

### **3. ADDICTS MAKE GOOD CHURCH MEMBERS**

**Main Theme:** How Can Ordinary Christians Help Addicts?

#### **Be ready for what you will encounter**

##### *Addicts are Miserable and Broken*

Reflect on the **misery and brokenness** of the crystal meth addict we spoke about earlier (Section 1. Addicts are Slaves to a Cruel Master)

1. Although, when speaking to addicts, they don't seem to understand many things, begin as a student; imagine yourself trapped in that misery. Consider your own secret sins and what it would be like for you to come under their control incrementally until you are as miserable and as broken as the addict you now face. How would you like a counsellor to help you? (Matthew 7:12) To think about addicts in this way helps us to develop genuine compassion for them (Mark 6:34, Romans 12:15).
2. Consider the way in which we often fall into the trap described by Job in Job 12:1-5 and 16:4-6. A person, even a believer, who is not at that time involved in a desperate struggle, will tend to minimise the struggles of a person who is struggling. You are counselling a person in pain. He is between highs. On one side, his cravings are driving him insane, on the other, his conscience is screaming at him to stop. On a third side is the inevitable deadline he faces—he is craving for more and more pleasure, but he is experiencing less and less. The satisfaction of his drug-worship is no longer satisfying. There is a gaping hole that he must fill—there is “something missing”
3. **Help the addict** by taking the time to grasp the full impact of this misery. Deliberately allow it to impact the way you perceive him and the way you will speak to him. If you continue like Job's counsellors, you will lose your opportunity to **evangelise and counsel** him at this **critical** time.

##### *Addicts are Proud*

Addicts tend to be proud. It is difficult to understand how an addict can be miserable and broken, but at the same time, proud. We will explore this below.

One thing that seems to make addicts proud is that they have struggled through many hard life experiences. They have become critical and cynical toward people who haven't experienced the hard experiences they have experienced.

Following on from this is a cynicism toward ordinary Christians and preachers who desire to help them. They seriously doubt that such people even know what drugs look like. They seem to see Christians and preachers in a humorous light as being so far removed from real life that they have no idea of the struggles addicts face.

Naturally, this impacts counselling because addicts often use the following approach. They either look for clues to uncover the Christian's well-wishing ignorance, or they ask the question directly, "So, have you ever done drugs?" As soon as a Christian helper answers, "No.", the whole interpersonal dynamic changes. Addicts then tend to want to become teachers rather than learners. They begin to control or manipulate the conversation, leaving the Christian person feeling like a helpless fool.

Moreover, many addicts speak of having "spiritual" experiences while under the intoxicating effects of drugs. They highly value "great spiritual insights" they get in their drugged state. Then, they like to toy with Christian people, making them feel ignorant and childish in their faith. Not surprisingly, there are at least 5 formally constituted "churches" in the world that consider marijuana their "euachrist".

These are all demonstrations of pride. As we consider what Scripture says about these things, we face some satisfying, confidence-inspiring teachings.

**Help the addict:** Before we consider this manifestation of pride, allow me to comment on how I have successfully dealt with the addict's assault, "So, have you ever done drugs?" or similar questions.

I answer that I haven't done drugs, and then I wait for them to finish their predictable explanation that a person who has never done drugs can never understand an addict. I then quote Romans 3:16-17 and draw attention to the fact that they have truly found themselves in the ruin and misery of which that text speaks. I then ask them why it is that they have come to the point where their lives are scarred by ruin and misery. They give a reason from their interpretation. I then counter that reason with God's reason. He shows in that passage that what goes hand in hand with this kind of ruin and misery is that they do not know the way of peace. I ask them what they understand about the way of peace, and they are unable to explain even the basics of God's way of peace. This transaction helps to restore control over the situation. They realise that maybe you have something to say that will help them. Never before has someone stood up to them so clearly, graciously, and helpfully. See also Isaiah 59:8, Matthew 7:13-14, and Luke 1:79.

Let us now consider the **pride** the addict.

