

*Baggage: Breaking The Grip Of Addiction*

**Video: When I Grow Up**

You know we smile and laugh at the innocence of little children. We see all the potential that's there in a child. Their whole life is before them and the possibilities seem endless.

But did you notice something? All children almost always say something positive when you ask them what they want to be when they grow up.

They don't say, "When I grow up I think I am going to mess up my life royally. I am going to make some decisions that if I do, could start the ball rolling in a very painful and negative direction."

They don't say, "My teeth are too white and my breath smells too good so when I grow up I'm going to start smoking and if I am lucky, I'll get lung cancer and die ten or twelve years early. I hope that happens to me."

They don't say, "When I grow up I'm going to start gambling. I'm going to get so hooked, I am going to start gambling all the time. I'm going to gamble so much I am going to lose all of my money. Hopefully, if I am lucky enough, I'll lose all my retirement money, have my car repossessed, and maybe even have some big guy named Guido break my legs."

They don't say, "When I grow up I'm going to be an alcoholic or a druggie and watch my marriage dissolve and my family fall apart."

No one says, "When I grow up I hope I'm addicted to porn so I can walk down that path of destruction."

And yet, even though no one plans to do any of those things, thousands and thousands of people open the door to very dangerous behaviors every single day and find themselves living with the baggage of addiction.

This is the final week of our series we're calling *Baggage: Lightening the Load*. What we've been doing is looking at things like fear, worry, anger, depression, and guilt to see the truths of the Bible.

We don't start off in life wanting to carry around any of these things, but somehow we begin to pick some of them up and carry them through life. What we've seen over the weeks is, there's a lot of different reasons why we pick these things up. For some of us those reasons can go all the way back to our childhood. But we've also seen that while our past can influence us, it can never control us.

The verse that we've used as the cornerstone of this series gives us a promise from Jesus Christ Himself that's music to the ears of anyone carrying heavy baggage.

Jesus said, *And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.* (John 8:32)

I know we live in an age in which most people think truth is what you make it. They believe that truth changes, depending on the person and the situation.

That may be a popular approach to the question of truth but it's completely bogus. It's distorted. The words of Jesus just cut right through all the double talk and mysticism. Truth can be known, and not only that but God's truth sets us free.

Every verse of Psalm 119 gives a facet of God's Word, the Bible. Listen to these:

*Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, And Your law is truth.* (Psalm 119:142)

*You are near, O LORD, And all Your commandments are truth.* (Psalm 119:151)

*The entirety of Your word is truth, And every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever.* (Psalm 119:160)

If we're going to be set free from the baggage of addictions, the place we need to go is exactly where we're going this morning, to the Bible.

Ed Welch has written a powerful book titled *Addictions: A Banquet in the Grave* and an excellent step-by-step study guide to lead those caught in addictions in the way out. The study can stand alone and is titled *Crossroads*.

Now just so you don't say, "I'm not addicted to anything so this message isn't for me," let me read you a quote from the preface of Welch's book.

He writes, "You will probably come to this book with a particular role in mind. For example, I came with the idea of helping others. But as I dug into Scripture's teaching on the reckless nature of the human heart and it's rich teaching on self-control, it made me see that I needed help as well. So thinking about your own struggles is the best way to start."

In another place he points out that addictions are really the sign of a worship disorder. He says, the question is "Will we worship ourselves and our own desires, or will we worship the true God?"

There's going to be something here for all of us this morning.

*I. To Deal With An Addiction Biblically We Begin By Taking An Honest Look At Ourselves*

There's 3 steps to this honest look. The first is to listen

**Turn to Proverbs 4 page 562**

Proverbs is part of what we call “Wisdom Literature” in the Bible. That’s a good name for it because Proverbs uses the words “wise” and “wisdom” 112 times in 31 chapters.

Remember, the truth that sets us free is God’s wisdom.

### **Read verses 4-8 & 20-22**

The path away from addictions begins with listening, listening to the wisdom that only comes from God. Wisdom means knowing how life is supposed to work, how it works best. To get it you just have to listen.

