Repeatedly we hear of the good kings in the OT restoring true worship, but neglecting the “high places”. For example, 2 Kings 12:2-3 reads, “Joash did what was right in the eyes of the Lord... the high places, however, were not removed; the people continued to offer sacrifices and burn incense there.”

I’ve done a lot of reflecting recently about the “high places” in my life. I’ve committed my heart to Christ and have dealt with many of the “big” issues in my life, but once-in-awhile I still find myself running off to one of those high places and sacrificing to the god of anger or the goddess of lust. With this in mind, Edward T. Welch’s *Addictions: A Banquet in the Grave: Finding Hope in the Power of the Gospel* (2001) put my problems onto a theological grid.

Welch challenges the popular idea suggesting that our addictions are a disease. Instead, Welch puts it into biblical language and refers to them as idolatry. He writes that “Addictions are ultimately a disorder of worship.” We create “high places” out of God’s good creation and then “waver between two opinions” (1 Kings 18:21) only to watch our idols become our tyrants. (All of this is also described in the first book of John Calvin’s (1509-1564 AD) *Institutes* – especially chapters 9 through 12).

Welch discusses the slide into addiction through five stages. The first two are being *unprepared* and developing a *friendship* with a particular vice (he refers to this as sin). We then move to the stages of *infatuation* and then onto *love and betrayal* (this he calls slavery). Finally, we end up in *worship* (which he calls addiction). Ironically, once addicted, we try to numb our shame with the very substance we are addicted to. And since we become what we worship, the consequences spill over and affect every other area of our life—work, relationships, spiritual life, and health. Eventually this whole process leads to death and, since this is exactly what the *Father of Lies* wants, it should come as no surprise that the number one defense tactic of the addict is to lie about their situation. Only by understanding what Christ’s grace has accomplished can we move beyond simply fleeing from sin and onto hating our sin and fighting against it “violently”.

Welch’s book doesn’t only deal with personal addictions, but it also talks about helping others face their addictions. Chapter five is a good chapter on how to talk to a spouse or a child struggling with an addiction and even scripts out approaches to those conversations. Each chapter also ends with a “Practical Theology” section which lists specific things to do under the categories of “As you face your own Addiction” and “As you help someone else.”

One area I found myself disagreeing with the author was his belief that AA programs do not go far enough and present a sub-Christian worldview. The latter part of that statement is where I take issue. Other than the “unknown God” of AA and the references to addiction as a “disease” I have a difficult time seeing how AA presents a sub-Christian worldview. (For the original creators of AA dis-ease meant sin, but I agree that many now interpret it biologically). I find AA to be profoundly Christian, and once you recognize that Jesus is the “Power Greater than yourself” and recognize that our dis-ease is our sinful nature, I believe we would have much healthier Christians and churches if every Christian were to live out the steps of AA with their own “high places”. In this way, we could go beyond simply being like the good kings of the OT, but would be sanctified by the *King of kings* and smash our idols.