1. Consider the pride of the idolater in Romans 1:30
2. **Arrogant** (*huperephanos*)—*to show oneself above others, over topping, to be conspicuous above others, or to be pre-eminent. Secondly, it is to have an overweening estimate of one's means or merits, despising others or even treating them with contempt, being haughty.*<sup>1</sup>
3. **Boastful** (*alazon*)—*to be an empty pretender, a boaster. Alazon describes the person who boasts about possessions and abilities he doesn't actually*

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<sup>1</sup>Strong, J. 1996. *The exhaustive concordance of the Bible : Showing every word of the text of the common English version of the canonical books, and every occurrence of each word in regular order.* (electronic ed.) (G5244). Woodside Bible Fellowship.: Ontario

have.<sup>2</sup> Its **antonym** is *tapeinós*, which speaks of a person who is humble, who places himself on the ground floor.<sup>3</sup>

4. What is more striking than the actual *definitions* of these words, especially those found in Romans 1, is the **context** in which they are found! The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament shows that *alazon* portrays *the corruption of idolatrous paganism*.<sup>4</sup> The unredeemed masses under God's wrath (v18), pursuing what they perceive to be paradise, in opposition to God, gratifying their lusts and exhibiting the features of verses 29ff.
5. Here this mystery is resolved, this pride, arrogance, boastfulness, accompanies **idolatry**. The natural result of a life of idolatry is the ruin and misery we see in the life of the addict.
6. **Help the addict:** Paul counsels Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:12 not to allow anyone to look down upon his youthfulness (the reader should consider the context). Paul then explains that Timothy will achieve this by living such an exemplary Christian life that they will not be able to fault him on anything that presents as childish youthfulness. A temptation with some Christians when faced with addicts who want to belittle them for their sheltered lives, is to try to exaggerate some sinful aspect of their past in order to identify with the addict. This doesn't show Christian character, rather it immediately exposes the fact that the Christian has fallen into the trap the addict wants him in. He has feared the addict enough to sin so he won't look stupid. Addicts will see through that kind of thing. Rather Christians who desire to be helpful will not try to brag about past sin. They will help addicts by acknowledging their sin as serious. They will refuse to compete with the addict for prominence and control. Personal pride must not stand in the way of clear evangelism, even if the Christian helper appears primitive and naïve. The way in which Christian helpers prevent an addict from looking down on them is by conducting themselves humbly, in an exemplary way, using God's word as the backbone of their approach. Be willing, as was Christ (Romans 15:3), not to please yourself by trying to win the admiration of the addict, but by trying to win the addict by your clear, unashamed, humble, Christian character and use of God's Word. The addict is proud; don't mimic him.

### *Addicts Know Interpersonal Misery*

One thing that is true in the lives of addicts is that they have ruined their relationships with most of the people around them. Even this can be used as an evangelistic and discipleship opportunity.

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<sup>2</sup>Strong, J. 1996. *The exhaustive concordance of the Bible : Showing every word of the test of the common English version of the canonical books, and every occurrence of each word in regular order.* (electronic ed.) (G213). Woodside Bible Fellowship.: Ontario

<sup>3</sup>Zodhiates, S. 2000, c1992, c1993. *The complete word study dictionary : New Testament* (electronic ed.) (G213). AMG Publishers: Chattanooga, TN

<sup>4</sup> *Theological dictionary of the New Testament.* 1964-c1976. Vols. 5-9 edited by Gerhard Friedrich. Vol. 10 compiled by Ronald Pitkin. (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (8:527-529). Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, MI

Consider what Scripture says about this:

1. In 2 Timothy 3:2c-3, Paul is describing terrible times that would come. One of the specific items in his list is that people would be “unloving” or “without love”. He uses the Greek word “*astorgos*” which speaks of a person who has no “family” love. This is a striking feature in addicts.
2. “Family” love is even seen and expected by common grace in a fallen world (Isaiah 49:15) which makes the lack of it so shocking. As some mothers display lack of family love by discarding their babies in trash cans, so addicts show lack of family love by turning on their parents and families, using them until they will not be used any more.
3. Addicts (often) have so ruined their relationships with the people around them that they can’t name even **one** person who would be pleased to see them at their front door.
4. Addicts weave themselves tightly into a network of “friends” who are all the same at heart, enduring anything to huddle around their “god”. Their addiction is even more important than the life of one of their friends (consider the excellent way in which this is portrayed in the National Geographic documentary on heroin, “Inside”. There a couple uses a batch of heroin that proves too strong. She begins to “fade”—where the body literally falls asleep, including breathing etc—and he doesn’t call an ambulance for fear of being caught. He would rather she died than he got caught and had his habit put in jeopardy.)
5. **Help the addict** by gathering information about their families and closest friends. Find out about people they used to be close to who will no longer associate with them. Show them, using specific examples in their lives, that they lack family love (*astorgos*) Convict them of sin in this specific area. Show them that it is their own personal sinful actions that have brought about such misery for them and all of their loved-ones. **Notice too** that Paul’s next accusation in the text is that they refuse to be reconciled. Use his very situation and misery to show him his need to be reconciled to God and the people around him. Case of the man who repented after holding his own mother down on the floor with a knife to her throat because she wouldn’t tell him where her purse was.