That sounds simple enough but all of us know it’s easy to get sidetracked.

That’s because there’s another voice calling out to us. That voice is folly. The words “fool” and “foolish” are used 79 times in Proverbs.

Folly is the mirror opposite of wisdom. Wisdom says, “Go slow, take your time, stay on the path, keep your eyes focused on the end of the journey. Don’t make pleasing yourself your highest priority.”

Folly says, “You can have it now. Why wait? You can have peace and comfort. You can feel good. You can forget about your problems. You deserve it.”

Now let me ask you, which voice sounds like more fun? Which voice sounds easier? Which voice catches our attention quicker?

What folly doesn’t tell us is that her words are all a lie. In the end she has nothing to offer except emptiness and heartache.

How many of us have listened to her way too many times? How many of us are listening to her right now?

Ed Welch writes, “Foolishness is like the hip contrast to wisdom. Who wouldn’t follow it? From a distance, folly sounds ridiculous. It makes promises it cannot keep, and has nothing to ultimately give except death and misery. But close up, when it conjures up a mirage that matches our desires, folly sounds like life itself.”

See what happens? We go after our substitute gods. We create our proxy deities. They’re actually our own desires and we want to feed them and serve them.

We become totally blind to our desires. What we crave, what we lust after, what we just have to have becomes our idol. We make an idol out of whatever it is we live for. It becomes our god.

Listen to the true God’s description of an idol worshipper:

*Such stupidity and ignorance! Their eyes are closed, and they cannot see. Their minds are shut, and they cannot think.*

*The person who made the idol never stops to reflect, "Why, it's just a block of wood! I burned half of it for heat and used it to bake my bread and roast my meat. How can the rest of it be a god? Should I bow down to worship a piece of wood?"*

*The poor, deluded fool feeds on ashes. He trusts something that can't help him at all. Yet he cannot bring himself to ask, "Is this idol that I'm holding in my hand a lie?" (Isaiah 44:18-20 NLT)*

John Calvin wrote, "The human heart is a factory of idols...Everyone of us is, from his mother's womb, expert in inventing idols."

For the Israelites the idols were made of wood. For us we serve the desires our heart.

They loved their idols and so do we. That's why we have such trouble hearing wisdom. Our idol, our addiction, feels so precious to us we can't bring ourselves to honestly ask is this idol a lie?

See how desperate we are for the truth of the Bible to set us free? So what do we do? Where do we start?

Listening and action go together. If you're not ready to act, you're not ready to listen but if you are ready to listen, then you're ready to act.

So step 1 is listening to God's wisdom. Step 2 is confessing your double-mindedness.

Here's where we often find ourselves. Stuck in the middle. We want to change but at the same time we don't want to change. We're double-minded.

We realize that our addiction is slowly destroying us but we hold onto it because we still want control of our lives. We want control even though we're the ones being controlled. What do we do?

**Turn to James 4 page 1074 read verses 6-8**

The Bible says that God gives favor to the humble. Humility means I'm not exalting and worshipping myself. If I'm proud then I want to be in charge and that means I'm going to try to fill my desires my way. There's no victory in that battle, only constant defeat.

The key to double-mindedness is submission to God. The key to double-mindedness is to obey God. It's, comply with God and resist the Devil because his voice is the voice of folly. He's a master at energizing our desires for pleasure.

The Bible is clear. There is an evil one. He goes by a number of names; Satan, Devil, god of this world, the evil one, the father of lies, but he's also called an angel of light. Satan

doesn't wear a red suit and carry a pitchfork. If he did he'd be real obvious. You'd see him coming a mile away. Instead he appears beautiful and enticing.

The biblical statement is, there's a battle going on for our hearts, minds, and souls. The agenda of the evil one is slavery and ultimate destruction. The agenda of our God is freedom and eternal life.

