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Pastor Dr. T. Valson Abraham
Founder / President
India Gospel Outreach
President
India Bible College and Seminary

LIBERTY FROM ADDICTION

Dear Friend,

Whether in India, Europe, Africa or America, addiction is a major problem.

Gerald May defines an addiction as “compulsive, habitual behavior that limits freedom of human desire.” In other words, an addict is a slave. Whatever holds an addict’s attention to this degree has become an idol. As God tells us, “You shall have no other gods before me.

What causes addictions? There are many reasons, but behind all of them stands the biggest reason of all: we have forsaken the Creator for the created. We have

exchanged the truth of God for a lie. Therefore, addictions are signs that all is not well in our relationship with God. We are listening to other voices besides the voice of God. We have believed the lie instead of the truth.

There are many addictions that destroys health, relationships, work and family. One addiction which has become common worldwide...tobacco addiction...

- Around 5.4 million deaths a year are caused by tobacco.
- Smoking is set to kill 6.5 million people in 2015 and 8.3 million humans in 2030, with the biggest rise in low-and middle-income countries.
- Every 6.5 seconds a current or former smoker dies, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).
- An estimated 1.3 billion people are smokers worldwide (WHO).
- Over 443,000 Americans (over 18 percent of all deaths) die because of smoking each year. Second hand smoke kills about 50,000 of them.
- 1.2 million people in China die because of smoking each year. That's 2,000 people a day.
- Tobacco use will kill 1 billion people in the 21st century if current smoking trends continue.

- 33 percent to 50 percent of all smokers are killed by their habit. Smokers die on average 15 years sooner than nonsmokers.
- Cigarette smoking is the major cause of lung disease, including emphysema and chronic bronchitis... It is proven to cause cancer, heart disease and hormonal problems.
- Regardless of how we may try and justify it. Smoking, and spitting tobacco, is a filthy habit.

To addicts, Jesus has this special word: "I have come...to proclaim liberty to the captives...to set at liberty those who are oppressed."

Since addiction is, at heart, a relationship problem, it takes relationship with God to break the addiction. Healing of addictions involves knowing God both in His Word and by experience. As Jesus says, "Come unto me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

True freedom from addiction can come only by a work of God. Only the Spirit of God can break the curse of addiction. The Spirit of God can do this only when the addict gives Him permission to break the curse and exchange the lie for truth.

Paul says, "Be transformed by the renewing of your minds." (Romans 12:2) Mind renewal involves both the head and the heart through a relationship with Jesus Christ.

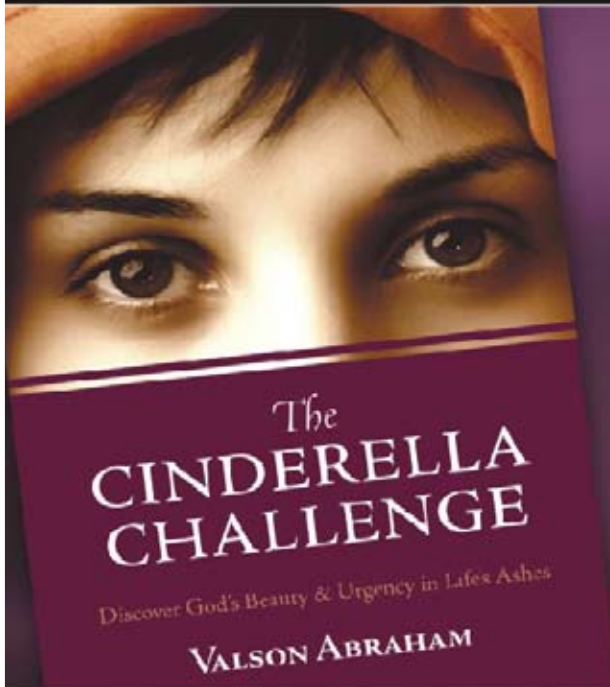
Many who follow Christ today came out of backgrounds in which they were heavily engaged in addictive behavior towards drugs, tobacco, gambling and alcohol. When they committed their lives to Jesus Christ, they surrendered this part of their lives over to Him. Now filled with the Holy Spirit, they lost the craving for these things. They gained the power to live free in Christ.

