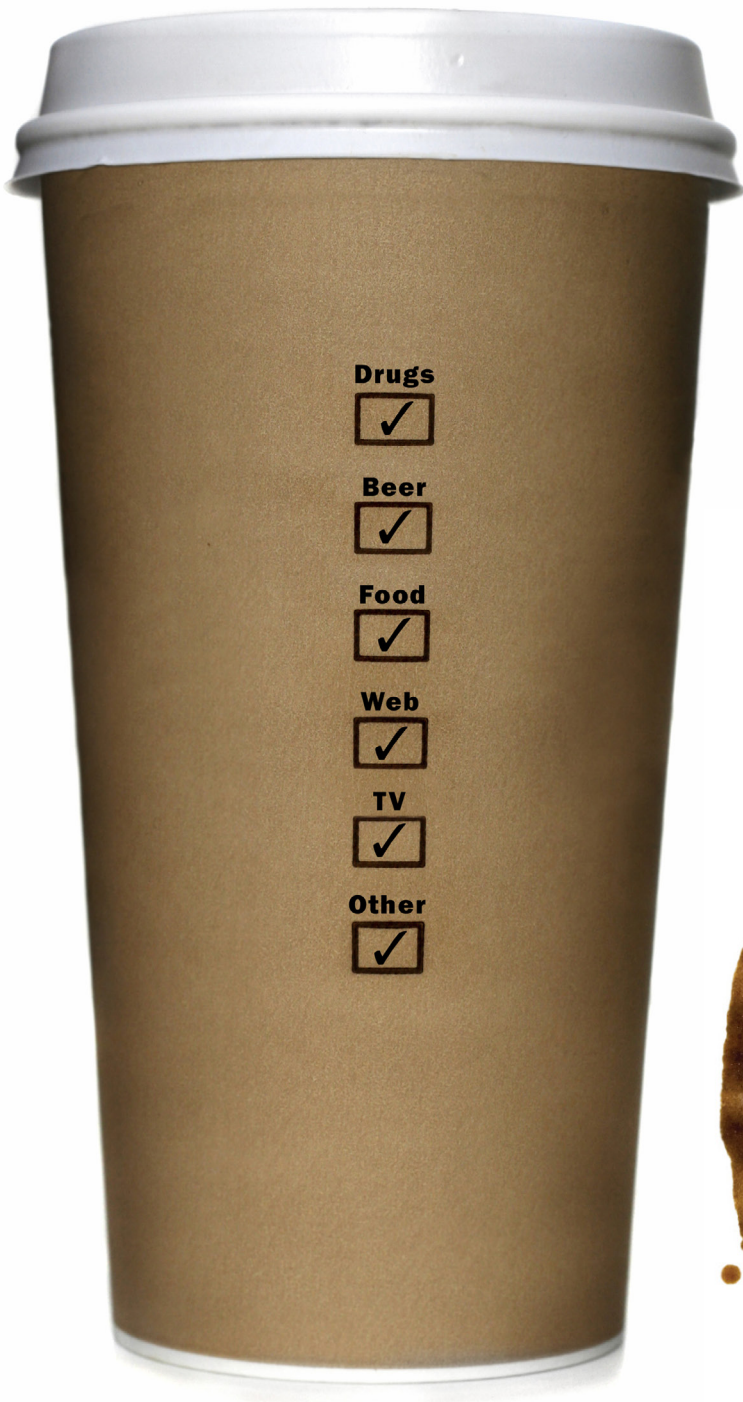


THE SURVEY SAYS // 20 REASONS TO SAY NO // THE WAY OUT // TOTAL CONTROL

# lifechange

THE ADDICTIONS ISSUE



**FREE**  
**AT LAST**

**WARNING**  
**SIGNS**



**BEGIN**  
**YOUR**  
**LIFECHANGE**

# contents

## ADDICTIONS ISSUE

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Special thanks to many members and friends of LifeChange/Weymouth Church who have contributed time, prayer, money and expertise to make this issue of LifeChange Magazine possible.

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LifeChange Magazine is published as a free gift to our community. The purpose of this publication is to share the life-changing principles of the Bible in a friendly, practical format. "The Addictions Issue" is fifth in a six-part series of LifeChange Magazines offering Christian, non-denominational perspective on life issues.

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### MISS SOMETHING?

Previous issues of LifeChange can be downloaded from our website and hard copies can be requested from the church office as long as supplies last. We have action teams available to assist you with overcoming stress, working through marriage and relationship problems, digging out of debt, dealing with past hurts and seeking freedom from various addictions.

You can submit prayer requests and ask spiritual questions by visiting our website or calling our office.

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# FREEDOM IS POSSIBLE

If there is one lie that people believe about addiction it is this: *there's no escape.* That's why so many of us will go so far to feed our addictions – even losing our families, jobs, and futures. Once we believe there is no escape, we lose hope. And when we lose hope, we start losing everything else.

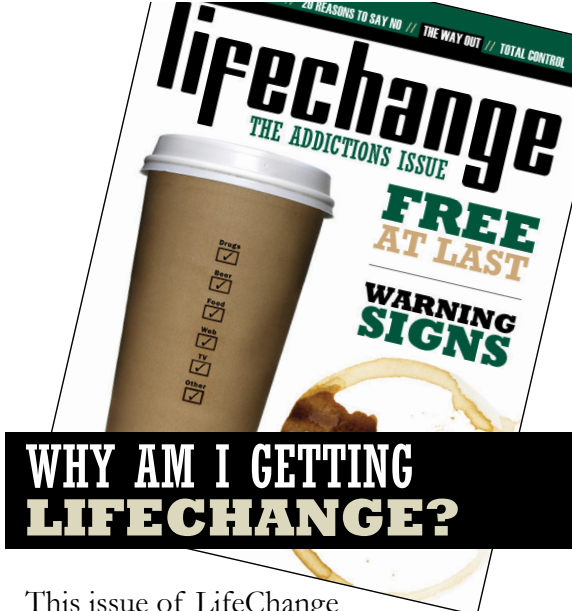
At LifeChange, we believe that change is possible, and that those who are living defeated, hopeless and addicted lives are much closer to freedom than they might think. In fact, we've watched people be set free from years of destructive addiction as they gave their lives to God and started to follow the basic principles of the Bible.

We also know that we weren't created to face the struggles of life on our own. We need the encouragement, prayer and

help of others who have walked the road to freedom before us. That's why we aren't just printing a magazine on addictions – we also have formed a team of people who know what it takes to be free, each of whom is willing to pray with you, answer questions, share their story, and offer biblical direction and encouragement.

The choice then, is yours. Many addicts that we've talked to have said that there were times in life when they were willing to listen, and other times when they simply dismissed the attempts of their friends to help. We hope and pray that today you are willing to listen and to make the first-step choice that could transform your future, and that of your family. That choice is to pray, **"Lord, as I read through this magazine, would You show me the answers I need so that I can be free from my addiction? I'm willing to do what it takes. But I need Your help."**

## AT LIFECHANGE, WE BELIEVE THAT CHANGE IS POSSIBLE, AND THAT THOSE WHO ARE LIVING DEFEATED, HOPELESS AND ADDICTED LIVES ARE MUCH CLOSER TO FREEDOM THAN THEY MIGHT THINK.



## WHY AM I GETTING LIFECHANGE?

This issue of LifeChange has been sent out, free of charge, to every household in Medina and a few surrounding areas as well. It has been written and designed right here in our community by members of LifeChange/Weymouth Church. We're not out to get anything from you, there's no obligation on your part at all. It's just a gift.

We've seen time and time again how God changes lives through biblical principles. Our prayer is that by sharing these with our friends and neighbors, we can make a positive difference in Medina and beyond.

Previous issues have addressed money management, overcoming stress, experiencing forgiveness and enriching love relationships. If you would like back copies of LifeChange magazines, we would be happy to provide them as long as our supplies last. Or, if you like, you can download digital copies at [www.LifeChangeMedina.com](http://www.LifeChangeMedina.com).

If you or someone you love is struggling with addictions, our church has a dedicated team ready to pray for you and offer you encouragement. Many of them have experienced freedom from addictions personally or have lived through the pain of an addicted loved one. They can help. Call or email us to learn more.

## GET CONNECTED TO LIFECHANGE

Like "LifeChange/Weymouth Church" and share your ideas.

Follow "@lifechange44256" for helpful reminders and verses.

Watch Videos of local families on the LifeChangeMagazine Channel.

Visit our church. For service times and locations, call (330) 723-1750.

Pray at the Medina Square Gazebo, Summer Thursdays at noon. Be prayed for, and join others in praying - along with believers from across Medina.







## MIKE

Way back in the mid-eighties, our son Mike confessed to us that he had a drug addiction. We had no idea. Me being a teacher and my husband Ken being a policeman, we should have seen the signs. But we were in denial with our own son.

Right away, we admitted Mike into rehab and he was there for six weeks. That was tough on all of us. I remained strong through the whole ordeal, but several weeks later I had a nervous breakdown. I was in and out of the hospital for several weeks. Our family was in turmoil, but we stuck close together and close to the Lord. We have a son who is four years younger than Mike who was a real trouper. He had to give up a lot of his activities because of all the meetings that we had to go to at the rehab hospital. We couldn't figure out why Mike turned to drugs. He had a wonderful home life.

With lots of prayers, Mike came out of rehab very strong. He even did some public speaking, which was amazing because Mike was a very quiet person.

He went to college in Lima to study refrigeration. He got good grades his first year. Then, he took his motorcycle to Lima for the summer. The day after he took it he got in a terrible accident. Mike's leg was all torn up and the boy riding on the back was killed. The doctors operated for twelve hours to save Mike's leg. He was in the hospital all summer, first in

Lima and then at Southwest near Cleveland. In the fall I needed to go back to teaching, so our wonderful Weymouth Church family took turns coming in our home and sitting with Mike. He advanced from the bed to a wheelchair to a walker and then to a cane. For the next twenty years, Mike lived with physical and emotional pain. He became hooked on pain killers. His addiction cost him his marriage and several jobs.

