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DEVELOPING A BIBLICAL DISCIPLESHIP CURRICULUM  
FOR UNITED GOSPEL RESCUE MISSION IN  
POPLAR BLUFF, MISSOURI

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A Project  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Educational Ministry

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by  
Gregory Wayne Kirk  
May 2024

**APPROVAL SHEET**

DEVELOPING A BIBLICAL DISCIPLESHIP CURRICULUM  
FOR UNITED GOSPEL RESCUE MISSION IN  
POPLAR BLUFF, MISSOURI

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Defense Date: March 1, 2024

I dedicate this doctoral project to my loving wife, Pamela. I love you more than I can say or write. For 45 years, you have been all over the country either in the military, school, or the ministry. I could have never finished this project without your support and willingness to travel back and forth between Poplar Bluff and Louisville time and time again. Our time in Foster #2 will always be remembered with its creaky floors and radiated heat. Good times all!!

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ICC	International Critical Commentary
JFB	Jamieson, Robert, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown. <i>Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible</i> . Hartford, CT: S. S. Scranton, 1871. <a href="https://ccel.org/ccel/j/jamieson/jfb/cache/jfb.pdf">https://ccel.org/ccel/j/jamieson/jfb/cache/jfb.pdf</a>
LSJ	Liddell, Henry George, Robert Scott, and Henry Stuart Jones. <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> . 9th ed. with revised supplement. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIGNT	New International Greek Testament Commentary
<i>TDNT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–1976



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## PREFACE

When I walked on the campus during student preview week in the fall of 2017, my decision was made. The absolute beauty of the campus combined with the thought I could be educated in the same halls as many other great men and women who came before me.

I would like to thank Dr. Matthew Haste for listening to my crazy talk during this doctoral project. He was the best advisor I could have worked with.

I also want to thank my humble brother-in-law, Dr. Timothy Paul Jones, who encouraged me every step of the way.

Thank you to the SBTS Library for all the archived doctoral projects on file for me to download, read, and reread over and over again.

Thank you, Dr. Jeremy Pierre and Dr. Robert Jones, for teaching me what a biblical counselor is and does. Your humor and straightforward teaching helped me understand the biblical counseling models you presented. I will miss making Dr. Jones's eyes roll at my many quirky comments.

Thank you, Dr. Stuart Scott, who taught me that if the Bible does not explicably say something, we should not just infer it.

Thank you, Dr. Harrod, for putting up with my seeming inability to understand statistics. You are the most gracious man I know. Your heart for ministry made me love you even though I hate math and statistics.

Thank you, Jennifer Stec, my editor. Without your constant prodding and pushing me to write better, this work may have never been completed. You will be my friend for life for this.

Lastly, I want to thank my loving wife, Pamela, who patiently put up with my whining and complaining every step of the way during the process. Without her continued encouragement and sideline cheerleading, this would not have been possible.

This has been an exhausting, frustrating, exciting, and depressing few years. I thought at times I would never be done, and other times I would see a glimmer of hope that it could be accomplished. I learned that I could do hard things, and I also learned that God is gracious and willing to help the simpletons who begin doctoral projects. I am glad to say that this simpleton finished the course.

Greg Kirk

Poplar Bluff, Missouri

May 2024

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Stronghold is defined as a “fortified place; a place of security or survival; a place dominated by a particular group or marked by a particular characteristic.”<sup>1</sup> These definitions could also be used when describing an addiction. Addictions become strongholds because living in addiction becomes a place of safety for addicts. The very habits that cause pain and suffering in addicts’ lives also become a haven where they can hide from friends, family, and society. The Scriptures declare that the weapons of Christian warfare are not of the flesh but are mighty through God for the demolition of such strongholds (2 Cor 10:4–5). These verses speak “of casting down imaginations.” Many addicts are caught in a lifestyle of pleasure and imagine that this lifestyle will be the best way to have happiness. Second Timothy 3:4 says that men in the last days will become “lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.”<sup>2</sup> Second Corinthians 4:4–5 states, “We demolish arguments and every proud thing that is raised up against the knowledge of God, and we take every thought captive to obey Christ.” These verses and others offer hope, rooted in Christ, that the hardships experienced by addicts are not unique to them and that in Christ they will find the true power that will enable them to walk in power and in freedom that can only be found in Christ. The Scriptures contain enough answers to mankind’s problems.