Today, millions are seeking freedom and peace for their lives. They attempt to calm their restless spirits through the only thing they know—addictions whether it be drugs, alcohol, tobacco, gambling, pornography or sex. These things offer only temporary relief, and they always run the risk of breaking down health and ruining marriages and families.

Trust in Jesus Christ. He is able to heal and set you free.

Confess your sins and addictions to Jesus. Pray in the name of Jesus Christ who is able to heal and set you free. Seek the help of a mature christian who can help you to be accountable. Fill your mind with Word of God and Replace your life with good habits. ●

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IPC ATTAPPADY DISTRICT CONVENTION, DECEMBER 27-30

IPC ATTAPPADY DISTRICT

One sunny morning, in 1985, Mrs. Mary Abraham shared a burden with her class at Hebron Bible College on taking the gospel to Attappady. Attappady is a remote region densely forested and situated in Palakkad district of Kerala. Tribals who live on its fringes are constantly in danger of attacks by wild animals, face the stark realities of acute poverty, and are inaccessible by any means of transport.

One of the students, Benjamin Thomas, was touched and inspired to respond to the call from Attappady. He committed himself to the work and began ministry there soon thereafter. Another student, M. J. Mathai, joined him later and they labored effectively in the region.

The senior IPC leader, Pastor T. S. Abraham and his wife, Mrs. Mary Abraham supported this ministry from the beginning with their prayers and financial assistance. Right from its inception, Pastor T. S. Abraham has provided exemplary leadership to the work in Attappady, and served as the District Minister from 1994 till 2011. He continued to be involved in the ministry as Patron till he went to be with the Lord in 2018. Pastor M. J. Mathai was active in the leadership, serving as District Vice-President and later as District President since 2011, on the recommendations of Pastor T. S. Abraham.

The ministry in Attappady continues to flourish through 20 committed evangelists who toil boldly despite tough challenges from religious fanatics, financial crisis, and absence of church halls. Today, there are 25 churches and 20 out-stations in this centre. A dedicated and strong leadership is being given by Pastor M. J. Mathai (District Pastor), Pastor Adv. Johnson Pallikunnel (District Secretary), Pastor Stephen Thattarathara (Vice-President), Bro. Finny John (Joint Secretary) and Bro. Joy T. J. (Treasurer).

IPC Attappady District is being encouraged and supported by India Gospel Outreach in association with K. E. Abraham Foundation. God is adding new believers to the church. The annual Attappady District Convention was held last year from December 27-30 at the ground of IPC Siloam Prayer hall. Many people from different parts of Attappady came and were blessed.



Pastor M. J. Mathai,
District Pastor of IPC Attappady District



Pastor Adv. Johnson Pallikunnel,
District Secretary, leading the service



Gospel Singers, Thrissur



Pastors who serve the Lord in different parts of Attappady District, on stage



Lt. Col. V. I. Luke
preaches on Saturday evening



Evang. Anu Koshy
sharing the Word of God on Sunday



Pastor M. J. Mathai leading the Communion Service



Believers from different parts of Attappady District gathered together on Sunday to worship the Lord and to participate in Lord's Table

ADDICTION AND ITS TYPES



Vivyn Mathew

Mental health Consultant,
New Hope Counseling Centre,
Kumbanad

ADDICTION
is both psychological and behavioral. Addictions are marked by craving, compulsion, and inability to stop harmful use of substances and lifestyle dysfunction. Addiction commonly understood in many ways.

“Every form of addiction is bad, no matter whether the narcotic be alcohol or morphine or idealism”. - Carl Jung

Images of intoxicated persons come rushing into our minds when we think of addiction. Almost every one knows someone who lost their lives due to being addicted to various substances. The term 'addiction' is widely used by all sections of society because addictive behaviors are one among the biggest problems of mankind. But common usage of this term has given rise to many questions and arguments. How big are addiction problems exactly? How does addiction differ from bad habits? Is addiction and dependence on substance synonymous? What causes addiction?