After awhile, Mike became immune to most pain killers. The one that finally helped him was a patch which was very strong. These patches are quite expensive, and Mike was off of them for four months. When he got a new box, he put on a full dosage not thinking that they were out of his system. He never woke up the next morning. His heart couldn't take it.

This was six years ago. We miss Mike so much. We hurt. Mike was 39 years old when he left us. He will not be here to walk his daughter down the aisle when she gets married. He won't be here to see his grandchildren. Our hearts are hurting, but we know Mike is in Heaven, based on his acceptance of Christ when he was younger. Knowing where he is gives us comfort and peace, and God gives us strength to get through each day. We are looking forward to joining Mike in Heaven someday.

## BRUNSWICK

"Addiction" I thought, "Well, I certainly know about that!" I grew up in a decent enough area, Brunswick

to be exact, and I would spend every other weekend with my dad. Now, my dad was a drinker, just like my grandpa (who died from it when I was young). My mother's side of the family liked to drink every time there was a gathering and so I grew up thinking alcohol was *normal*. At the age of twelve I got my first shot at being *normal*, and I thought I had arrived. I spent the next twenty years drinking myself into broken relationships, jails, pain, sorrow, and a lot of guilt. As it all piled up, I would drink to find peace of mind. And the cycle kept spinning around and around. During the last half of those years I tried desperately to figure out how to CHANGE. I read every self-help book I could find, I attended intensive outpatient counseling and inpatient counseling several times, and became a regular A.A. attendee.

Nothing seemed to work. No matter how hard I tried, I kept going back to the bottle. Then, something did happen . . .

I was in jail, again, but this time I heard the truth about myself, and the truth about *change and freedom--freedom from myself!* That truth is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. After hearing this dear lady reaching out to me, and others in my situation, with the words of Jesus, "God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for Him, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs . . . God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted," I realized, by God's amazing grace, that I needed HIM. I desperately needed this Jesus she was

telling us about. I asked her how I could know Him, and she lead me in a *life changing* prayer! That day I met Jesus Christ, my Savior and Lord.

Was my life made perfect that day? No. But from that very day forward I was a changed person. Jesus Christ, my Savior, has completely changed my life! HE is truth. *AND THE TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE!*

## INTERMISSION

Galatians 5:1, "It was for freedom that Christ has set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery."

Addictions are slavery, bondage. Whether the addiction is food or alcohol or drugs, or whatever, we are chained to our addiction, as a yoke on oxen. The yoke is heavy and only becomes heavier. We need more and more, yet we are never satisfied. The cost is financially, emotionally, relationally more than we ever planned to pay. We only find despair and emptiness trying to fill our souls with that which does not satisfy.

That was *me* ~ in bondage to food, with lots of excuses. The bottom line is that I was sinning, filling up my soul with food rather than with the Lord. But there was good news! What? There is a Solution for my sin! Jesus, through the cross, died for my sin. He has set me free! No more yoke ~ no more chains! Regardless of the addiction, there is hope. Hope in Jesus! I am living proof.





# BEGIN YOUR LIFE CHANGE / DAN JARVIS

A good friend of mine, who I'll call Frank, struggled with drugs since his early teens and ended up in prison. Upon release, he had every intention of putting his habit away for good.

Frank did everything I could have asked him to do. He was avoiding the areas of town that made him stumble. He was coming to church and Bible study multiple times per week. He hung around at my house on off-days. He was holding down a decent job. Things were looking up in Frank's world. I remember him sitting at my kitchen table and saying, for the first time in a long time, that he felt *good* about his life.

Then, while attending drug rehab classes, he met a woman who led him back into the drug scene. Within a week, the police caught him.

Upon release from another prison term, Frank did well temporarily, but in a moment of weakness he used again, and died of an overdose, leaving his family behind.

What is it about us and our addictions? What keeps us enslaved to things that destroy our lives, tear apart our families, and ruin our relationship with God?

All of us have experienced the pull of addictions in one way or another: overeating, gossip, television, alcohol, pornography, drugs, lust, greed and any number

of other things. No matter how long you've struggled, or how deep the addiction is embedded in your heart, you can find liberty. It begins with God.

The Bible says it this way: "Once we, too, were foolish and disobedient. We were misled and became slaves to many lusts and pleasures. Our lives were full of evil and envy, and we hated each other. But when God our Savior revealed his kindness and love, he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy." (Titus 3:3-4)

How do we get mercy from God? We have to cry out to Him and ask for help. Through Jesus, God offers this new life to those willing to repent and put their faith in him. From there, he works to transform us into the type of people we were created to be – free from bondage.

Most of us don't experience "instant" deliverance from temptation – we have to work hard and over a long period of time to be fully free. And as Frank's story sadly illustrates, the stakes are very high. So what should we do first?

**Admit where we've been wrong, and admit that we need God's help.**

What we all wish for, of course, is an easy way out of our addictions, a 1-2-3 formula with guaranteed success. Anyone who's tried quitting anything can tell you that it's not that simple.

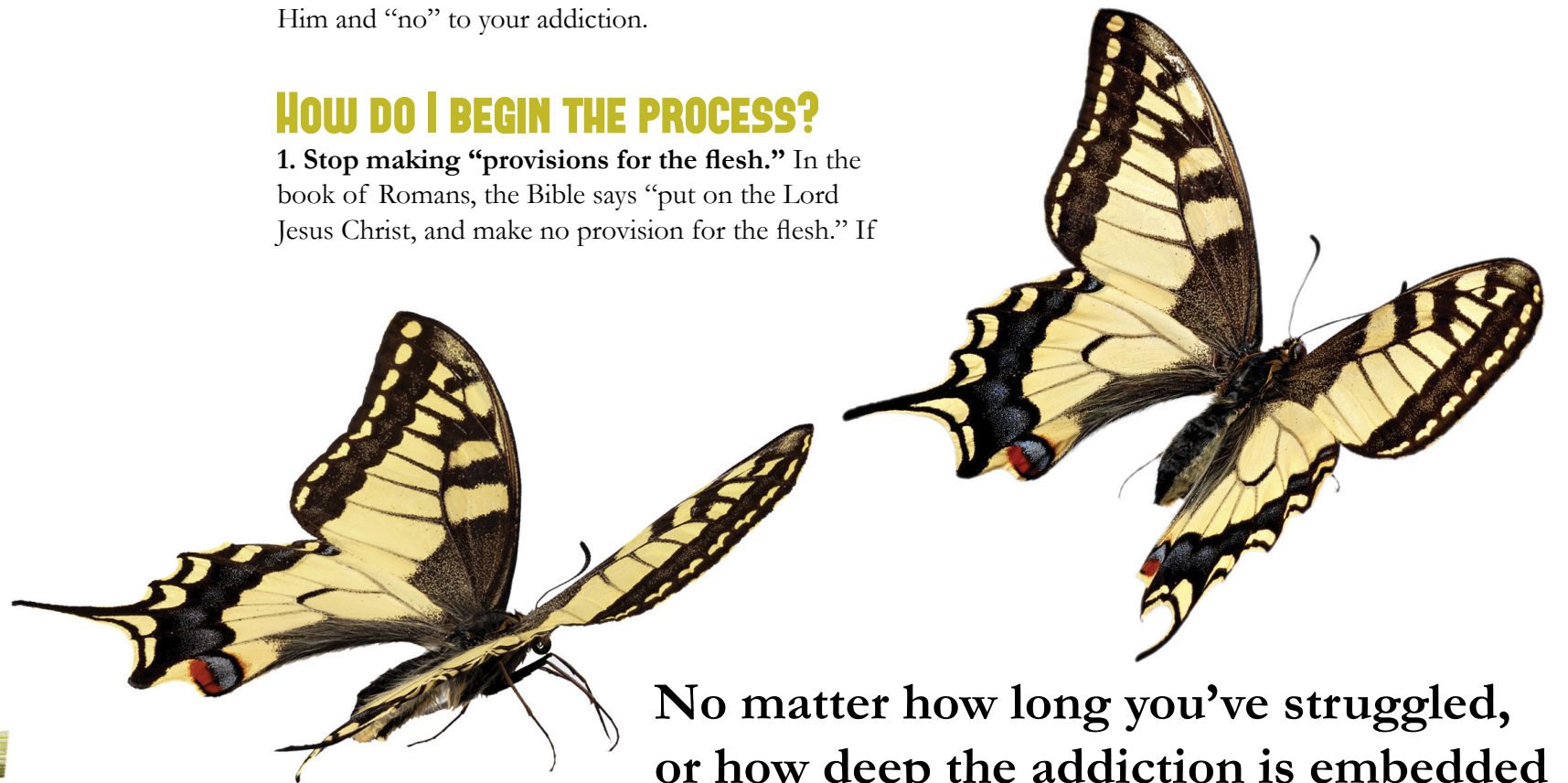
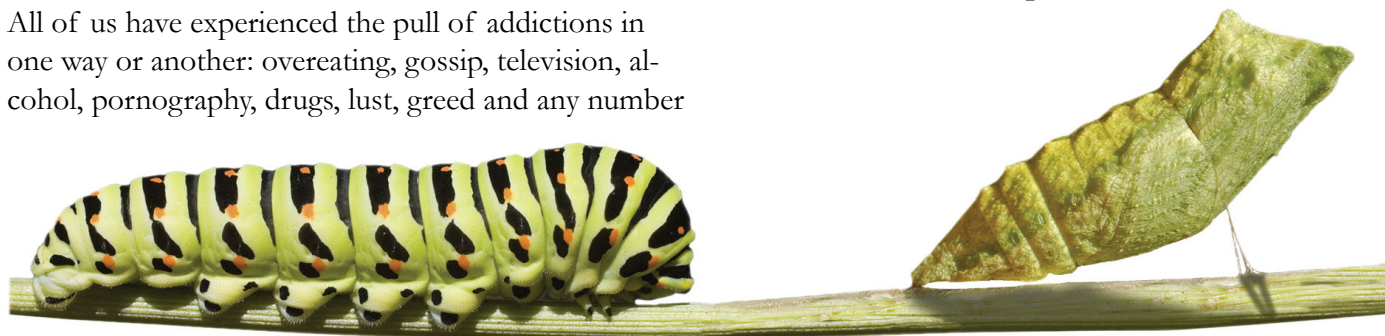
At first, trying to quit will seem painfully difficult and take all the energy you have. But as you start winning victories, the tide will turn. Over time, it will get easier to say "no" to temptation and to start replacing your addiction with new habits, and in time you will be less and less tempted to fall back. To win these battles, God can equip you, love you, empower you, and guide you, as long as you'll make the choice to say "yes" to Him and "no" to your addiction.

