Understand Addiction

- Lies > Bondage
- Truth > Freedom

Biblical answer?



Defeat the lies at the heart of addiction by believing the truth that Jesus speaks to free us.



Addict lies about God

- God is not Good
- God is not all-seeing
- God is not Judge
- God is not Savior
- God is not Enough

THE ADDICT TELLS LIES ABOUT THE GOD OF TRUTH.



Addict lies about self

- Denial
- Downplay
- Deflect
- Despair

THE ADDICT LIES TO HIMSELF ABOUT HIMSELF.



Addict lies about sin

- Sin makes me happy
- Sin helps me forget
- Not a good time to stop
- Sin is harmless

THE ADDICT LIES ABOUT SIN BECAUSE SIN LIES TO THE ADDICT



Addict lies about others

- You are my enemies
- You are to blame
- You are not affected
- You're as bad as me

ADDICT HATE MOST THOSE WHO LOVE THEM MOST