Global estimates on substance abuse shows that the scourges of these debilitating conditions are felt across the world. A global survey in 2014 showed 4.9% of the world's adult population (240 million people) suffer from alcohol use disorder (7.8% of men and 1.5% of women), 22.5% of adults in the world (1 billion people) smoke tobacco products (32.0% of men and 7.0% of women). It is estimated that 11% of deaths in males and 6% of deaths in females each year are due to tobacco. illegal psychoactive drugs like cannabis is the most prevalent at 3.5% globally, (15 million people) inject drugs. These estimates are only the tips of the metaphorical iceberg because the addictions on substances are only a minor fraction when compared with the immeasurable psychological or behavioral addictions worldwide. It means the addictions like problem gambling, internet addictions and addiction to televisions are rampant globally and may be prevalent in every household which makes it difficult to measure.

Addiction is both psychological and behavioral. Addictions are marked by craving, compulsion, and inability to stop harmful use of substances and lifestyle dysfunction. Addiction commonly understood in many ways. Some consider it in respect to appetites, desires and preferences that have got out of hand to become excessive unmindful obsession for distraction from facing the realities of life. Other opinions includes addiction as attempts to get away from distress, running away due to fears and insecurities, being liberated from fear and pain limitations, obsessive bonding with substances and activities for some sense of relief due to an inability to beat the present life and some consider addiction as the loss of purpose and connection.

**THE
Spiritual models
suppose addiction
occurs because
of a separation
from God. Moral
causation of
addiction points
to the fact that
there is a "correct"
morality based on
a particular set of
values. Deviation
from those
values results in
addiction.**

But addiction is overly acknowledged with drugs that have an effect on the Central Nervous System. Addiction is compulsive engagement on rewarding stimuli. Brains reward seeking pathway is involved primarily. Dopamine from the Ventral Tegmental Area projecting to higher region called Nucleus Accumbens activates for more rewarding experiences resulting in addictive behaviors. It is to be noted that some behavioral addictions can be placed equal footing with drug addictions. This may point to the fact "excessive appetites" are powerful than "drug dependencies".

DEFINITION OF ADDICTION

"What is addiction, really? It is a sign, a signal, a symptom of distress. It is a language that tells us about a plight that must be understood". - Alice Miller

In order to gain clarity and understanding there is a need to define the word addiction. For our purposes we define addiction as follows:

*American Psychological Association (APA) defines **Addiction as the repeated involvement with a substance or activity,***

despite the substantial harm it now causes, because that involvement was (and may continue to be) pleasurable and/or valuable.

This definition highlights four main attributes to addiction. They being,

1. Addiction includes both substances and activities (such as sex and gambling): persons may become addicted to both substances and activities. Substance addiction includes any substances that are taken into the body. This may include drugs, tobacco and unauthorized use of prescription medications. The activity addiction may include activities such as gambling, sex, the internet, pornography, and shopping etc. Sometimes people call these "process addictions."
2. Addiction leads to substantial harm: Addiction harms not only the person with the addiction but also everyone around them. The difference between "bad behavior" and addiction lies in the occurrence of substantial harm to the addicted person or others, "substantial harm" means harmful consequences like declining health, damage to interpersonal relationships, and diminishing financial resources. The less-obvious, indirect loss from the addiction is that it consumes all their time, energy, and preoccupies their thoughts.
3. Addiction is repeated involvement despite substantial harm: A behavior cannot be called as an addiction unless it happened regularly and repeatedly.
4. Addiction continues because it was, or is, pleasurable and/or valuable: It is shocking to know that most people initiated their involvement addiction agents like drugs because; at first it was pleasurable, or at least valuable. It was considered "valuable" because it reduced anxiety., it provided a temporary escape from bad situation or boredom. This initial pleasurable and valuable initial involvement later on becomes a rewarding experience that they cling to be addicted.

A behavior can be called addicted if it is engaged in at an abnormally high frequency or volume. The behavior will be dominated by preoccupation with the object or the activity or the means of acquiring it, or experiences of distress when the activity is stopped or prevented. The experience of the behavior becomes out of one's control, unsuccessful attempts. Mood changes become visible according to the changes in the engagement with addictive agent. The behavior brings conflict with the family members due to occurrence of lying, stealing or criticism by family. The behavior causes harm in other lifeareas such as finances, education or work, physical or mental health.