## HOW DO I BEGIN THE PROCESS?

**1. Stop making "provisions for the flesh."** In the book of Romans, the Bible says "put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh." If

I'm going on a diet, should I lay up "provisions" of candy bars and cookies in the pantry? Of course not! Those "provisions" will be calling my name in the first weak moment. If I'm serious about overcoming addictions, I'll have to get rid of the things that lead me to fall. Whatever your addiction may be, ask yourself, "Do I have provisions around my house or workplace that feed my habit?"

**2. Practice radical amputation.** That doesn't sound like much fun, does it? Jesus taught this figurative principle in his famous Sermon on the Mount, and, fun



**No matter how long you've struggled, or how deep the addiction is embedded in your heart, you can find liberty. It begins with God.**



or not, it works. He told people that whatever caused them to sin should be cut out of their lives. I heard of one man who was hooked on immoral images he was downloading from the Internet. His addiction was ruining his marriage and stealing the joy out of his life. The only way he was able to break the bondage was to cancel his internet service. “But that’s kind of radical,” you might say. Right! Radical amputation! Ask yourself honestly, radically, if necessary, “What is the daily source of my temptations? What causes me to stay addicted?” Then, make the tough choice to get rid of it. Ask a trusted friend to keep you accountable, to make sure you follow through.

### 3. Begin replacing bad habits with good ones.

“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age ... “ (Titus 2:11-12, NIV). For some people it’s difficult to imagine life without their addictive behavior. Their assumption is that if you take away the booze, immorality or gossip, what’s the point?

I’ve been involved counseling teens from Medina’s Juvenile Detention Center over the years, and over and over again I get skeptical looks from them when I say that I enjoy my life. And that alcohol and drugs aren’t a part of it.

The irony is that they’re the ones sitting in jail, usually because of substance abuse, still clinging to the idea that the “fun” they have doing all this is worth any price – their family, their future, their reputation, or even the next five to fifteen years of their lives.

**Here’s my point: You have to find something better to do than continue your old way of life.**

The Bible says it clearly enough: “You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds;

and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness...” (Ephesians 4:22-24)

What will replace the hours and energy you spent on your habits? What will fill the longings in your heart that used to be band-aided by drinking, or pills, or porn, or a host of other things?

#### **Choose to love God instead of your addiction.**

We devote ourselves to the things we love. If you are a workaholic, alcoholic, or any other “holic,” offer yourself to God. Perhaps Jesus’ instruction to “love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength” is, at core, the real answer for the addicted. Get to know God personally. Let him be your passion.

#### **Choose to fill your life with meaning beyond self-pleasure.**

I met one broken young man, probably about 14, who told me that his mother loved the bottle more than she loved him. Even worse, she actually told him that. If we are to break the bondage of addiction, we must look past ourselves. We have to love others. No addiction is worth hurting the people we love. Start to do good things for people. Volunteer to help others in a community organization or church. Spend time outside with your kids. Stop making everything about you, and start looking at how you can serve. It is ironic, I know, but trust me: the moment we stop living for our own pleasure, we find real joy.

God wants you to be free from your addictions. His power can break the chains of habit and release you into a new life of fulfillment and productivity. His forgiveness can cleanse your past and transform your future. He created you for a far greater purpose than you realize.

### **WILL YOU BEGIN YOUR LIFE CHANGE TODAY?**

**Dan Jarvis** is a pastor at LifeChange/Weymouth and enjoys writing about the amazing grace God provides.

“If you think you are standing strong, be careful not to fall. The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, He will show you a way out so that you can endure.”

**The Bible**  
(1 Corinthians 10:12-13)



# DEBRA FEHSENFELD FREE AT LAST! From Eating Addiction to New Life

In my teenage years, I became a slave to **bulimia**.

I loved food, but I didn't want it to "catch up with me."

How delighted I was to find a way to eat endlessly without consequences—or so I thought. More and more of my life began to center around food binges.

I made my decisions about who I would be with, what I would do, and when I would do it based on my growing addiction.

No one knew, and my happiness seemed to depend on their not finding out. I lived for those binges. In those moments, I could live without limitations—except, of course, the swollen glands, the strained relationships, the wasted opportunities, and the perpetual sense of guilt and fear that I would be discovered. But I could eat anything I wanted!

Eventually, however, I began to desire a life beyond food. So I decided I would stop. I read books, obtained jobs, and chose college and graduate courses all with the primary purpose of learning how to be free from the chains of this relentless addiction.

And I would quit ... for a day, a week, even months, at times. But the addiction would never leave. When life became too hard, I would comfort myself by appointing a day for an uninterrupted binge. When that anticipated day was unwittingly disrupted by an unsuspecting friend or relative, or by some unanticipated circumstance, I experienced the ensuing restraint as an untamed beast experiences a cage. No matter how hard I tried, brief periods of abstinence were the best I could do. My mind and heart were literally obsessed by food.

During my years in graduate school, I began to feel concern for my soul. I felt so guilty. I knew that God was not pleased with what I was doing. I reasoned that even if He would tolerate my binging and purging, He certainly hated the lying, stealing, and manipulating that came with it. These were essential, though, since secrecy was my only means of "peaceful" continuance. What an absolutely miserable existence!

After completing graduate school, a Jesus-following lady hired me to transcribe her personal journals. As I read of her failures and battles with self-indulgence, I saw an unmistakable difference. Her happiness was in God. My happiness was in food. When she struggled, she responded by ultimately forsaking the sinful indulgence out of greater love for God. When I struggled, I turned from God and His ways out of greater love for food.

All I could do was groan to God. I felt it would kill me to permanently stop practicing bulimia. It would mean giving up all of what I knew and loved (though also hated) about life. I could not do that. I knew I couldn't.

About this same time, a guest speaker came to our church and shared his testimony of how God's power had set him free from the sin of gluttony. I was surely the most attentive person present that day! When he said, "If you want to stop sinning, memorize Bible verses," I began immediately. It didn't work in the magical, instantaneous way I had hoped, but I kept on in sheer desperation. I spent hour upon hour, day after day memorizing, reading, studying, and meditating on the Bible. I continued to groan and plead with God for help, for freedom.

My desire for freedom increased all the more as I came to see more and more the beauty of Christ, and the peace and happiness that surely belonged to all who could walk with Him freely. But that was not yet my privilege. Would it, could it ever be? I wondered and hoped.

One day in the midst of study, the first of several links in the chains of my bondage was broken. For a long time I had known that the word *gospel* meant "good news," yet it wasn't until this moment that it dawned on me why "good news" was the phrase used for describing the work of Christ. Christ had died for sin. By His death He freed me from the penalty of sin. This much I knew. But by His resurrection, new life had come for all who turned to Him in faith.

What I realized in that moment was that Jesus was the One with the power to make me free, and He would do it by making me altogether new! I knew from hard experience that I could never stand against the power

bulimia had over me. I would be its slave forever. My only hope was the possibility that the old me would die and be remade, reborn, a new person in Christ.

As I responded to God in faith, I began to experience a new desire. Before this time, I had always wanted to be free so that I could live without hindrance. For the first time, I wanted to be free so that I could love my God and Savior with all my heart and soul—the way He deserves! Something had indeed changed.

So, did I quit practicing bulimia from that day forward? No. In fact, I betrayed my new Master many times. But something about even the process of failure was incredibly different. He remained faithful to me. He blessed me so richly every time I was in His presence that I came to love His presence. And captivated in this way continually, I found myself binging and purging less and less frequently, until one day I realized I didn't need to practice it at all. I was happy without it.

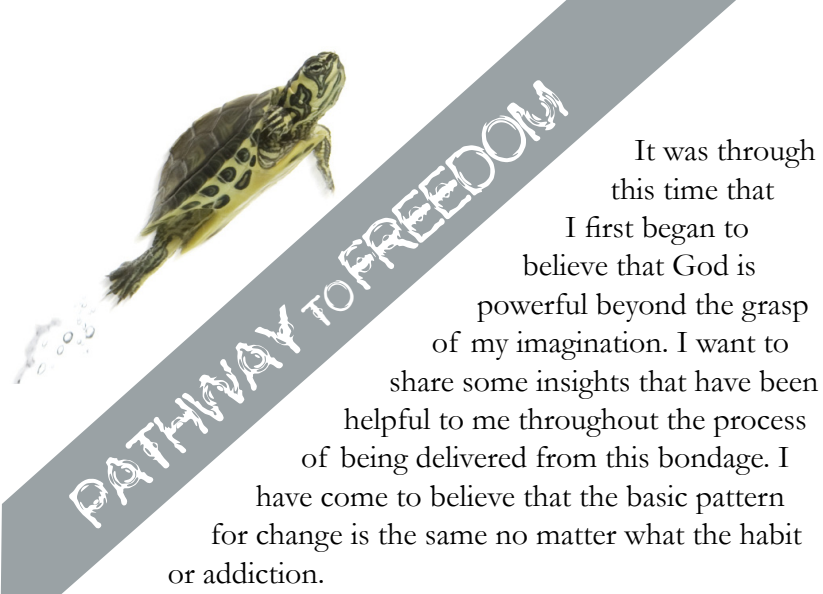
I never could have imagined it possible, but the truth had set me free! Jesus had become more important, more satisfying, and more desirous than the sweetest, most appealing of foods!

That was about fifteen years ago, and I am still free. Do I ever feel old desires creeping in? Yes. Do I ever think too much about food? Sometimes. But I am experiencing the amazing grace and invincible power of God, who is remaking me in every way. Because He has freed me and I am being freed still, I know that one day I will be completely, altogether freed—made perfectly like Jesus with no distractions, no impulse toward sin, in order to serve, worship, and love Him forever!