### *Addicts Talk Too Much*

One thing addicts seem to love is talking. In all of their talk, certain trends are noticeable:

1. Addicts like to speak a lot about their own experiences. Unfortunately, a lot of what they say leans toward self-promotion. They want you to be impressed with their experiences and the admirable way in which they have come through hard life experiences.
2. Addicts like to justify themselves and their way of life. While they often freely confess their shortcomings generally, their confessions are laced with accusations against other people. Listen for what they say **in addition** to their confessions. Do they emerge appearing relatively innocent while others appear wrong and unreasonable?

3. Consider Romans 3:19. God puts an end to the hum of self-justifying arguments and **everyone** stops speaking.
4. **Help the addict** by bringing him to the point where he will **stop talking** and confess this sin before God. Convict (rebuke) him of this sin (Titus 2:15). Specifically, this can be done by noting the specific ways in which they continually declare their innocence and other people's culpability. Use specific incidents (as in the data you gather while considering their interpersonal misery) to convict them of this sin of continually trying to appear right. Specific conviction is most likely to aid specific repentance.

### *Addicts Struggle with Accurate Perception*

We considered the addict's proneness (with the rest of the fallen human race) to worship elements of God's good creation that bring him a pleasant bodily experience rather than worshipping God. To an extended degree, he sees true value in his addiction of choice and no value in God. He is convinced that his addiction of choice will deliver the promised reward, even though he knows fully that it has failed repeatedly.

Depending on mind-altering substances increases the severity of the addict's warped perspective of reality. His perception of the world is clouded by:

1. The mind-altering effects of his drug/alcohol/substance
2. His numbness from the exhaustion of pursuing pleasure but not finding satisfaction (See Jeremiah 9:5)
3. Their depression, mulling over the meaning of life and their helpless worship/slavery.
4. **Help the addict:** I listen to addicts reasoning about the meaning of life. It is always helpful to ask them questions that will help you to understand their concept of life.
  - a. Ask them questions without criticising their world-view—you are learning what they perceive to be true.
  - b. Ask them what they think their purpose in this world is.
  - c. Expand the circle of questioning and ask them what they think the purpose of the human race is; why are we even here?
  - d. Ask them about the whole world; why is *it* here? Find out what they think about creation and God the Creator.
  - e. If God created the world, what were His purposes?
  - f. If God created the world, what rights does He have over the universe and the people He has made?
  - g. Find out what rights they think God has over them as individuals.
  - h. Find out what they think is the ultimate source of motivation in life.

It is helpful to consider these questions in the framework Paul provides in Romans 8:28-30—God's delightful foreknowledge of His people, His creation in order to give them existence, His plan of redemption in order to justify them, His grace in eternal glorification. In this context, God is working **all things** (verse 28) for the good of His people and for His glory. God's purpose is seen in a nutshell in verse 29—that there would be many people who would be *like Jesus*. In short, addicts need to be exposed to a

vast, mature, Christian world view. They need to see God's demands on their lives and their responsibility to function as God requires.

### *Addicts Come for Help for Different Reasons*

Christians who desire to help addicts should seriously consider what it was that brought the addict to seek help. I have seen **two major dynamics** at work here.