CAUSES OF ADDICTION:

"Addiction begins with the hope that something "out there" can instantly fill up the emptiness inside". - Jean Kilbourne

Many factors influence the development of an addiction yet we don't know how these various influences combine to form an addiction. These factors fall in the areas of Biological, Psychological, Socio- cultural and Spiritual influences

According to the biological model, a person's distinctive physiology and genetics causes addiction. Genetic vulnerability in the form of genetic loading from heredity aids I the development of addiction. The degree to which they like or dislike a particular addictive substance or activity is assumed to come from these genetic factors. Some people may enjoy a substance or activity so much that it becomes very tempting and difficult to resist.

The disease model highlights that addiction (especially substance) is a complex irreversible illness, characterized by altered brain structure and functioning. These changes in the function of the brain can cause addictive behaviours characterized by compulsive, at times uncontrollable drug craving that persist(s) even in the face of extremely negative consequences. For many people drug addiction becomes chronic, with relapses possible even after long periods of abstinence.



When
you can't
I can.
- God

Psychological factors are believed to play an important influence in developing addiction. Behaviors that control people's functioning and decrease life satisfaction are often called maladaptive behavior such as Addiction. The study of factors that contributes to the emergence of maladaptive thinking and behavioral patterns can explain the reason for such addictions. Some of the possible psychological causes of addiction can be due to abnormality, or "psychopathology" that presents itself as mental illness. Secondly, thoughts and beliefs create their different emotional response and feelings determine their behavior. If thoughts, beliefs and feelings are unrealistic or dysfunctional, their behavior and developing personality can make a person psychologically vulnerable to addiction. Third, the unhealthy behavior learned in response to their environment causes faulty coping and behavioral patterns.

According to the sociocultural model, the cultural standards of a society and the negative effects of culture and society cause addiction. The larger social systems that surround an individual may make a person vulnerable. An individual within any given system participates in the maintenance of that balance in the system or society. However, if the natural balance (status quo) of a system is dysfunctional, then the system serves to maintain that dysfunction. Some dysfunctional systems can promote and foster addictive behavior for some individuals in that system.

The Spiritual models suppose addiction occurs because of a separation from God. Moral causation of addiction points to the fact that there is a "correct" morality based on a particular set of values. Deviation from those values results in addiction.

TYPES OF ADDICTION

“An over-indulgence of anything, even something as pure as water, can intoxicate.”
- Criss Jami

LIST OF SUBSTANCES THAT CAUSE ADDICTION:

- Alcohol
- Tobacco
- Opioids (like heroin)
- Prescription drugs (sedatives, hypnotics, or anxiolytics like sleeping pills and tranquilizers)
- Cocaine
- Cannabis (marijuana)
- Amphetamines (like methamphetamine, known as meth)
- Hallucinogens
- Inhalants
- Phencyclidine (known as PCP or Angeldust)
- Other unspecified substances

LIST OF IMPULSE CONTROL DISORDERS

Lists of disorders where impulses cannot be resisted, which could be considered a type of addiction. The following is a list of the recognized impulse control disorders:

- Intermittent explosive disorder (compulsive aggressive and assaultive acts)
- Kleptomania (compulsive stealing)
- Pyromania (compulsive setting of fires)
- Gambling

LIST OF BEHAVIORAL ADDICTIONS

It has been suggested one of the types of addictions is behavioral addiction. The following is a list of behaviors that have been noted to be addictive