There is not a day that passes that I don't marvel at what He has done for me. Yes, the gospel is "good news." It is indeed the power of God unto salvation (freedom)! And yes, now I have a new obsession: freedom for all in Christ! "Because Your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you.... I will be fully satisfied as with the richest of foods" (Psalm 63:3-5).

Stopping the practice of bulimia was just the beginning of a whole new life, but it was an important beginning.





It was through this time that I first began to believe that God is powerful beyond the grasp of my imagination. I want to share some insights that have been helpful to me throughout the process of being delivered from this bondage. I have come to believe that the basic pattern for change is the same no matter what the habit or addiction.

### Cry Out to God

Tell Him, if you can honestly, that you hate the thing that has taken from Him your love and energy. Express your desire to give Him all your heart's affections. If you find yourself just saying words, without your heart and mind being engaged, admit that to Him. Be completely honest before your Savior. Honesty is essential for healing. Ask God to reveal to you the truth about your own heart.

### Trust God Today

Trust Him to help you this day to overcome. Do not tell yourself, "I am never again going to give way to this addiction." Rather, pray: "Help me, please, Lord; and by Your grace, I will obey You today." Trust Him to supply you with the strength, perseverance, and love that you need in order to obey Him today. Then prove your trust by making decisions and choices with love for God and His Word as your rule. We are changed and brought to freedom one day at a time.

### Avoid Triggers

There have been, more than likely, some particular practices that trigger a sequence of choices that end in finally giving way to your addiction. In my case, there were certain foods that I would not normally eat unless I was planning a binge/purge. Pay attention to what you do, say, and think about before you fall into sin. Although these things may not be wrong in themselves, while you are still so vulnerable to going back to your old master through habit, you must wait to reintroduce these practices into your life—and some you may never choose to allow again. This is simply part of the process of wanting freedom enough to ruthlessly make "no provision" for sin (Rom. 13:14).

### Be Saturated with the Truth

Memorize Bible verses (during exercise is a great time for this!); study; listen to sermons; read books to help you understand God's Word; praise Him because of the truth you are discovering. Do everything you can to get the truth of God into you. Feed on it. Savor it. Think about it just as you have done with your addiction. Just as your sin ascended to the high ground in your life, now let the Word of God overtake that ground!

But keep in mind that Bible knowledge alone does not free anyone. According to Hebrews 4:2, "The gospel was preached...but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it." Change and freedom come when you read, memorize, and study, believing God. You don't know when or how He will do what He promises, but you believe He will. You hold on to Him and His Word, obeying Him because you believe Him. You release your grip on things that you love, because you believe that what He has is better.

### Seize Pivotal Moments

It is in the midst of the most intense moments of temptation—those moments when everything in you feels drawn to doing what you have become accustomed to doing—that you have the opportunity to embrace and cling to God's grace to break those habits. When you feel the old, familiar draw, you can be sure you will do what you have been doing unless you purposefully do something different. The "something different" can be any number of things—play with your children, pray for someone, pay bills, write a letter, go for a walk ... It ought to be something active, not just mental.

Do "something different" while depending on God, praising Him and reminding yourself afresh of the truth that you have come to believe:

His love is more satisfying than the temporary pleasures of sin!

Debra has an M.A. in counseling. She has been married for 16 years and has 4 children. This testimony originally appeared in Revive Magazine, and has been adapted for use in LifeChange with permission from the publisher.



### Consider this before you feed your addiction:

1. My addiction goes against everything God wants me to become.
2. Jesus died to save me from sins, like this addiction.
3. I'll feel guilty and dirty if I do it.
4. This won't really satisfy me.
5. Once I do this, I'll wish I hadn't.
6. This will hurt other people that I love and care for.
7. This will hurt God's reputation, especially if I'm known as a Christian.
8. I will come under the discipline of God.
9. This addiction will rob me of my potential in life.
10. It will waste precious, God-given time.

11. Eventually, someone will find out.
12. God sees everything I do, say, and think.
13. It will keep me from fulfilling the purpose of my life.
14. I have more important things to do.
15. This addiction will distract me from my spiritual focus.
16. It will rob me of heavenly rewards.
17. The devil wants me to do it.
18. There will be real consequences to this, some of which I don't even realize.
19. God will hold me accountable.
20. I really love God, so why would I want to disobey Him?

Verses for Reflection: 1 John 2:1-17, Galatians 5:19-24.





*‘It’s unbelievable, the power drugs have over someone. I will do anything to get a fix.’*

smoking, drinking, and eating. The choice to use and then crave an activity or substance seems to spread from one thing to another. That’s bad news! It means that people need help overcoming, not just one, but multiple areas of bondage. It could also suggest that addictions are the result of unchecked behavior that, over time, leads the person on to other unchecked behavior. When self-will runs riot over self-control, the results can quickly spill over into more than one area. In other words, whatever the Self wants, the Self gets. Until it is too late.

**Medina County is not immune to the so-called “harder drugs.”** Out of the 42 inmates surveyed, 15 admitted they can’t stop smoking marijuana, 8 can’t stop using heroin, and 13 were addicted to psychiatric or pain medications. Two men mentioned Ecstasy and four people checked that

they were using crystal methamphetamines uncontrollably. Then there were 26 men and women who mentioned alcohol as having taken over their lives.

The majority of people completing the survey (5 out of 7 women and 22 out of 35 men) said they were addicted to smoking cigarettes. **When asked which came first, cigarettes or drugs and alcohol, the most frequent answer was, not surprisingly, cigarettes.** Parents need to take note of this because clearly cigarettes are a “gateway” drug that takes a child unaware and leads them down a path they certainly won’t want to go. The survey revealed that some people started smoking as early as nine years old, with another illegal substance introduced in the same year or soon thereafter. If a child is caught smoking cigarettes, parents need to realize that a rebellion against

legal authority has begun, and should be vigilant in working through the issue so that the child’s rebellion does not escalate.

Who helps children and teens get ahold of these substances? **Out of 42 responders, 21 said they were introduced to their addiction by a close friend, 10 mentioned a family member getting them started, and 9 said it was a school acquaintance.** These answers speak for themselves. When a child’s closest relationship circle is using, they will follow soon enough. One twenty-something who was addicted to pain killers mentioned to me that it was her mother who kept her supplied as a way of compelling her obedience.

When asked how addicts got access to their drug of choice, 12 said the substance was available in their home and 19 said they received drugs from a friend. This statistic begs the question, “Can a drug dealer really be a friend?” I was once attending the funeral of a young man who overdosed on cocaine. A drug dealer later said to me, “I was taking good care of my boy. If only he hadn’t gone to Akron. I always made sure he didn’t go too far.” Of course, the drug dealer didn’t grasp that it was his relationship with the deceased that made it easy for him to obtain cocaine in the first place.

Four inmates confessed that they routinely stole to get the money for their habit, while 18 said they worked to be able to support their drug or alcohol use. These same hard workers, however, had trouble on the job. Twenty-one people from the survey said that their substance abuse had caused them to miss work and 18 were fired for it. Clearly, **drugs take their toll personally and even in the broader economic picture of our community. Employers don’t want to hire known drug users, and so a vicious cycle begins.** Drugs lead to incarceration, which in turn leads to loss of employment, and then there is difficulty finding a new job, so the drug dealing begins again with another incarceration, difficulty finding work, drug dealing... and on and on it goes.

When looking at the serious repercussions of addiction, a disturbing pattern became apparent. **No matter what the consequences of the addiction, whether it be losing family, incarceration, or even a near-death experience, the need to fulfill**

**Larry and Sue Jarvis have served as chaplains at the Medina County Jail for nearly two decades. In preparation for this edition of LifeChange, they surveyed some of the inmate population regarding addictions. Sue reports:**

The results of our survey showed clear patterns among people whose addictive lifestyle has led to arrest or incarceration. As a jail chaplain of nineteen

years, I see the progression of people’s addictions and view the resulting devastation up close and personal. While our polling was not scientific, it does represent real people from Medina County – your neighbors and mine.

We believe that *an addiction is any activity or substance you partake of at first by choice, but later by compulsion, without thought of its effect on anyone but yourself.* Keeping this in mind while viewing the survey results allows some observations to be made and, hopefully, some principles to be learned that can protect family and friends.

First, **most people with a destructive habit have more than just one.** Most respondents listed groups of addictions – cigarettes and marijuana; cigarettes, beer, and internet porn; or cocaine, ecstasy, and heroin; or



**that craving overrode everything.** One girl commented, “It’s unbelievable, the power drugs have over someone. I will do anything to get a fix.” This girl listed cigarettes, crystal meth, alcohol, crack, psych meds, marijuana, and heroin as drugs she could not stop using. Apart from a miracle of God, she is a walking overdose waiting to happen. Another female who answered the survey and had severe drug problems as well, scrawled across the bottom of the paper, “HELP ME!”