The whole reason we get started in addictions in the first place is, on the surface saying, "I tried something and I like it." If we didn't like it, we wouldn't go back over and over. The Bible doesn't hide the fact that there's pleasure in sin but it makes a realistic assessment. Speaking of Moses it says he was willing to *suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin.* (Hebrews 11:25)

Sin's pleasures are real but their temporary. Sin's pleasures are there, but in the end sin becomes our master and we become its slave.

I believe the real heart issue is this, not just "I like the way this substance or action makes me feel," but, "Before I started I didn't like the way I felt. Before I started there was something empty or painful about my life."

Maybe all this talk about God is a little much for you. Maybe you're wondering why I keep going to the Bible for direction. Here's why. The real issues in our life are ultimately spiritual.

We sin when we say, "I want to manage my world my way without God interfering."

As Welch writes, "Somewhere in the back of your mind you knew there was a God, but you are just like the rest of humanity; you wanted to manage your world yourself. You thought you knew better."

There's an ultimate connection between our actions and God whether we want to admit it or not.

Think about this:

When you're angry you are saying, "God isn't good. I deserve better. I want to be God."

When you feel sorry for yourself you're saying, "I deserve better from God."

When you complain you're saying, "I deserve better from God. God isn't good."

When you're crippled by fear you're saying, "God can't be trusted."

When you don't love others you're saying, "God isn't good to me so I don't have to be good to others."

When you lie you're saying, "God doesn't know all. I can hide from Him."

When you are depressed you're ultimately saying, "God doesn't care. I have no hope."

Everything ultimately goes back to our view of God.

So step 1 is listening to God's wisdom. Step 2 is confessing your double-mindedness, and 3 is start telling the truth.

The Bible says, *The path of the just is like the shining sun, That shines ever brighter unto the perfect day. The way of the wicked is like darkness; They do not know what makes them stumble.* (Proverbs 4:18-19)

Addictions grow in the darkness. They're like mushrooms. Addictions feed on lies. We do everything we can for as long as we can to hide an addiction.

This is God's explanation of why Jesus was rejected by His own people, *And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.* (John 3:19)

It's hard to have your evil deeds exposed but as long as we're lying about our lives we're playing Satan's game. The Bible calls him the father of lies.

Actually all human history turned at the point where Adam and Eve believed Satan's lies and doubted God. God said, "Don't eat the fruit."

*Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."* (Genesis 3:4-5)

This is the turning point of our lives too. Satan minimizes wrong behavior and the consequences, which is a lie intended to kill, and he promises freedom. "You can be like God. You can be in control."

When a person's addicted, the Bible says they're a voluntary slave. Satan victimizes them but see they also want to believe lies because they want to try to hang onto what they think is running their own show.

See what happens when we start telling the truth? We begin to undermine Satan's grip. We begin to expose Satan's lies.

Jesus put it this way, *Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.* (John 12:35-36)

I. To Deal With An Addiction Biblically We Begin By Taking An Honest Look At Ourselves  
II. To Deal With An Addiction Biblically We Continue By Taking An Honest Look At God

The Bible never tries to argue for the existence of God. It just starts off in Genesis 1 with these words, *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.* (Genesis 1:1)

When the Bible talks about God, this is who it's referring too. The all-powerful creator who spoke and creation just was. It happened.

**Turn to Isaiah 40 page 638**

I want you to see a series of questions. They're not questions that we ask about God but questions that God asks us.

**Read verses 12-15**

God is the Almighty One. He's the creator. He's your creator. And that means He has authority over you. He's got claims on your life.

Now listen to this, *You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.* (Luke 4:8)

Not yourself. Not your addiction. Not your job, or your family, or your possessions. We are commanded to worship and serve God alone.

Here's the problem. None of us have worshipped and served God exclusively. None of us have worshipped and served God 24/7 365. We've all violated that scriptural command many times over.

When we choose ourselves over God it's called sin and the Bible says, *The wages of sin is death.* (Romans 6:23)

The eternal heaven will be a perfect place. Perfect like God, without sin. The Bible says, *Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.* (II Peter 3:13)

Revelation 21:27 explains, *But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.*

God is a perfect God. Heaven is a perfect place. God can't accept sin.