As a minister of the gospel and executive director of the United Gospel Rescue Mission in Poplar Bluff, Missouri, I want to help men and women caught in the

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<sup>1</sup> *Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed. (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 2003), s.v. “stronghold,” <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/stronghold>.

<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the Christian Standard Bible.

stronghold of addictions break free using the principles of discipleship, which entails a close walk with Christ and a consistent study of his Word.

### **Context**

The United Gospel Rescue Mission (UGRM) in Poplar Bluff, Missouri, has been meeting the needs of addicted men for fifty years. These needs include housing, food, personal hygiene products, and clothing. In those years, the UGRM has grown. Once a home for a drunk man to sleep off his drunkenness, UGRM now provides programs, Bible studies, and biblical counseling to addicts, offering them real hope for a future of sobriety. The New Life Transition program is a free, one-year residential program provided to thousands of men who have come through the doors seeking help with addictions. Men come to the UGRM to find peace in Christ and break the bonds of the flesh and habitual sin. These sins have had dominion over them for days, months, and sometimes years. These men have lived out the words of Solomon: “As a dog returns to its vomit, so the fool returns to his foolishness” (Prov 26:11).

UGRM provides a stable environment for those who have lived a chaotic lifestyle. Drugs, alcohol, and even pornography create a multitude of problems. These habits take the most crucial role in their lives, and nothing else matters. Over a period of time, addictions take more and more of the men. Soon, addictions are more important than family, a job, or even a place to live.

One serious problem found at UGRM is the constant turnover of men in the program. Though the New Life program is designed to last for one year, men who enter UGRM are continually leaving at different intervals, some due to relapse. The transient nature of hardcore addicts is a consistent problem. Homeless individuals who stay in camps, on the streets, or in abandoned buildings live a life of day-to-day existence. If the present situation does not suit them, they pick up and move on. Therefore, stability is a

significant factor. People who own a home, have a good job, or have family ties in an area learn that they cannot just pick up and leave when problems arise.

Men from every state and sometimes other countries enter the doors of the UGRM. Some men are intoxicated or under the influence of drugs when they arrive. This requires a detox protocol before beginning a program or counseling session. Some men will leave the program or cause a disturbance so that they will have reason to be excluded from the program. There is little impetus to work through their addiction when their belongings consist of a few personal items of clothing or essential papers and they have no sense of obligation to a community.

The constant turnover of men makes it challenging to lead a group through a step-by-step program from beginning to end. On one day, there are thirty men in the New Life Program; the next day there are twenty men present; the next week there are thirty men again. The program needs a curriculum that introduces clients to the saving grace of Jesus Christ and disciplines new believers to be growing, thriving, solid followers of Christ.

### **Rationale**

In a single year, UGRM provides services to over 200 men. Although most will not complete the program, they still need a biblical curriculum to use while enrolled. There are few biblically based curriculums or workbooks that address individuals in the grip of addiction. Curriculums currently available on the market are expensive and do not always meet the needs of men who find themselves in hopeless situations. Curriculum costs grow exponentially when men enter and exit the program without completing the program.

In the early 1990s, little was written concerning recovery from addiction. Each program or group created workbooks suited to their needs. Most rescue missions use programming based on the Alcoholics Anonymous Twelve Step model promoted by Bill Wilson. UGRM currently utilizes a curriculum that is primarily written from an

integrationist viewpoint and heavily relies on Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) to help men break free from addiction. It contains some references to Scripture. I wrote the curriculum currently in place at UGRM. As I have grown in my counseling practice, I have found, as Powlison says, “the truth that is in Jesus reveals and changes what we live for. He changes how we live.”<sup>3</sup> This is what men struggling with addictions need—God’s truth and a changed life. The absence of a robust biblical discipleship curriculum leads to leads to discouragement among the staff and the teaching volunteers and can ultimately result in a client’s weak attempt at or failure to achieve sobriety.

The mission of UGRM attracts also well-meaning volunteers, many of whom serve as lay counselors. These men are providing an excellent service; however, many are not knowledgeable concerning addictions. In the absence of a standard curriculum for counseling, lay counselors create their own studies. However, as they are studying to become biblical counselors and learn the ropes of teaching, they need to be trained in a standard curriculum that they can then use to counsel the men.

Furthermore, the absence of a biblical discipleship curriculum also affects the ability of UGRM to plan a purposeful speaking ministry. Invited speakers speak on random topics; this can cause confusion for those dealing with addictions because speakers can provide wrong information, or their material can conflict with the fundamental beliefs of the mission. There is an immediate need to equip current and future counselors and speakers with a biblical discipleship curriculum that addresses addiction.