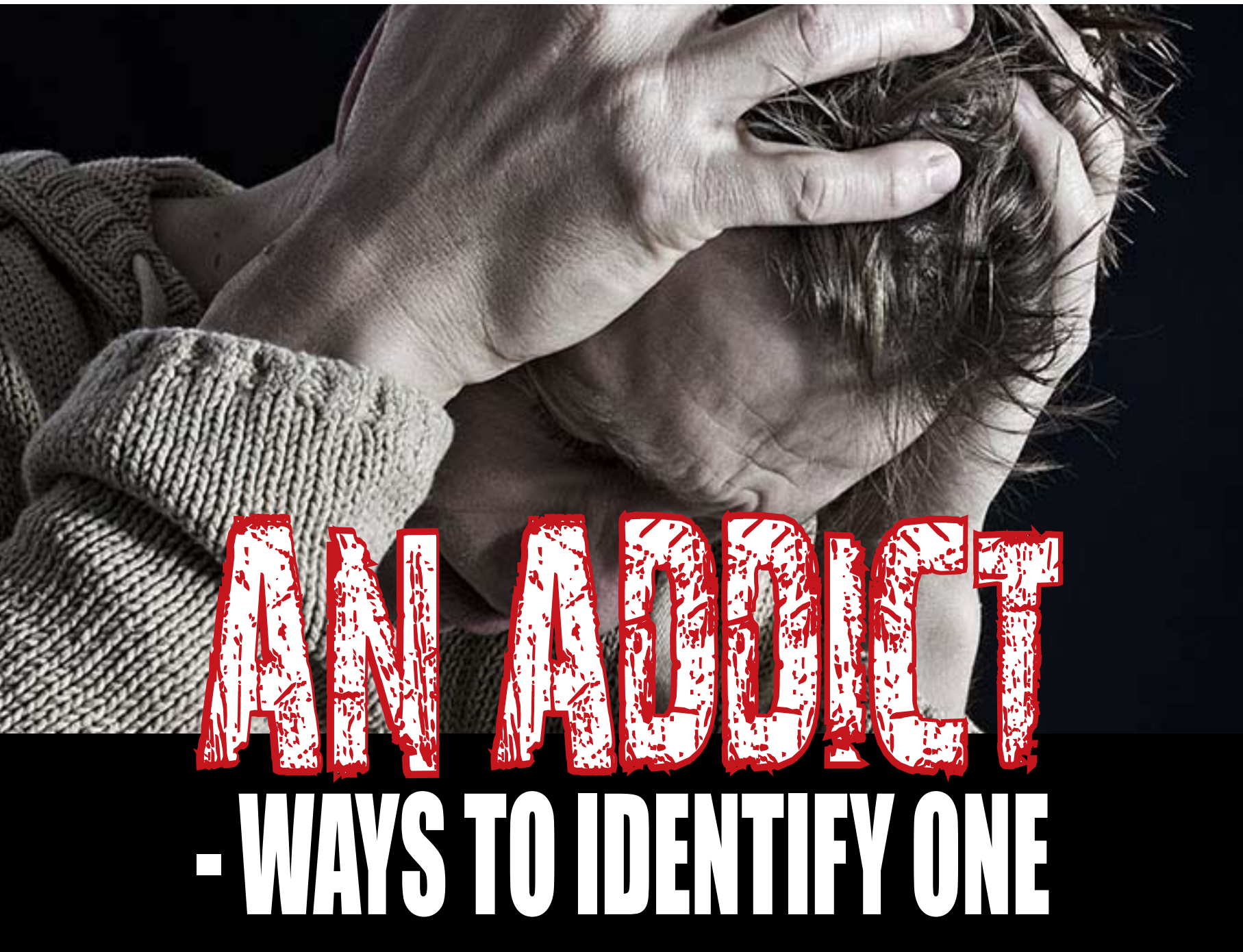
- Food (eating)
- Sex
- Pornography (attaining, viewing)
- Using computers / the internet
- Playing video games
- Working
- Exercising
- Spiritual obsession (as opposed to religious devotion)
- Pain (seeking)
- Cutting
- Shopping

CONCLUSION

An outlook into addictive behaviours opens up a vast area of needs beginning from an individual to community at large. The reach and magnitude of Addictive behaviours that is overtly and covertly holding people captive is far beyond any estimation. The community at large should be aware of this danger that begins innocently but ends very viciously. Effective multipronged preventive and interventional strategies need to be evolved to help people to live productive and fulfilling lives. ●



MANY FACTORS
influence the development of an addiction yet we don't know how these various influences combine to form an addiction. These factors fall in the areas of Biological, Psychological, Socio-cultural and Spiritual influences



AN ADDICT

- WAYS TO IDENTIFY ONE



Dr. Saji Kumar K.
P. Ph.D; IBTS
Areparambu, Kottayam

THERE IS A function of transmitting information in the brain through the release of specific chemicals by what is called neurotransmitters. The constant abuse of drugs damages its function and there is a progressive weakness in the cells of the brain and consequently in the movement of muscles.

Drugs are meant to save a life but they have been misused over the centuries. It continues to destroy people and society.