1. **Firstly:** Most addicts I have had to deal with have given me reason to believe they had never truly been born again—including many who claimed to be believers. What brings them to the crush-point that forces them to call out for help is their **pressing circumstances**. It appears in this situation that their final motivation is their circumstantial misery, intertwined with intense emotions. Often, a Christian person who questions an addict in this condition, will find that they have recently been asked to leave the place where they have been staying. This often has a high shock factor and they seek help in a highly emotional state. In many cases, regaining shelter appears to be the final and sole motivating factor.
2. Notice that the greatest need here is not improved circumstances, but the salvation of his soul! The counsellor's aim is not primarily to get the addict off the street, but to use his pressing circumstances as a God-given opportunity for evangelism.
3. Consider the tragedy of irreversible brain damage through drug abuse that apparently pushes the addict beyond the reach of the gospel, and thus hope.
4. **Help the addict:** An opportunity such as this for a Christian counsellor is a blessing because he can use this circumstantial misery in the way God intends it to be used. Scripture shows that increasing circumstantial misery is a display of God's goodness and mercy. It is **this misery** that presents the addict with the God-given opportunity to repent. This is the theme found in Psalm 107. There the psalmist begins and ends with a statement of the goodness of God, and in between those statements, shows how God brought people to repentance by subjecting them to personal, circumstantial misery. Use this misery in the addict's case by warning him that this is a display of God's goodness and mercy. He dare not reject this opportunity to repent because the calamity and misery that will come to those who do not repent will be immeasurably more intense and extended. Be ready and willing to direct this addict to Christ.
5. Those who come for counselling because they are caught and **exposed** seem less likely to succeed than those who come because they are personally broken and exhausted with their sin (they expose themselves).
6. **Help the addict** by using the shame of exposure to warn ultimately of the shame and exposure of the future final judgement (Revelation 20:11-15).
7. **Secondly: Every believer struggles** with one or other sin to different degrees of intensity (some are **entangled**—Hebrews 12:1). The dynamic here is different. While negative circumstances do play a part, what is more compelling than anything else is the convicting work of the Holy Spirit, urging them toward authentic personal holiness and true worship (John 16:8). This is the war (1 Peter 2:11, James 4:1ff). With true



believers, rather than confusion there is an eager desire to lay hold of the spiritual secret that will set them free. It is entirely possible, when an unbelieving addict comes exhausted to the counsellor, that it is the result of a convicting work of the Holy Spirit in his heart. It is when this dynamic is in force that the biblical counsellor can exude the most hope.

### **Be Ready to be Involved and to Give Hope**

*You will want to gain genuine involvement*

1. by being willing to **listen** to him/her (**James 1:19**, Romans 12:3)
2. by **learning** the shocking reality of their lives
3. by developing a genuine sense of urgency/compassion because of their misery (past, present and future)
4. by being willing to extend yourself to help them in their state of need
5. because you personally believe that even at this desperate stage there really is hope through the gospel.

*You will want to give them hope at a very early stage because*

1. They truly are exhausted from repeated failure (for many, death is not far off due to organ failure or suicide—deliberate or accidental)
2. They have no confidence in you or the Bible (probably compelled by someone else to come to you)
3. They know that you have probably never experienced their lifestyle, you live in different worlds—you are amusingly naïve to them.
4. They are in a poor state of health which too leads them to hopelessness.
5. They are conscious that they have done so much damage in their relationships that they really don't believe it is possible to undo the damage, nor do they have the energy to try.
6. Their cravings and the feeling of emptiness are so intense, they really don't believe they could ever withstand them (they come believing they will never be free).
7. In spite of the misery their addiction has brought them to, they are convinced that nothing can bring them the relief that **think** their addiction can.

*You can give them hope by*

1. Refusing to nit-pick at their obvious lack of understanding in many areas of life. Overlook the side issues and go for a life-changing conviction of sin and repentance that signals a fresh start. Use the suggestions made in the material we have already covered.
2. Showing them how Scripture describes **exactly their** situation (fallenness, desire, sin, slavery, bodily sensation, dependence, worship, idolatry)—nothing new! (1 Corinthians 10:13)

3. Showing them that God really does save people like them—regardless of how far gone they are (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).
4. Showing them that the change can begin immediately through **the Person** Jesus Christ and will be permanent and transforming (Acts 16:31, Romans 10:9, **Hebrews 7:25**)
5. Showing them that there is genuine help among the Lord's people (Ephesians 4:11-16, Jude 22-23).
6. Showing them that you are willing to deal sincerely with them regardless of whether they are attempting to manipulate, deceive or ridicule you or not. Christians who were once addicts tell me that **this** is one of the things that made the greatest impact on them in their drugging state; when they were approached by sincere Christians.