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<sup>3</sup> David Powlison, *Seeing with New Eyes* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2013), 3.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to create a biblical discipleship curriculum that promotes and introduces clients to faith, repentance, and power through the gospel of Jesus Christ at United Gospel Rescue Mission in Poplar Bluff, Missouri.

## **Goals**

The following goals determined the effectiveness of this project.

1. The first goal was to assess the spiritual beliefs of at least fifteen clients at the United Gospel Rescue Mission.
2. The second goal was to develop an eight-session classroom study, taught over a four-week time period. Each class taught the clients a scriptural basis on how to walk in a Christlike manner.
3. The third goal was to implement the classroom study with the intent to equip new clients with the biblical tools to worship God.

Definitive research methodology measured when these three goals had been accomplished.<sup>4</sup> The research methodology and instruments used to measure the success of each goal are detailed in the following section.

## **Research Methodology**

Three goals determined the effectiveness of this project. The first goal was to assess the current level of spiritual knowledge of at least fifteen clients at the United Gospel Rescue Mission. Many of the men who enter the UGRM come from a life on the streets or from prison. Those who showed little to no understanding of salvation were first counseled on their need for salvation. After an initial time of counseling and upon entry to UGRM's New Life Program, clients were given the pre-study survey.<sup>5</sup> I

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<sup>4</sup> All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use.

<sup>5</sup> See appendix 1.



statistically analyzed the results of this survey, interpreted the responses, and modified the curriculum developed in goal 2.<sup>6</sup> Ultimately, fourteen clients completed the survey.

The second goal was to develop an eight-session classroom curriculum, taught over a four-week period, that would be implemented in a group format and allow for one hour of interactive teaching and discussion. The curriculum primarily focused on developing an understanding of old works of the flesh, repenting from habitual sin, and living by faith in Christ. Participants were required to engage in class discussions and complete assigned homework. The curriculum was evaluated by an expert panel consisting of the pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church in Doniphan, Missouri; the Chair of Biblical Counseling at Baptist Bible College in Springfield, Missouri; and the Director of the Addictions Connection in Florence, Kentucky. They rated the lessons as exemplary and faithful to biblical teaching. The panel utilized a rubric to ensure the curriculum was biblically faithful, sufficiently thorough, and applicable to ministry practice.<sup>7</sup> This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level.

The third goal was to equip new clients with the tools to worship God through the implementation of the eight-session classroom study on biblical discipleship. The discipleship curriculum covered topics including admitting to God that they are a sinner, asking forgiveness of personal sins against God, learning how to have a daily walk with God through devotional time, and understanding the importance of being involved in a local evangelical church. This goal was measured by re-administering the original survey to each client one week after finishing the study.<sup>8</sup> For the clients who also took the pre-study survey, I performed a *t*-test for dependent samples to determine if there was a

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<sup>6</sup> See chapter 4 for the statistical analysis and interpretation.

<sup>7</sup> See appendix 2.

<sup>8</sup> See appendix 1.

positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-study results. Because of the transient nature of the clients at UGRM, I could not guarantee that the individuals who took the pre-study survey would also be present to take the post-study survey. Although this goal was not met because the t-test did not show a statistically significant increase in knowledge, the difference between the pre-study and post-study survey mean scores showed an overall increase in their knowledge on most survey questions.<sup>9</sup>

### **Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations**

Specific terms used throughout this ministry project are defined below to aid in the reader's understanding of the subject.

*Addiction.* The term addiction has a broad meaning in the counseling community. The world defines addiction as the compulsive use of any substance that they know is harmful. This project uses Mark Shaw's definition: "Physical addiction occurs when you repeatedly satisfy a natural appetite and desire with a temporary pleasure until you become the servant of the temporary object of pleasure rather than its master."<sup>10</sup>

*Addictions.* Addictions are habitual sins in a person's life. Each person is individually responsible for his sins (Rom 1:18–23). Only the light of God's truth can make a man or woman complete (Rom 1:21; 1 Cor 6:12–20; Gal 5).

*Discipleship.* The word discipleship never occurs in the Bible. The term is ambiguous in English. For this project, discipleship is defined as instructing a person who has received Christ to closely follow his teachings. The Scriptures are plain when they state, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have

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<sup>9</sup> See chapters 4 and 5 for analysis and discussion of the project results.