Since the beginning of history humans have searched for substances that would sustain, protect and act on the nervous system to produce pleasurable sensations. Individuals are attracted to drugs because of the belief that drugs help them adapt to an ever-changing environment and taking drugs reduces tension and frustration, relieves boredom and fatigue, and in some cases it seemingly helps people to forget and escape the harsh realities of their world.

Addiction affects not only the abuser but also the whole community. Substance abuse brings guilt feelings, relationship problems and several spiritual problems. Many of them feel rejection, loneliness, shamefulness, depression, hate and anger. Substance abusers find failure to fulfill major role obligations at work, home and church. This ends them up in poor work performance, suspensions of his/her life, neglect of children or household, continued substance use despite having persistent social or interpersonal problems caused by the effects of the substance, and most of all it means arguments with spouse about consequences of intoxication, and quarrelling with each other. It also denotes an irresistible mental craving or compulsion or urge for the drug, that the person will go to the extent of begging, borrowing, stealing, robbing, and even killing to satisfy his/her need regardless of the place, people and time. After the habit is established, they need to take drugs in order to feel "normal," a condition referred to as psychological dependence. Following are some of the ways to recognize an addict.

CHANGE IN PHYSICAL CONDITION

The first sign of addiction is its physical symptoms. Indistinctive speech or overemphasis on words, tremor in speech is evident in drug addicts. They also might have red or watery eyes, out of focus or glassy look, complaining of regular illness to hide the effects of drugs, craving for sweets, occasional vomits late nights, gets up at night to have drugs, and also their eating habits are very irregular. They avoid eating with their family members. They usually eat little and sometimes eat a lot but suffer from constipation. Alcohol and drugs can spoil any part of the body and curtail its proper functioning. Drugs promote indigestion and causes constipation in the beginning but for the habitual and longtime users, it causes loss of appetite and gastric derangement. The knowledge of time and personality is lost

and the drugged person feels that he/she is enjoying the pleasure of life for hours together, although in reality it is only for few minutes. If continued, it causes intoxication and loss of self-control.

The subject becomes very talkative, jovial and laughs at the minutest things done or said. The delirium is generally noisy and restless, which is accompanied by muscular excitement and it is followed by sleep which is accompanied by delightful and erotic dreams. Continuous use of large doses of drugs will lead to coma followed by death from cardiac failure. For the beginners it will result in mental derangement and even insanity.

Alcohol also produced gases in the stomach which may cause bloating and cramping. Drinking can interfere with the body's ability to digest food and absorb vital nutrients. For constant drinkers, this can contribute to malnutrition and the development of some alcohol related diseases. Therefore, long term use of alcohol is associated with higher rates of peptic ulcers in the lining of the stomach. It can also lead to inflammation of the stomach (gastric) which causes loss of an appetite, nausea and stomach pain.

There is a function of transmitting information in the brain through the release of specific chemicals by what is called neurotransmitters. The constant abuse of drugs damages its function and there is a progressive weakness in the cells of the brain and consequently in the movement of muscles. Muscles become flabby, and the skin, dry, red, and shiny and there is also excessive perspiration on hands and feet. Alcohol cause damage to muscle tissue and as a result there is acute muscle pain and weakness especially in the limbs. The affected muscles may later become swollen and bruised. Indisputably, drug abuse is one of the causes of cancer. Heavy abuse of drugs increases the risk and also develops cancer in tongue, mouth, pharynx, and liver. Alcohol has a synergistic effect with tobacco that increases the risk of cancer.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SYMPTOMS

GUILT

Guilt is the feeling of being personally responsible for something blame worthy. Guilt is the feeling that is caused by the self judgment that "I have done something wrong." A drug abuser feels guilt over his/her conviction that his/her addiction was self- inflicted. "Drugs users may have been separated from family, friends, and even from God while they know that the use of drugs is unacceptable in the community, family and in the sight of God. But they continue to be a victim to drugs.

ANGER

Anger is an emotional state, experienced by everyone but difficult to define. It occurs in varying forms and degrees of intensity from mild annoyance or feelings of aggravation to violent rage. Anger is a leading cause of depression, accidents, sickness, and interpersonal tension. Drugs abusers are easily prone to anger, specially when they are not able to find drugs they crave for. This anger might turn towards the family, friends and the society in general.