### **Be Ready to Convict of Sin and Apply the Gospel of Grace**

*The solution is the gospel of the Lord Jesus—in the following specific areas*

1. **Consider the Critical importance of conviction**—be specific, they need it. (Take special note of Dr. Adams' treatment of *conviction* in *How to Help People Change*.)
2. They have sinned **against God** (Psalm 51:4, Genesis 39:9, 13:13, etc.). The objective nature of their sin must be shown to them so that it would become clear to them that their sin is not just about their own isolated lives, it is a personal offence against God. Christ's atoning sacrifice deals with that offence.
3. Their present misery is the merciful **consequence** of that lifestyle. Far more intense, eternal consequences await them. It was in order to save them from this sin and its consequences (temporal and eternal) that Christ died. This (the Gospel of Jesus Christ) is God's specific solution to this particularly pronounced rebellion and tragedy. (Ephesians 2:3-5, Romans 6:23).
4. The **hostility** (clash between **their** agenda and the agenda of **God**) must be addressed (Romans 8:7, 1:30, 5:10, John 7:7, Colossians 1:21, **2 Timothy 3:4**) I have quoted a number of texts here to emphasise this actual hostility in the unsaved addict's heart toward God because of the seeming paradox we noted earlier. Remember, when speaking to an addict, he/she may come across as so broken and miserable, you couldn't imagine butter melting in their mouths. Yet at the same time, we saw that they are fiercely proud and self-righteous. In their hearts is a blazing hostility toward God. This hostility must be dealt with by those who desire to help addicts. Addicts must come with this hostility toward God broken. **Beware, addicts often come across as helpless, innocent victims**; be careful to hear what Scripture says about this covert (or not so covert) hostility toward God in fallen man. Because of Jesus, true peace is possible! Colossians 1:19-23. Confess and turn away from hostilities.
5. Call the addict to repent from a pleasure-centred lifestyle and to commit him/herself to a principle-governed lifestyle where Jesus is Lord and



Master (2 Timothy 3:4). Earlier, we spoke about the interpersonal misery of the addict. Much of this has to do, as we saw, with the fact that he/she will not live in submission to any authority. Their authority is their personal desires. This is often what has caused the interpersonal problems; refusing to submit to the authority of their parents, refusing to submit to the law of the land, ultimately, refusing to submit to God Himself. Christians who desire to help addicts would do well to show this tendency in the life of the addict and use it as a point of conviction of sin, urging them toward repentance, submitting to the authority of God for the first time, rather than submitting to their own personal desires.

6. Addicts, because of their self-centred lifestyles and the sins they have engaged in as they have pursued their desires, naturally carry around a sense of guilt. The Gospel of Jesus Christ deals with this guilt as well (Psalm 32:1-5, 1 John 1:9). Sometimes addicts use this load of guilt as a reason why they can't come to God for forgiveness—they consider themselves too far gone. The gospel declares that even such addicts will be **freely justified** by God's grace (Romans 3:23-24).
7. Call the addict to deliberately renounce their gods/idols they love so much (initial breaking-off commitment) and to persevere in distancing themselves from them progressively (1 Thessalonians 1:9, Romans 6:19, Hebrews 12:1).
8. Call the addict to be vigilant; he has been prone to succumb to the worship of one substance/activity, he is therefore prone to do this in every area of life—like drug addicts who kick the drugs but become alcoholics or heavy smokers.

*A note on feelings orientation*

1. One may wrongly conclude that because there is so much happening in the physical body to raise and lower one's sense of wellbeing, that one is the victim of his own body. This impression should **never** be given. True believers have the power, by God's grace and empowering Spirit, to live godly lives with the kind of vigour that will pull their feelings right in their wake (Romans 8:13, Colossians 3:5).
2. Consider Psalm 1 and other Scriptures that speak of the **blessedness** of God's people. Addiction is not *inevitable* it is the result of sinful response to bodily feelings—looking for **blessedness** in the wrong places. Repentance will include the daily, positive pursuit of **this** blessedness. This is deliberate, passionate, putting off and putting on (Colossians 3 and Ephesians 4). (Mere sobriety is not enough, total transformation is God's intention—Romans 12:1-2.)

### *A note on resistance*

Failure in counselling homework with unbelievers often seems to be tied up with an obvious **confusion** about what you are asking them to do; a deep lack of understanding of even basic issues. This is both a spiritual reality (1 Corinthians 2:14) and an unwillingness and lack of desire to give themselves to spiritual exercises. There is an unwillingness to **override** negative feelings and to act according to principle in even **one** inconvenient action. This is war! When God breaks through into that life, that **resistance** and **confusion** immediately begins to vanish—very thrilling.