<sup>10</sup> Mark Shaw, *The Heart of Addiction: A Biblical Perspective* (Bemidji, MN: Focus, 2012), 27.

commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt 28:19).

Two limitations applied to this project. Addicts can be skeptical of sharing personal information on surveys. To mitigate this limitation, each client participant was given an identifying code that aided in the collection of data and protected the participant’s anonymity. Second, addicts who live a transient and unpredictable life may, without notice, leave the mission and thus end their participation in the project before the four-week program was completed. To mitigate this limitation, this project required that at least 60 percent of the men enrolled in the program completed through session 4 and 30 percent of the men enrolled completed the entire program.

### **Conclusion**

God has provided every believer with enough spiritual resources to walk in freedom from addictions. The following chapters show how these resources can enable the addicted soul to live free from the stronghold of sin through the freedom found through salvation in Jesus Christ.

## CHAPTER 2

### BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR THE PROJECT

Men who come to the UGRM are basically loners who have isolated themselves from friends and family. Some may have loose friendships with other street people or have friends in their specific community. However, these relationships are scattered and unstable. Men who enter UGRM's program are first shown their need for a Savior and then taught what it means to be a follower of Christ. This is done in spiritual community, where men can share with one another the struggles they face, help one another to be free from addictions, and walk with Christ in wholeness and victory. To walk in victory, new believers need biblical discipleship to facilitate the breaking of sinful strongholds in their lives. Jesus calls new believers to be discipled, and Scripture provides the purpose and the pattern of discipleship. The thesis of this chapter is that an effective discipleship curriculum requires teaching new believers to know and obey God, recognize and reject the temptations of the world, build a new foundation in Christ, prepare for the spiritual battle ahead, and live intentionally with a renewed mind. This will be demonstrated by examining the Lord's call to discipleship, defining terms for understanding discipleship, and reviewing key passages of Scripture related to discipleship, including 1 John 2:3–6, Proverbs 23:29–35, 1 Peter 2:1–6, 2 Corinthians 10:3–5, and Ephesians 4:17–24.

#### **The Call to Discipleship**

Discipleship began in earnest with the early church. Michael Wilkins states, "By the time of the early church, as recorded in Acts, the term disciple was synonymous

with the true believer in Jesus.”<sup>1</sup> Before his ascension to heaven, Jesus instructed his disciples to make more disciples. Matthew 28:19–20 records what is commonly known as the Great Commission: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you.” Wilkins comments, “In a general sense, we may define a disciple as a committed follower of a great master.”<sup>2</sup> Jesus had chosen the twelve disciples and taught them to teach others. He used the process of discipleship to increase his followers’ fidelity and devotion to the gospel. Now it was their duty to repeat the process with other willing participants.

Wilkins points out the disciple was much more than a learner: “To say that a disciple is a learner is true, but this overemphasizes one aspect of the term’s meaning and misses what the term primarily signified in the New Testament.”<sup>3</sup> Discipleship was not simply a person learning from one another. As Wilkins states, “A disciple was one who made a life commitment to a particular master and his way of life.”<sup>4</sup> In *A Call to Discipleship*, author Susan Heck describes a disciple as “a person who attaches himself or herself to a master with a commitment to follow his teaching and imitate his life.”<sup>5</sup> The life of a disciple is far more than hanging around the fringes of a master; it is one of devoted servitude and a close and intimate walk.

The idea that a disciple is an imitation of the master is found in Paul’s letters. Paul exhorts the Corinthians: “Therefore I urge you, imitate me” (1 Cor 4:16) and “Imitate me, just as I imitate Christ” (1 Cor 11:1). Heck notes, “We might say

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<sup>1</sup> Michael J. Wilkins, *Following the Master: A Biblical Theology of Discipleship* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 34.

<sup>2</sup> Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 34.

<sup>3</sup> Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 39.

<sup>4</sup> Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 39.