ISOLATION AND LONELINESS

One of the major problems found among drugs abusers is that they feel that they are alone as they are rejected by their own children or church members. They want to be in the company of people; but circumstances and the feelings within them forces to be alone. This habit makes them moody and sometimes even leads them either to depression or a kind of anti-social attitude. The feeling of rejection is very strong in them

DEPRESSION

Depression is a prolonged feeling of sadness, discouragement, and an inability to "get on top of things." Depression is a common, universal condition that varies in terms of symptoms, severity, origins, and duration, and that affects large segments of the population. Researchers have made bold claims about drug abuse leading to depression. It has been known that drug abusers have higher rates of depression than non-drug abusers.

CHANGES IN BEHAVIOUR AND LIFESTYLES

Unexpected change in mood and attitude are common in addicted people. They have a wavering mind and ever changing attitude towards their friends. They have lack of interest in spirituality. The violence and crime that the drug business brings to the society is frightening and its influence is alarming. Many drug addicts imagine that they can fly or do supernatural things. Drugs such as Lysergic Acid Diethylamide (LSD) produce hallucinations and LSD users have stepped off high-storied building plunging to their death. Many of the recent suicide cases are triggered by such drug abusers.

Alcohol can make the addicts aggressive and it results in violence and crime. The alcohol addict becomes a rebel against society and generally withdraws from normal life. Many young people today are school dropouts and abandon social gathering because of their addiction. The need for the money to support their alcoholic habits leads the alcohol addict to indulge in anti-social activities such as stealing, smuggling, lying and cheating without any guilt feelig. The majority of road accidents are due to the drivers being under the influence of alcohol or drugs.



DEPRESSION

is a prolonged feeling of sadness, discouragement, and an inability to "get on top of things."

Depression is a common, universal condition that varies in terms of symptoms, severity, origins, and duration, and that affects large segments of the population.



The hallucinogenic drugs produce hallucinations. Drugs like amphetamines, speed, pep pills and cocaine can make the user aggressive and result in violence and addicted alcohol usually gets angry and upsets easily in their life. Even a single episode of heaving drinking can cause the lining to become inflamed and bleed.

WITHDRAWAL SYMPTOMS OF DRUG ADDICTION

People addicted to drugs normally suffer from the withdrawal symptoms. The withdrawal symptoms are due to the adverse effects - caused by lack of drugs in the body, which in turn affects the brain. The brain and body become addicted to the drugs. Each type of addiction requires different treatment and also the length of treatment and the withdrawal symptoms also differ according to the drugs. Symptoms may last for more than a week in people who suffer from severe drug addiction. Some of the withdrawal symptoms might be life threatening and can cause great discomfort.

Each drug produces different but significant physical withdrawals (alcohol, opiates, and tranquilizers). Some drugs produce little physical withdrawal symptoms, but more emotional withdrawal (cocaine, marijuana, and ecstasy) symptoms. Every person's physical withdrawal pattern is also different. Some may experience only a little physical withdrawal, but that doesn't mean that they are not addicted. Such people may experience more emotional withdrawal. Some of the withdrawal symptoms include acute anxiety and depression. There is also difficulty in sleeping and there are feelings of dejection and hopelessness, and sometimes suicidal tendencies.

When the addicts don't get the drugs, the heart rate might go up and their body might

sweat all the time. They also feel tightness in the chest and nausea. The person may experience restlessness, irritation and anger, shivering, convulsions, hallucination and delirium tremens, when the supply is cut off. This person will take the same substance again and again to relieve or avoid withdrawal symptoms.

MALADAPTIVE PATTERNS OF DEPENDENCE

TOLERANCE

A need for increased amounts of the substance to achieve intoxication or desired effect or diminished effect with continued use of the same amount of the substance. A person who used to drink 30ml of alcohol/smoking may need more after six months to get the same effect.

EXCESSIVE USE

The substance is taken in larger amounts and over a long period irrespective of associated problems.

HELPLESSNESS

The person would like to stop or control use of the abuse substance, but becomes helpless due to tolerance and withdrawal symptoms.

PREOCCUPATION

A great deal of time, energy, effort and money is spent to obtain the substance and to use the substance. Thus the person forgets or neglects other important things in life.