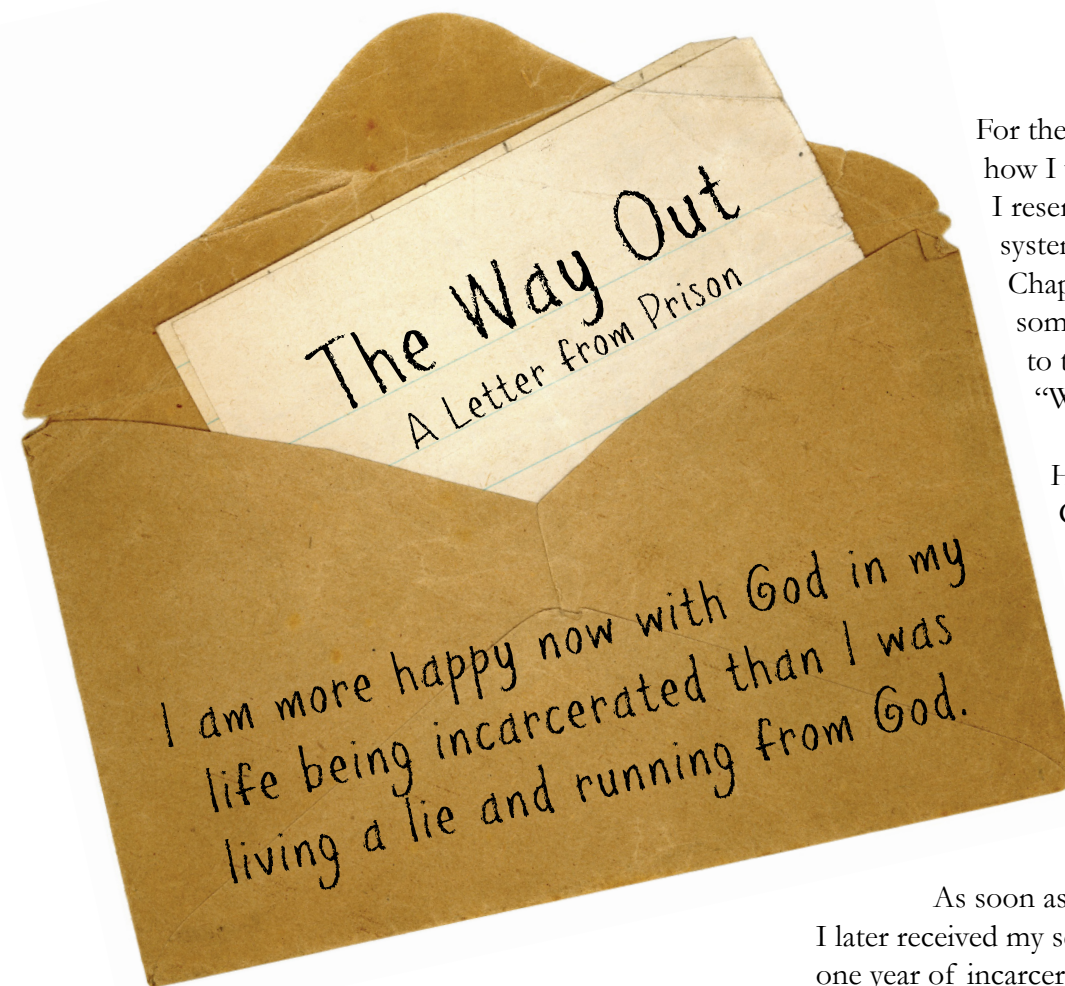
**Drug use isn’t something you simply “grow out of.”** Many people are incarcerated over and over for possession, paraphernalia, and selling. They either use until they die or they finally become so tired of the lifestyle that they’ll do whatever it takes to change. Consider what this 56-year-old woman addicted to cigarettes and alcohol wrote: “Everyone has different issues to blame addictions on. Growing up and seeing both sides of the family drinking and mostly having a good time, but then sometimes fighting, I thought it was a way of life. Most (of the family) are dead now, but I’m still trying to find the ‘fun.’ It’s not working too good.”

One 31-year-old male who loves his marijuana and his gambling has no plans to stop either activity. He rightfully notes, “You can’t stop unless you wanna!” Another guy who admitted issues with everything from cigarettes, x-rated videos, and tattoos to ecstasy, cocaine, and heroin sadly pointed out that, “Jail is not helping...” He said, “We need more drug programs!

We need someone who is going to listen to us. We need someone to feel our pain, because it runs deep.” Another man, a 32-year-old, addicted to cigarettes, alcohol, and crystal meth, has tried quitting for the last four years. He has tried will power, counseling, and inpatient rehab, all to no avail. He writes, “It (alcohol) has totally ruined my life for the last fourteen years...” and now he is sitting in jail hoping that time away from the booze will help.

**Recognizing that the desire to quit is not enough, and that counseling or expensive rehabs don’t have all the answers either, the questions for our generation and our community become, “What will work? What can help an addict desiring freedom?”**

The LifeChange Addictions Response Team believes that a Biblical approach to this heartbreaking, home-wrecking issue can offer the kind of help these addicts need. To put the whole man or woman back together after the trauma of addiction requires the help of God Himself. Indeed, He has given human beings everything they need for a life of dignity and freedom. **The Bible is the timeless instruction manual** filled with power to change the self-centered heart of the addict and **the Holy Spirit is the counselor** who has seen and heard it all. **Jesus Christ is the sponsor who would do anything to set the captive free;** in fact, He died so that every person might be set free from those things that bind him or her. He (Jesus) is always there, encouraging and empowering every man and woman to live that new life that, while deep in the alcohol and drug usage, always seemed impossible. True life change is just a prayer away!



For the first nine days I kept planning how I was going to catch my next high. I resented everything about the court system. Then, on the ninth day, the Chaplain Larry spoke to me and read some Bible verses about the need to turn to God. I asked the pastor, “Why did God do this to me?”

He said that this was the only way God could get my attention, the only way I would turn to Him. He explained that you can believe in Christ instead of returning to your sinful ways. I woke up the next morning with a change of attitude, like a spiritual awakening. I asked God for help and I received it!

As soon as I got out of jail, I became sober. I later received my sentence for the charges and I got one year of incarceration. I was sad at first, but this time I was spiritually fit to make it through. I came to realize that this was God’s will for me and that I have to carry it out to the best of my ability. In the Bible it says that the troubles we endure are minor when compared with the life God will give us in eternity.

Right now I am writing this from Mansfield (prison), with nine more months left in my sentence. I am more happy now with God in my life being incarcerated than I was living a lie and running from God. I only wish I could have found the Lord sooner, before everything happened the way it did. - Andy

**I** experienced a nasty addiction at the age of 19. I grew up in Medina and lived a life that many teenagers dream about. I graduated with a 3.7 GPA and attended Tri-C. I continued to excel in college, graduating with a General Motors Certification and an associate degree in Applied Science.

My addiction began with prescription medications I had been given after breaking some bones in a dirt bike accident. After graduating college I started working for a GM dealership. I was making good money – but I was living a double life.

I thought I had my addiction under control and that I was outsmarting everybody, including God. Soon I began to spiral out of control and to lose everything I cared about. I didn’t want help, in fact, I became depressed and resented God for the life he was giving me. I finally received a blessing from God – I got picked up on a secret indictment for three counts of drug trafficking, and spent 14 days in Medina County Jail.



Setting Captives Free is an online ministry designed to help individuals overcome various addictions. Learn more at [www.SettingCaptivesFree.com](http://www.SettingCaptivesFree.com).



# TOTAL CONTROL

AN INTERVIEW WITH DEL FEHSENFELD, COUNSELOR AND PASTOR

## ADDICTIONS HOLD SUCH CONTROL OVER PEOPLE. HOW DO YOU HELP?

First we have to be honest about the reason why we got addicted. We turned to something that gave us an immediate and powerful reward; we thought it would make us happy or satisfied. In the short term, an addictive substance or activity does seem to do this. So we keep going back to it.

By the time I talk to someone with an addiction (who is really wanting help), the thing that started out being rewarding and useful in their life has now started to consume so much of them that it is destructive. They find themselves out of control, full of shame and guilt. They start to realize that what is required to achieve satisfaction is coming at too great a cost.

## I SUPPOSE NON-ADDICTED PEOPLE MIGHT NOT UNDERSTAND THE POWER OF THESE THINGS. IF THE HABIT IS DOING DAMAGE, WHY NOT JUST GET RID OF IT?

On the one hand a person might say, “This is the worst thing that has ever happened to me,” but on the other hand, they feel like each fix is the best thing that has ever happened to them. It is sad, but to an addicted person, they may believe that their habit is the best and only source of satisfaction they can get. So, how easy is it for someone to just “give up” the only reliable source of fulfillment they know of? It is so much more than just stopping a behavior. They have to find something else that can be their savior – that can make them comfortable or peaceful or happy. Even though the addiction is destroying them, this is how they feel.

Generally speaking, once an addiction has taken root, a person has organized their entire life around getting access to the addiction. And, because the person has defined their lives on this basis, they start lying to protect it. Ethics change. Relationships take second place to the addiction. There is a lot of hiding, because they believe secrecy is necessary to maintain their access. Shame and guilt also keep them in the shadows, because they don’t want to feel the embarrassment of others knowing how advanced their habit has become.

I’ve never met anyone who is addicted who has not also given themselves over to lying at so many levels. It is very difficult for an addict to tell the truth; if they were to do that they would be giving up control, and perhaps even their “freedom” to continue the addiction.

## AS SOMEONE'S LIFE BECOMES DEFINED BY AN ADDICTION, DOESN'T THAT HURT THEIR FAMILY? DON'T ADDICTS CARE ABOUT THEIR LOVED ONES' FEELINGS?

It is hard for the people around them to realize that while the addict may indeed love them, he just loves something else even more. Sometimes we can feel outrage or hurt at this, but for the addict, it feels necessary for survival. Everything else has to be sacrificed. The addiction has total control.

## SO WHAT IS THE ANSWER?

**The first step, and this sounds so simple, is that there has to be a humble, honest confession.** A person has to acknowledge the extent of the control their addiction has over them. They have to admit, “I am a slave to this.” They have to get honest about how it happens, where it happens, when it happens, and how often it happens.

People will generally not tell me everything about their addiction during their first discussion – but they’ll put a toe in the water by sharing some information, reserving some or most of the truth for themselves. They want freedom, but they aren’t willing to be truly honest. You can’t force a person to that place, you can only invite them to it. That’s why most people have to hit rock bottom before they will really embrace their brokenness and seek real help.

**Next, the person has to submit to God and to some caring people in his or her life** – and this is really *giving over control*. An addicted person must give up all the lies that have covered up their actions and admit the truth. It is often very painful for the people around them to realize how much has really been covered up. It is hard to hear that a loved one had completely reorganized his life to gain access to addictive substances or behaviors, and has kept so much of it hidden.

Then there’s another dynamic – I know people who are addicted to internet pornography, and who are willing to admit it and grovel, but they are still not willing to submit. In this case, they might voice a desire to give up the porn, but they won’t relinquish control over their computer to someone who could keep them accountable.

*I must be willing to admit that I’ve lost the ability to self-govern, and so I have to give over governance of my life to someone else...no matter how long it takes, even if it is for the rest of my life. This commitment starts*

with God, but it will also take human accountability to eliminate the access to the things that are killing the addict. I’ve never seen anyone get through an addiction without this kind of accountability.

## IN GOD'S WORD, WE READ ABOUT THE FREEDOM AVAILABLE IN CHRIST AND THE NEW LIFE THAT IS POSSIBLE FOR THOSE WHO OBEY HIM. WHAT BIBLE PASSAGES DO YOU SHARE WITH ADDICTS?