<sup>5</sup> Susan Heck, *A Call to Discipleship* (Bemidji, MN: Focus, 2012), 3.

discipleship is ‘you follow me as I follow Christ.’”<sup>6</sup> Anthony Carter points out, “Learning from Christ is the disciple’s greatest desire. It is the foundation of all that he believes. He joyfully receives the words of his Master. They are his daily bread. He meditates upon them day and night (Ps. 1:2).”<sup>7</sup>

In Matthew 13:52, Jesus uses *μαθητευθεις* to show the disciples that they are not to be like the scribes who just copy what is written over and over; rather, they are “instructed into the kingdom of heaven” (KJV). The CSB renders this “every teacher of the law who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven.” As A. T. Robertson contends, “The disciple of the kingdom, like the Master, is always fresh-minded, yet knows how to value all old spiritual treasures of Holy Writ, or Christian tradition.”<sup>8</sup>

Jesus took ordinary men and made them his closest associates. He revealed the Father to them (John 17:25–26) and showed himself to be God incarnate when he was baptized (Matt 3:13–15; Mark 1:9–11; Luke 3:21–22). Upon his baptism, the heavens opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him. A voice from heaven proclaimed, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well-pleased” (Mark 1:11). These new followers of Christ quickly discovered they were following a special rabbi. Jesus could have chosen only scribes who knew how to write, or only lawyers who knew the law, or only rabbis who knew the Old Testament. Instead, he chose ordinary people. This gives hope and encouragement to those who follow Christ as they seek to disciple new believers in the ways of Christ. Regular everyday people can become followers, and followers of Christ are to take the Word of God and make disciples over and over.

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<sup>6</sup> Heck, *A Call to Discipleship*, 4.

<sup>7</sup> Anthony J. Carter, “What Is a Disciple?,” *Tabletalk Magazine*, June 2018, 9.

<sup>8</sup> A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1933), s.v. “Matt 13:52” (pp. 83–84).

## Key Terms for Understanding Discipleship

Commonly used to depict disciple, disciples, and discipleship, μαθητής (“a learner, pupil, disciple”) appears over 269 times in the New Testament, with 252 of those instances in the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles.<sup>9</sup> Douglas Mangum defines discipleship:

Discipleship is the process of devoting oneself to a teacher to learn from and become more like them. For the Christian, this refers to the process of learning the teachings of Jesus and following his example in obedience through the power of the Holy Spirit. Discipleship not only involves the process of becoming a disciple but of making other disciples through teaching and evangelism.<sup>10</sup>

To be a follower of Christ is to learn from him and become like him. Burk Parsons avers, “Although many people don’t want to hear it, and while many pastors fail to preach it, there is no distinction between a Christian and a disciple of Jesus Christ.”<sup>11</sup>

Other related words, including μανθάνω (“to learn”), are used to express the idea of discipleship more narrowly, tying discipleship to the concepts of learning and instruction.<sup>12</sup> Like the parallel Hebrew terms, however, these words refer not only to the transfer of information but also to the transformation of one’s lifestyle in order to be more like one’s teacher. The purpose of discipleship is not only to instruct, but to exhort and encourage the new believer, urge him forward in his new walk with Christ, and hold him accountable along the way.

One word often used in conjunction with discipleship is παρακαλέω (“to exhort, or to earnestly support or encourage a response or action”).<sup>13</sup> These words are

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<sup>9</sup> Bible Study Tools, “The KJV New Testament Greek Lexicon—μαθητής,” accessed August 9, 2022, <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/kjv/mathetes.html>.

<sup>10</sup> Chris Byrley, *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, ed. Douglas Mangum et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014), s.v. “discipleship.”

<sup>11</sup> Burk Parsons, “Coram Deo—Before the Face of God: Christians Are Disciples,” *Tabletalk Magazine*, June 2018, 2.

<sup>12</sup> Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, and Henry Stuart Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed. with revised supplement (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), s.v. “μανθάνω.”

<sup>13</sup> James Swanson, *A Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997), s.v. “παρακαλέω.”

synonyms for pleading. Matthew 8:5, Luke 7:4, and Luke 15:28 are passages that describe a person pleading with someone. Working with new believers who are struggling to put away fleshly desires often involves pleading with them to turn from their habitual sin and walk in the new light they have been shown. Learned patterns are hard to overcome, but with care and consistent discipleship, progress can be made.

Another common word for discipleship is *προτρέπω* (“to urge forward”).<sup>14</sup> This word is used in Acts 18:27: “And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers [*προτρέπω*] him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed” (ESV). Paul urged the brethren to receive him when he came. Disciples are often like a crowd cheering on a participant in a sporting event, urging the younger disciple to walk in the new way they have learned. New Christians need to know that there are people who believe in them and are willing to go the distance to see them break free from old habits and patterns.