IGNORING DANGER ALERTS

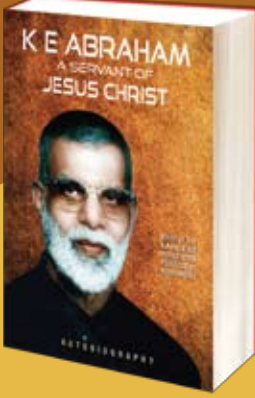
The abuse of the substance is continued despite knowledge of having a persistent physical or psychological problem that is likely to worsen with continued use. The person may ignore doctor's advice to stop drinking or stop using the substance.

SOCIAL SYMPTOMS

Continued substance abuse despite having persistent social or interpersonal problems like arguing or quarrelling with family members or at work place. This includes denial, accusation, physical abuse, withdrawal from social life and suicidal attempts.

Many measures have been taken in the past to eradicate the problem of drug addiction by conducting seminars, creating laws and regulations, by opening detoxification and rehabilitation centers. Yet drug addiction is on the rise and has become a menace to the very fabric of our society and church, as well as to the family. People have right to access to knowledge on the nature of drug abuse and solutions to the problem. Drug addictions are among the most prevalent complex and destructive illnesses in human society. They are found in every segment of society, regardless of race, religion and social-economic class. They have a significant impact on spiritual, physical and mental health of family relationships as well as Church and child development. It is very important that counseling intervention be included by the Church. Marriage and family counseling must be emphasised because the addicted person is part of all these relationships. The Church need to give hope into their lives and it is the responsibility of the church, pastors and association leaders to help them to know the way to stop it and how to grow in spirituality. ●

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**COUNSELLING
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FACING EXAM ANXIETY



Allan Varghese

Teaching elder at Restoration Church, Durham (N.C) U.S.A and Refugee Resettlement Coordinator at World Relief Durham. Interested in evangelism, mission and psychotherapy.

AS A CHRISTIAN,
your identity is in Christ and your performance in the test will not make you a loser in the sight of God. Irrespective of the test results God can lead you in His ways.

I am a young adult who struggles with anxiety, especially during exam times. Do you have any advise to handle this kind of anxiety?

Thank you so much for reaching out with your question. Psychologists commonly distinguish the anxiety you have listed as “test anxiety.” While it is absolutely normal to have anxious thoughts, sometimes it can aggravate, impairing us from doing our daily functions. Symptoms of anxiety could range from sweating, stomachaches, and headaches to having panic attacks. If you experience persistent panic attacks or have recurrent body pains due to anxiety, then please consult a psychologist.

There are also various cognitive behavioral mechanisms you could try to bring your anxiety under control. One way, in case of “test anxiety,” is to pause and “think about thinking.” Theologically, we have every reason to believe that we are to “think about thinking” as the scripture says, “to take every thought captive”(2 Corinthians 10:5).

We all have our own way of reasoning and how we think often has a big effect on how we feel. Therefore, the process of reflecting on thinking begins by being attentive to our own thinking pattern. Often our thoughts are what we say to ourselves in our minds: self-talk. Therefore, pay attention to the self-talk. For example, when you think of your test, what are your thoughts. If you say to your self “I am going to fail,” then the consequence will be fear and anxiety. However, if you say, “I am going to pass,” then that will keep you calm during the test.

Another important element in “think about thinking” involves challenging our unrealistic thoughts. This arises from the basis that your thoughts are not always the reality. For example: Thinking that you will fail a test doesn’t mean that you will actually fail. Often we come to these conclusions pre-maturely. Those thoughts are “thinking traps” that we call upon ourselves with out any actual facts. For example: We say statements like, “I know I will mess it up.” “I will never be a success.” “I am a loser.” Often, we carry these thoughts during our preparation and tests resulting in loss of concentration. Instead, challenge these “thinking traps” with factual statements such us, “I will not know if I mess up, or not until the results come out.” “Failing in a test does not define my identity.”

As a Christian, your identity is in Christ and your performance in the test will not make you a loser in the sight of God. Irrespective of the test results God can lead you in His ways. Therefore next time when “test anxiety” swells up, remember to be attentive to the anxious thoughts and challenge them. Moreover, take couple of minutes to pray so that God may remind you of your identity in Christ and His love for you. As you take your anxious thoughts captive in this manner, you are taking a step in faith believing that your identity is in Christ and not in the outcome of the test. ●