I often point them to Ephesians 4:17-32, where we read about our need to both “put off” evil and “put on” the life of Christ. What we’ve discussed so far is how to “put off” things we know are wrong. But once we have relentlessly, thoroughly closed off all the things that feed our “idol” (a biblical word for addiction), then we have to address the “put on.”

That leads us back to where we began: the function of the addiction in a person’s life.

Initially, the addiction did serve a purpose for the individual – dealing with boredom, finding exhilaration, coping with loss, sadness or depression, etc. – and so the addiction has been the source of hope and help for the person. It has in a very real sense, become their god.





In order to overcome an addiction then, you have to not only cut off what is destructive, but you have to discover what your new source of fulfillment and emotional life will be.

What will you do when you are sad, bored or angry? This is the “put on” side of the equation, where Jesus invites us to a whole new kind of life, an “abundant life” (John 10:10), a life of true rest (Matthew 11:28).

We have to learn how to organize our lives around Him instead of ourselves. This new reorganization places us close to Jesus and far from our addiction.

I must be willing to admit that I’ve lost the ability to self-govern; so I have to give over governance of my life to someone else.

This is where the real hope for long-term change is found. Satisfaction in the truest sense of the word is available to us.

“But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control. There

is no law against these things!” (Galatians 5:22-23)



## HOW ABOUT YOU?

Are you ready to start a new life with God? To give control of your life to Him, and to seek help in being released from the bondage of your addiction?

# 3

## HERE ARE THREE ACTION STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TODAY:

1. **READ** Romans 12-13 in the Bible.\* Make a to-do list for change based on these chapters.
2. **WRITE** down your own “confession” of what your addiction is, how much control over you it has, and what you do each day to maintain it.
3. **CALL** for help. If you don’t know who to call, you can start with the church at (330) 723-1750 and ask for the LifeChange Addictions Response Team.

**Del Fehsenfeld** is a family counselor and the senior editor for Life Action Ministries. His work involves individuals, families, and whole churches that are in need of spiritual renewal and restoration. ([www.LifeAction.org](http://www.LifeAction.org))

\* If you don’t have your own copy of the Bible, the church will gladly provide one to you free of charge. Or, you can find the text online at [www.BibleGateway.com](http://www.BibleGateway.com) or, on your mobile device, download the free *YouVersion* app.



## SHAME AND SECRECY

In 1969, I stumbled upon an issue of a pornographic magazine in the back room of a relative’s home. As a pre-teen, I was instantly hooked, and I couldn’t get enough.

As I approached adolescence, my desire for porn grew stronger and even though I was in a Christian family and going to church every Sunday, I was completely addicted. So I felt dirty. I felt like I was turning my back on God. But my lust grew.

Fast forward to the 1990’s and I’m married to my beautiful wife, Mona, and raising our three children. I have a modest home and a successful occupation, but since the internet came into our home, I found my old addiction growing in intensity. I would sometimes plan weeks in advance for times I could be home alone, just so I could look at the computer. I told my wife many lies, but even more, I was lying to myself.

This went on for years – a revolving door of guilt, shame and secrecy, all to serve a delusion that somehow I would be satisfied and happy by this. I got to the place where nothing on the computer could make me happy, nothing even made sense in my life anymore. I longed for the days when I had a joyful love for God, but those were long gone.

One night, in late 2002, I sat down at the computer after my family had left for church. But my overwhelming despair at the man I had become left me paralyzed at the keyboard. Nothing I thought about viewing that night even sounded interesting. I realized what I had known all along; in that moment – only Jesus could fill my emptiness and bring real joy to my soul. Porn never could, never would. And only Jesus could heal my broken relationships with my wife and kids.

The weight of that truth left me feeling so spiritually and emotionally void that I laid my head on the computer desk and just wept at how twisted and broken I was. My thoughts turned to a Bible verse that I had heard many times, but somehow reached my soul in that moment: “And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better to enter eternal life with only one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell.” (Matthew 18:9). So, I prayed, “God, I repent of my sin – *cause me to go blind* so I don’t have to fall to pornography anymore!”

Thankfully, God didn’t answer the first part of my prayer that night. He did, however, forgive me, and change me. But there was more asking for forgiveness that needed to be done. In Matthew 5:28, Jesus said: “Anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” So, in effect, I had sinned against my wife. I went to Mona and asked her forgiveness for all those years of sin. I am so grateful that she forgave me, and even told me about the endless hours of praying for me she had invested, not knowing how else to reach me. By the grace of God, we have been married 28 years and my love for my wife has grown immensely.

Webster defines “addiction” as, *Being abnormally tolerant to and dependent on something that is psychologically or physically habit-forming.*

That’s me. I fight this battle every day. I wish I were one of those “miracle healing” stories of people who leave their addiction in one single moment – but I’m not. I still face temptation, and every day I have to choose to fight against evil. I’m armed with God’s love and forgiveness, Bible verses I’ve memorized, friends who offer accountability, accountability software on my computer, and a loving wife who walks with me through the battles.

Is it worth it to fight? A thousand times YES! I am so grateful for my Life Changer, Jesus, and the fact that I can come to Him every day. - Chris

Chris is a member of the Addictions Response Team at the church. The team is available to counsel with those who have been hooked by the lure and false promises of porn. If you would like help, or someone to pray for you, contact them at [lifechange@weymouthchurch.com](mailto:lifechange@weymouthchurch.com).







**When you are doing it, you don't care about the consequences.** Doing this "feels so good" at the moment, that you are willing to set aside the hazards and potential negative fallout. It doesn't matter who disapproves, you are going to do it anyway.

**You hide the evidence of how much you do it.** The charges are on a separate card, the booze is in the bottom of your closet with your shoes, the drugs are under the toilet lid, and you clear your browsing history thoroughly.

**You lie to protect your involvement.** Lying while looking your loved ones right in the eye becomes second nature to you with, "Who me?" and, "No way," and "I'm just holding this for my buddy." Many people with addictions end up with a chronic lying problem as well, so this can really snowball.

**You start hanging out with like-minded people and the family wonders where you are.** A bar is filled with people who drink. Finding others who do drugs isn't that difficult if you know who you are looking for. Gamblers are at the racetracks. Shoppers are always shopping. You start lying about where you are, not just what you do.

**You start missing work.** You feel sick with a hang-over, a stomachache, a headache, or the shakes. You can hardly get out of bed. You don't fit in your uniform anymore. You just don't feel motivated. Not work...not today.

**You spend a lot of time thinking about it** when you aren't doing it. It isn't as thrilling as the activity itself, but it is a cheap substitute.

**You tell yourself, "One more won't hurt."** That one more that won't hurt always turns into two more and then three more. Soon you give up trying to resist and you are back to your addiction. It was a lie. One more really did hurt.

**You convince yourself that no one can tell.** This is another common self-deception that addicts harbor. Overeaters gain weight. Gamblers can't pay their bills. Meth addicts lose their teeth. Shoppers have overflowing closets and basements. Drunks get DUIs and lose their families. No kidding! Behaviors and appearances change. Those close to you can tell something is wrong.

**H**ave mercy on me, O God,  
because of your unfailing love.  
Because of your great compassion,  
blot out the stain of my sins.

Wash me clean from my guilt.  
Purify me from my sin.  
For I recognize my rebellion;  
it haunts me day and night.

Against you, and you alone, have I sinned;  
I have done what is evil in your sight.  
You will be proved right in what you say,  
and your judgment against me is just...

Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean;  
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.  
Oh, give me back my joy again;  
you have broken me—now let me rejoice.

Don't keep looking at my sins.  
Remove the stain of my guilt.

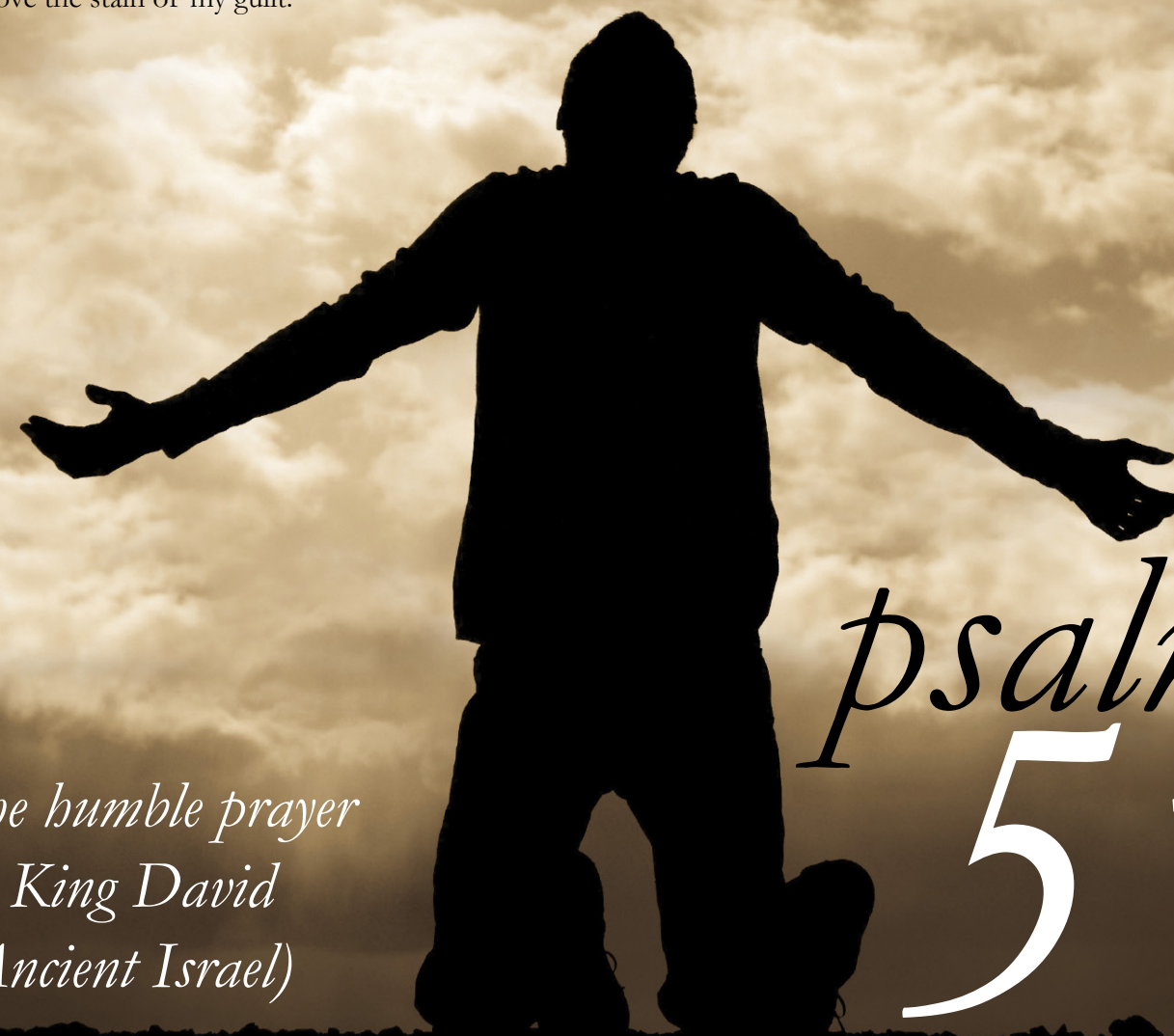
Create in me a clean heart, O God.  
Renew a loyal spirit within me.