So here we are as sinners condemned before God. But there's another side to God. There's something else we find out when we take an honest look at Him.

The Bible says God is love and He loves His creation. He loves us.

Here's what distinguishes the message of the Bible from every other religious book that's ever been written.

It tells us that our creator, who is holy and judges sin, made the way for our forgiveness. This is what He did... *For God so loved the world that He gave His only*

*begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. (John 3:16-17)*

That's the God of the Bible. He's the creator. He's the holy one. But He's also the savior.

Now listen. If we're going to worship God and not ourselves then we have to start by realizing that we're not the savior, He is. He sent His Son. Christ was our perfect substitute when He died on the cross. That's why there's only one thing that we can do to be forgiven. The Bible says all we can do is believe. Remember, *whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

As soon as we say that we can earn our way to God by our own actions we're robbing God of the worship and glory that only He deserves.

There are 150 verses in the New Testament alone that say that becoming a part of God's eternal family is by faith.

Here's the most important spiritual question you can ever answer. Have you come to the place in your spiritual life where you've recognized that you're a sinner before God, and the best you know how, have put your trust in Christ alone to be your sin bearer?

This isn't just a question for people struggling with life-dominating addictions. This is question for anyone and everyone. This is a question for the irreligious and for the religious, for the amoral and for the self-righteous.

Jesus said, *He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him. (John 3:36)*

We're already under the wrath of God. Jesus is our only hope. The question is, is He your hope this morning?

*I. To Deal With An Addiction Biblically We Begin By Taking An Honest Look At Ourselves  
II. To Deal With An Addiction Biblically We Continue By Taking An Honest Look At God  
III. To Deal With An Addiction Biblically We Conclude By Redirecting Our Worship*

**If you're still in Isaiah 40 look at verse 28. If not it's page 639.**

If you've been struggling with an addiction you know what it's like to be tired and weak. You know what it's like to stumble and fall. But listen to this...

**Read Isaiah 40:28-31**

Those are words of life!

What idol are you worshipping this morning? Is it an addiction? Is it pleasure? Is it peace and comfort? Are you sitting on the throne instead of God?

What ever we worship becomes the center of our lives. At its root idol worship is about our own desires. It's about looking to the idol to give us what we think we need. We

worship at an idol because we think it will give us pleasure, security, power, peace, or prosperity.

When we rename our addiction or our misfocus of life as idolatry we're suddenly pointed back to God as our only hope. Jesus Christ bought us with the awesome price of His own blood. He died to redeem us.

That means redeem us from eternal punishment, redeem us from the weight of sin, and redeem us from all false worship.

This is so exciting. Listen to another truth you'll only find in the Bible. *Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.* (I Corinthians 6:19)

God the creator, through the 3<sup>rd</sup> person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, lives in every believer.

He empowers us, He directs us, He convinces us of sin, He seals us until the day of redemption.

How can we redirect our worship? The Bible commands us, *Be filled with the Spirit.* (Ephesians 5:18)

*I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.* (Galatians 5:16)

To be filled with the Spirit, or walk in the Spirit means be controlled by the Holy Spirit who lives in you. When God's in control of our life our worship will be totally redirected.

We covered the basics today but there's so much more that could be said on the subject of addiction. Breaking free is never easy. Addictions are strongholds that dominate and control our lives.

Let me just challenge you to do something today. Not tomorrow or next week, but today. If you're feeling bound by an addiction. If you're feeling like you can't break free from some besetting sin, tell someone you can trust.

Tell me, tell one of our prayer and care team members after the service. Tell your spouse, your parents, the person who invited you here that's been talking to you about Jesus. Bring them on board so they can walk down this road with you.

There is hope. That hope is found in the person of Jesus Christ.

Lets pray.

*O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water. I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory.*

*Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands.*

*My soul will be satisfied as with the richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise you. (Psalm 63:1-5)*