### **The critical role of church involvement, accountability and radical amputation**

*Help the addict with the following: He will need:*

1. Proper **church involvement** and support (Even unbelievers should be urged to spend time with the Lord's people; the place where they are most likely to encounter God's saving grace. Proverbs 13:20, Romans 10:17)
2. Support **must** include personal **accountability** with a suitable believer who truly cares—consider the following suggestions for ground rules from one of Dr. Mack's outlines:
  - a. *Agree on the parts of your lives that you will be accountable for, more diligent and faithful in.*
  - b. *Person can't be closer than spouse.*
  - c. *At beginning of each session, go straight to the issues.*
  - d. *Agree to ask very direct questions. You design your own questions and he his. Be brutally honest with yourself. And receive their suggestions as well (since you struggle with different things).*
  - e. *Last one, "Have you deceived me in any of your answers to my previous questions?" (from Chuck Swindoll)*
  - f. *Agree on how much of the conversation can be shared with other's spouse.*
  - g. *Spend a specific amount of time, keep it succinctly edifying. (Critical in order to prevent addiction from staining every conversation and facet of life).*
3. This will help him in the gruelling process of **radical amputation**. (I have simply used the word "he" in the sentences below, referring to either a man or a woman, in order to keep my sentences simple.)
  - a. He may have to stay with a Christian family for a period of time
  - b. He may have to hand over monthly income to a trusted person

- c. He may have to use a less sophisticated 'cell phone that doesn't have an internet connection
  - d. He may have to install accountability software and or put his computer in a more public place
  - e. He may have to move house, change job
  - f. He may have to ask someone to keep him to his schedule
  - g. He will need help to identify the situations in which he is most tempted and to install inhibitors and facilitators in order to counteract deceitful behaviour—people, places, music, movies, aromas, habits (daydreaming), events (things going right or wrong), busy-ness/inactivity etc. Temptation, in such circumstances, can return in full force even years later.
4. He will need a **temptation plan** and a **failure plan**. He will need help to develop proper plans that will specify what he must do when he experiences temptation and when he has failed to resist temptation (excellent example in *Introduction to Biblical Counseling* pages 291-292)—to fail to deal with this is to set him up for devastating discouragement (addicts tend to want to come right in an **instant**, that is a demonstration of the nature of addictions) *Godliness Through Discipline* by Dr. Jay Adams is an outstanding resource in this regard. People who help addicts often see a failure (getting drunk again or getting drugged up again) as a uniquely catastrophic tragedy, as if all of their work is now destroyed. They become discouraged and their discouragement shows, encouraging the struggling addict to think that more damage has been done than has actually been done. As every honest believer knows, we all sin in many ways (James 3:2). While it truly is a tragedy when a child of God falls into sin, believers should be cautious not to label the sin of the addict who experiences a failure as being of a greater magnitude than the sin of a believer who struggles with another form of temptation. Understand from your own experience that we do sin, all of us. What the addict needs is strong encouragement to remain pure and to keep short accounts with God, without going to the extreme of creating a permissive environment.
5. **Very important:** He will need help to avoid seeing the whole of his life through the eyes of an addict—focus on character growth **other** than the particular “addiction” (this will help to keep him/her from discouragement in the face of failure) such as:
- a. Begin on simple submission to genuine authority
  - b. Work on being others-focused rather than being self-focused
  - c. Work on personal pride and self-justification (Dr. Mack’s book: Humility)
  - d. Work hard on family love (Your family God’s way)
  - e. Work on communication (Your family God’s way)
  - f. Work on being a joyful person rather than being burdened (and burdening others) with a victim/martyr mentality.

### A Final Word of Hope

It seems that in our day there are two words that have become inseparable. The one is “addict” and the other is “rehab”. We have come to think that the

only solution to the slavery of addictions is “rehab”. Having managed a “rehab” facility myself, I place high value on being able to remove an addict from his environment of fierce temptation into a totally different environment where he can learn a new, godly, disciplined way of life, before facing the challenges he will need to face when he returns to ordinary life.

Having said this, I would like to point out that the idea of “rehab” is relatively new. I have not been able to trace the concept back any further than approximately 60 years (even the 12-step program of Alcoholics Anonymous (1950) only dates back to 10 June 1935). One must ask the question, “What happened to addicts before the era of “rehab” centres?” Surely God was able, in the past, to save His people, whether they were addicts or not? (Hebrews 7:25, Isaiah 63:1—mighty to save) My own grandfather was one of them—an alcoholic until his early 30’s—saved through the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. I have every confidence that as sincere Christian people apply the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to addicted people, God is still able to save them radically, forever, for His glory. Please don’t be discouraged by the failure or inaccessibility of “rehab” centres, rather arm yourself with hope in the gospel, which is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes (Romans 1:16).