Do not banish me from your presence,  
and don't take your Holy Spirit from me.  
Restore to me the joy of your salvation,  
and make me willing to obey you.

Then I will teach your ways to rebels,  
and they will return to you.  
Forgive me for shedding blood, O God who saves;  
then I will joyfully sing of your forgiveness.

Unseal my lips, O Lord,  
that my mouth may praise you.  
You do not desire a sacrifice, or I would offer one.  
You do not want a burnt offering.

The sacrifice you desire is a broken spirit.  
You will not reject a broken and repentant heart,  
O God.



*The humble prayer  
of King David  
(Ancient Israel)*



**"God designed us to live in freedom, to have self-control, to enjoy His creation, and to fulfill His purposes."**

H E L P D E S K



### **How should I handle a family member who is an addict?**

The first step is to determine if your family member is open to receiving help. As much as we would love to step into the lives of those we care for and force them to make wise choices, we can't. If they do seem open to addressing their addiction problem, you can offer to pray for them, take them to the hospital, point them toward helpful resources (pass them LifeChange Magazine!), offer to meet with them regularly for accountability, or attend church with them. It is likely that the individual is going to need a lot of grace, patience, positive

reinforcement, and daily strength. He or she is also going to need help filling up their calendar, which will help them avoid the temptation that comes during periods of boredom or loneliness.

If your family member is not open to help, or is unwilling to admit the gravity of their situation, you may need to commit to pray for that person and quietly influence them for good. There isn't much that can be done in the long run for people who still want to remain in bondage to their habit. It may be that, for your own sake, you'll need to commit the situation to God and simply love the person despite their failures.

### **What if I struggle with multiple addictions?**

The root of all addictive behavior is the same – seeking to satisfy our deepest desires with something other than what God intended. For one reason or another, we settle for cheap substitutes like drugs, porn, mindless entertainment, overspending, or other sad addictions rather than living the full, joyful and purpose-filled life that Jesus died to make possible.

Practically, it can be helpful to write down each behavior you know in your heart is holding you in captivity, then list the negative consequences that the addictions are each producing in your life. *How much is this costing me? Who is this hurting? What is this preventing? What am I risking?* Suddenly, your addictive behaviors are shown in their true light – empty, expensive, and destructive.

Next, ask God to help you overcome each habit, and find some key Bible verses to can memorize that will help you remember what to do.

Finally, seek out a trusted friend, pastor or counselor who can help you walk through your addictions and start to replace them with positive habits you want to develop for the future. It is likely that you will have to battle hard to finally be free, but be encouraged: the root issues that have led to your addictions are related, and once you have a life-changing encounter with God, things will start changing for the better. Your addictions are like dominos in a row – once you discover the answer and get a taste of real freedom, you won't want to turn back. The Bible says that God, "who began a good work in you, will be faithful to complete it" (Philippians 1:6).

### **Should I tell my loved ones that I'm addicted?**

If you suspect that admitting your addiction will hurt the people who care about you, extra caution is warranted. While it is not right to live a secret life behind the backs of the people you love, be sensitive to the fact that your loved ones will need time and grace to process your confession. In fact, our recommendation is to seek the counsel of a pastor before proceeding – just to work out a plan as to when the "truth should come out" and how to best handle the situation.

Also, it is important to consider the price of keeping your habit a secret. Eventually, the truth will be revealed, and it will hurt your family even more to discover that you were addicted and lying to them about it. The fact is, you have some difficult discussions ahead, and there is no guarantee that your family will respond positively. But it is better for you to tell them then for them to find out another way. At least you will have the opportunity to explain your desire to change and your plan for doing so. Waiting until you get caught is never the right plan.

### **What if I don't believe my addiction is wrong?**

It is easy to demonstrate why hard drug addictions, daily drunkenness, and other "extreme" addictive behaviors are wrong – such things obviously hurt the addict and the people around them. But what about the more "normal" or "petty" addictions that some people have – overeating, smoking cigarettes, watching too much television – that sort of thing? Is every addiction wrong?

For the answer, we have to look to the heart of what addictions do, and what they cause us to become. The Apostle Paul wrote that while things may be permissible they are not always "beneficial" and that he did not want to be "mastered by anything." Addictions of any stripe are certainly not beneficial (even something like watching too much TV has negative effects), and we as humans should not be "mastered" by any habit or substance. God designed us to live in freedom, to have self-control, to enjoy His creation, and to fulfill His purposes. Addictions harm us and make us slaves – thus they hinder our ability to honor God with our lives.





# FROM LSD TO THE MEDINA JAIL - AS A CHAPLAIN!

LARRY JARVIS

**I**n 1968, when I was worried about the Vietnam War and listening to Iron Butterfly and Jethro Tull, my friend introduced me to LSD. It didn't take long for me to add marijuana, speed, and cocaine to my list... and I had to repeat my senior year in order to graduate from North Miami High School in Florida. I spent the next couple years cruising the country, checking out hippy havens and the next high.

## IT STARTED AT HOME

Both my mom and dad were alcoholics. Sundays were what you would call "special" – they were the days my parents could spend the whole day at the bar, while I sat sipping Cokes and eating pretzels. My parents couldn't pay their bills, so we moved a lot. I attended thirteen schools in twelve years, as my family was always running from the bill collectors in the Miami area. My dad was an embarrassing drunk, so I determined early on in my life that I would never be like him. He was demanding, unreasonable, selfish, and a pain to the rest of the family. He ruined holidays, crushed my feelings, and drove my mom crazy. She stayed with him "for the sake of the kids."

By the time my friend Jeff introduced me to LSD before a high school dance, I was ready for something different. Drugs seemed perfect for me. I was suddenly part of a new group that didn't care what my

family did, and they didn't care that I got bad grades. Drugs made everyone equal and thinking was reduced to a minimum of, "Where and how can I get more?"

As a baby boomer, I still had a work ethic in the midst of my drug use. I co-owned a little print shop with my sister and drove around South Florida delivering jobs in my 1970 Volkswagen Beetle. My hair reached my shoulder blades and my office constantly pumped out rock music that damaged my hearing. I could work high, party high, and sleep high.

## THEN I MET SUE

In 1972, I met my future wife. She was visiting one of my friends on her spring break from Ohio State. She was a girl I would have considered unattainable: pretty, smart, college prep, and from a good family. Amazingly, when she and her boyfriend broke up in 1973, I got brave and extended an invitation to her to go to Disney World with me – and she accepted.

After a year of writing letters, sending flowers, and making phone calls to Columbus, I proposed to her in August of 1974. (She wasn't into drugs, but she didn't care that I was. After all, it was the Seventies, and we were all free to do our own thing.) We were married in December in Avon, Ohio, despite the serious reservations of her parents, and I moved up to Ohio so that we could begin our new life.

And it was new. I left my drugs behind in Florida and embraced my new family. I had a good job, a nice apartment, and a loving wife. About two years in, as one day rolled into another, I got restless. The old feelings of being high, the ease of being stoned, while the minutes and hours floated past, began to resurface and I wanted to use.

I found someone who would sell me what I wanted easily enough, and I started living a double life. By 1979, I was maintaining the appearance of sobriety in front of my boss and in-laws. I worked hard and came home to my wife and my little refuge in the attic where I surrounded myself with Coca Cola memorabilia and pot, with a little Southern Comfort thrown in. But even then, I certainly wasn't my dad. No way! I paid my bills, didn't move, and I never embarrassed myself or my wife.

Our first child was born and it blew my mind. Now I had *responsibilities*! Susan was staying at home with the baby and the money was all up to me. I worked and, because I liked to work, I worked some more. It all felt empty, and I felt inadequate for Sue and for the baby. I felt adrift, but there was always the next high to ease that purposeless feeling.

## NO WAY OUT

In 1982, we had our second child. Sue was thrilled with her role as mom, while I continued to struggle

with mine as a dad. After all, what model did I have to follow?

We had moved to Medina and had some nice friends in the neighborhood. Sue had joined Welcome Wagon and had play groups with other young moms. It all looked pretty and normal on the outside, but inside I was feeling trapped. I didn't see any way out of my life. I had two kids, a house payment, and all sorts of expectations. I didn't see how I could succeed, and the pressure of impending failure pushed me securely into the arms of my work and my drug use.

I worked an eight hour shift and then worked another job on top of that. I had to have money to pay for my own drugs of choice. Marijuana, speed, cocaine, and some occasional drinks kept the fears and restlessness at bay. I was proud of the fact that we never missed a payment, even though my drug use was escalating.

Sue and the kids were alone a lot. She pretty much raised them, while I looked on through a fog of work, smoke, and sleep. And then one day, in 1984, she announced that she had gotten saved. Whatever that meant.

## THINGS CHANGED

Sue started taking the kids to Weymouth Community Church. I was working so much that, for the most part, I didn't know the difference. But the light in her



# "HE DIED FOR ME SO THAT I COULD LIVE FOR HIM!"



eyes was not something I could dismiss. I felt uneasy and almost jealous, because it wasn't me who put it there. And then, there was the fact that she said she was praying for me.

Speed kept me going. Work was where I escaped from all the sweet family moments I didn't feel a part of. Marijuana always took the edge off.

As the kids got older, I noticed that everyone was avoiding me when I came home. I was irritable from the cocaine and speed, and I yelled at the kids for... well, nothing. I found myself never happy with anything my family did or said and they knew it. Their survival strategy was to stay out of my way. That's when it hit me: *I was just like my dad*. In my efforts to be unlike him, I had simply substituted another drug of choice and was making my own family miserable.

Then I started seriously looking for a way out of my situation. While I was conjuring up various suicidal scenarios, Sue must have felt my distress...and my aim, because she said to me just "in passing" that I couldn't die without believing in Jesus. She quoted Revelation 21:8 to me (where it makes clear that all the unbelievers, cowardly, sexually immoral, and liars end up in the Lake of Fire). I'd never read the Bible, but I did have a healthy respect for it. Upon hearing that verse, I found myself in a real dilemma: **I didn't want to live, but I was afraid to die!**

## LIGHT IN MY DARKNESS

One evening I saw a strange book in our home that Sue was reading – it was called *Piercing the Darkness* by Frank Peretti. Although fictional, it seemed real enough to me. The characters were going through the same confusion and desperation I felt – and in the unseen spiritual world, there was a great battle occurring for their souls! I stayed up all night reading that book, and upon putting it down, I knew what I had to do.

On Thursday, September 21, 1989, I surrendered my life to God. I arrived home from work to the sounds of my little family scattering to other parts of the house. They were avoiding me as usual. Undeterred, I called out to them from the family room. "Come here, guys. I need your help."

Cautiously, they approached. "Yes?" Sue asked. "What do you want, Larry?"

"I want to know how to be saved," I replied.

Sue explained that I needed to tell the Lord I was sorry for all the bad I had done and then give my life to Jesus, because He died for me to make me acceptable to God. She had no idea that I was ready for this and started to cry in shock and joy when I opened my arms to hug the kids and her and said, "I'm ready."

So they all heard my salvation prayer while tucked in my arms. I told the Lord I was sorry and that He could have my life. It was short, but I meant every word of it. And in that moment, I was born again.

I bought a Bible and started reading it. Sue and the kids were ecstatic and answered lots of my questions. I started going to the church. I found myself free to love my kids, no longer shackled to the pain of my past. I felt good, happy in a way I had never felt before. Jesus was real and He was working in my life.

I mentioned to Sue that I didn't see how I could keep doing drugs and be a Christian. Full of faith, Sue explained that if I was serious about Jesus, He would be serious about me. He wanted me off drugs and was waiting for me to ask. Jesus would give me the strength and power to stop.

Three weeks after my salvation prayer, I asked the Lord to help me stop and He did. I woke up the next morning and knew the old life was over. I carried all the drugs and paraphernalia out to the garbage. I flushed the speed, dumped the marijuana and poured the Southern Comfort down the sink. My addictions were finished.

## NO TURNING BACK

Here it is 2012 and I have to tell you – once Jesus got ahold of me, there was no turning back. *He died*

*for me so that I could live for Him.* Twenty-three years ago He saved me from my addictions! There was no withdrawal (and medically, there should have been), there was no family intervention, and there was no drug rehab that we couldn't afford. There was no relapse and no regret. God did a miracle! I called on Him and He answered more powerfully than I could have ever imagined.

That's why I am a jail chaplain today. People need to know there is a Name they can call on for help and hope, both today and for eternity. It is the same name I called on in 1989. It is the mighty name of Jesus.

Call on Him like I did. Don't wait.

**Larry and Sue Jarvis serve as chaplains at the Medina County Jail and also manage Margaret House, a transitional home for women needing a fresh start. Learn more about their ministry at [www.MedinaLight.com](http://www.MedinaLight.com).**





While there is no one-size-fits-all “formula” for getting out of an addiction, we hope this worksheet can help you take the first steps forward. It is important that you seek the counsel of a pastor, friend, or even the team that designed this magazine so that you can get some personal help in finding freedom from your addiction.

STEP ONE: GET HONEST

Addictions are ugly realities that we have to face before we can finish.

List any substances or activities that have addicted you, or to which you may have an unhealthy bond:

Checkmark any of the following symptoms of addiction you’ve noticed in your own life:

- ☐ Lying to cover up the activity
- ☐ Desiring it above all other things in life
- ☐ Stealing or cheating to support what you do
- ☐ Hiding what you do from family
- ☐ Shame or guilt in your soul
- ☐ Feeling overpowering or illogical compulsion to continue
- ☐ Organizing your schedule around accessing it
- ☐ Planning in advance how you will do it
- ☐ Wishing you would stop, but never stopping
- ☐ Unable to imagine being happy without it
- ☐ Fear of “what people would think” if they really knew
- ☐ Feeling trapped or enslaved
- ☐ It is necessary to stay awake, be relaxed, or feel happy
- ☐ No one else realizes how often you do this
- ☐ Borrowing money to continue it
- ☐ Giving up family and work time to do it

Estimate the amount of money you spend feeding your addictions monthly: \$

FIRST STEPS to NEW LIFE

Estimate the amount of time you dedicate daily to your addictions (including the time it takes you to gain access to it):

What consequences do you know of for people who remain addicted to the things you listed above? (example: smoking = lung cancer, porn = relationship problems, drugs = brain problems and jail, etc.)

Finish these sentences in your own words, being as brutally honest as possible:

If I let addictions continue to grow in my life,

I will probably end up

My hope for a fulfilling marriage will be

My kids will probably

My reputation will be

My relationship with God will

STEP TWO: GET SPIRITUAL

God’s power is the most potent weapon in any battle against addictions. Not only can He transform you, but His love and grace can sustain you through the temptations ahead. Knowing Jesus can give you purpose and direction in life that far surpasses what any addictive behavior can provide.

Up until this point in my life, my relationship with God has been. When it comes to following the principles of the Bible, I have been. When I think about Jesus Christ and His sacrifice for me, I feel.

Look up the following verses in the Bible to learn the basics of spiritual life. In your own words, summarize what each verse is teaching.

Romans 3:23

Romans 5:8

Romans 6:23

Romans 10:9

Romans 12:1-2

Based on these verses, what should you do to begin a relationship with God?

Write your own prayer to God based on what you have learned so far. Include your confession of why you need Jesus and what your new commitment to Him will be.

If you need more room to write your prayer, use a separate sheet of paper.

STEP THREE: GET HELP

In the Bible, God instructs us to lean on one another for encouragement, strength, love and motivation. He actually commands churches to help accomplish these important goals! All of us need the help of others; no one is supposed to walk through life alone.

- Check any sources of help you currently have access to:
- ☐ The Bible
- ☐ Books about my addiction
- ☐ A caring mom, dad, or family member
- ☐ A spouse that has stuck with me
- ☐ Friends who are not addicted
- ☐ A church family
- ☐ A mentor/pastor
- ☐ Someone willing to help me go to rehab
- ☐ A support group
- ☐ Someone who prays for me
- ☐ Social worker or parole officer

Take a moment to thank God for the items you were able to checkmark. Any help that is available to you is a blessing! Now, you can add things to your list:

1. This magazine, which you can re-read for encouragement.

2. The website, SettingCaptivesFree.com which we highly recommend for ongoing accountability and assistance.

3. An invitation to attend church. There are many wonderful churches that honor God’s Word right here in our area. Be sure to attend one, and make an appointment with the pastor discuss your decision to follow Jesus.

4. The LifeChange Addictions Response Team, who would be happy to add you to our prayer list (anonymously if requested), offer encouragement, point you toward helpful support groups, or even offer personal mentoring as you walk the road to victory.

5. Most of all, the life-changing power of Jesus. God’s power can directly intervene in your life as you make the choice to start honoring Him. Start by praying for His help. As Jesus said, “With God all things are possible!”

“Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.” Ephesians 3:20

WHERE TO GO?

If you don’t already have a church home, you are welcome to visit either of our two locations:

LifeChange Church – 9:45 a.m. Sundays  
787 Lafayette Road – Williams-on-the-Lake, near the Fairgrounds

Weymouth Church – 8:30 or 11:00 a.m., Sundays  
3398 South Weymouth Road – near the Rt. 3 & I-71 Interchange

Email us at lifechange@weymouthchurch.com or call (330) 723-1750.

Would you like someone to pray with you?

Gazebo Prayer – 12:00 p.m, Summer Thursdays  
Public Square, Medina

Join us and many other Christians from across Medina at the Gazebo on any summer Thursday to receive prayer for personal requests and to join in prayer for the spiritual and practical needs of our city.





Weymouth Community Church  
3398 South Weymouth Road  
Medina, Ohio 44256  
(330) 723-1750

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## NEXT STEPS



**The LifeChange Addictions Response Team** offers personal prayer, counseling and biblical advice that can assist you or your loved ones in their quest for freedom. We can connect you to support groups with regular meetings that can help you build a bridge to a new life.

**LIKE** us on Facebook to stay in the loop  
([www.facebook.com/lifechangemedina](http://www.facebook.com/lifechangemedina))

**FOLLOW** us on Twitter "@LifeChange44256" for helpful reminders.

**WATCH** Youtube testimonies on our LifeChangeMagazine Channel.

**CALL** to speak with someone from the Addictions Response Team about local support group meetings, prayer, counseling, or encouragement – (330) 723-1750.

**BE OUR GUEST** on Sunday morning. Each week we hold church services that emphasize the life-changing truth of the Bible.

Try either of our two locations – to the north of Medina our Weymouth congregation meets at 3398 South Weymouth Road (8:30 & 11:00am). In central/south Medina, our LifeChange congregation meets at Williams-on-the-Lake (9:45am), 787 Lafayette Road (near the Fairgrounds).

**VISIT** [www.LifeChangeMedina.com](http://www.LifeChangeMedina.com) for more details!