The word *νουθετέω* is translated as “put in mind: hence admonish, warn, rebuke.”<sup>15</sup> Paul reminds the readers in Acts 20:31, “Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for three years I never stopped warning each one of you with tears.” Paul warned the believers of the wolves who would come in and attempt to change the words that Paul had preached to them and written in his letters. It is often easier to return to old habits than to live in a new way. Discipling sometimes means warning the new convert not to return to his old way of life. This is the goal of the United Gospel Rescue Mission’s discipleship program, to be part of the transformation of a client’s lifestyle to be more like Christ’s.

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<sup>14</sup> LSJ, s.v. “*προτρέπω*.”

<sup>15</sup> LSJ, s.v. “*νουθετέω*.”



## Scriptural Examples of Discipleship

Examples of discipleship are found in the Old and New Testaments. Old Testament fathers were told to disciple their children in the ways of God. Joshua 1:8 states, “This book of instruction must not depart from your mouth; you are to meditate on it day and night so that you may carefully observe everything written in it. For then you will prosper and succeed in whatever you do.” Deuteronomy 6:6–9 also commands,

These words that I am giving you today are to be in your heart. Repeat them to your children. Talk about them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Bind them as a sign on your hand and let them be a symbol on your forehead. Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your city gates.

In Joshua, the Hebrew word for meditate is  $\text{הִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה}$ , meaning “to moan, growl, mutter, speak, and muse.”<sup>16</sup> It was evident that the Lord wanted his people to not only read his Word, but also to keep it on their tongues in their daily walk and work. Fathers were also instructed to teach children the Scriptures as they sat in the house and when they were lying down, maybe at nighttime prayers. They were to keep Scripture so close to their hearts that they could quote it as second nature.

The theme of discipleship continues throughout the New Testament and is carried on by Christians today. At the United Gospel Rescue Mission, counselors have a unique opportunity to serve clients during the most vulnerable times in their lives, coming alongside them as spiritual parents in the faith. When a client trusts in Christ, it is UGRM’s responsibility and privilege to help them know and obey God, recognize and reject the temptations of the world, build a new foundation in Christ, prepare for the spiritual battle ahead, and live intentionally with a renewed mind. When he first comes to Christ, a client must be taught to know the Lord and believe that his power alone can change the heart of stone. The apostle John describes what it means to know and obey God in his first letter.

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<sup>16</sup> Robert L. Thomas, ed., *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries: Updated Edition* (Anaheim, CA: Foundation, 1998), s.v. “ $\text{הִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה}$ .”

## **Learn to Know and Obey God: 1 John 2:3–6**

In his first epistle, John tells the reader that to know God is to follow his commandments. Ernst Dryander is emphatic on this point: “Nothing can take the place of this one indispensable condition; no confession, however faithful; no ‘Lord, Lord,’ however earnest; no churchgoing, however regular; no calling, however high. Nothing can take the place of obedience to the Father.”<sup>17</sup> Obedience to Christ is a foreign concept to the new Christian. Obedience means that the follower will complete, to the best of his ability, whatever the Savior asks. The first order of business is to not commit sin (John 5:14; 8:11). To the addict walking in the newness of life (Rom 6:4), many of the things he desired—drugs, alcohol, illicit sex, profane language, and even vices such as stealing and cheating—are now taboo. The new disciple must determine in his heart that he is walking in a new direction, learning from a new master, and obeying his commandments.

According to Gary Derickson, and in relation to 1 John 2:3–4, “John’s first use of ‘know’ (γινώσκομεν) *ginosko* carries an experiential nuance and should be seen as a relational term.”<sup>18</sup> This first term, γινώσκομεν, is in the perfect tense and means “to know by experience.”<sup>19</sup> Howard Marshall contends that “the sign of knowledge of God is obedience to his commands and recognition of the way of life that he expects from his people.”<sup>20</sup> People who have spent years in addictive behaviors learn to trust their own ways; their “street” knowledge has put them into their current situation. New believers need to understand that obedience to Christ means following his ways and learning from him. Marshall further posits, “To know God thus involves knowledge of his character and

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<sup>17</sup> Ernst Hermann Dryander, *A Commentary on the First Epistle of St. John in the Form of Addresses*, trans. and ed. W. O. E. Oesterley (London: Elliot Stock, 1899), 32–33.

<sup>18</sup> Gary W. Derickson, *First, Second, and Third John*, Evangelical Exegetical Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012), 132.

<sup>19</sup> Henry George Liddell, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon Founded upon the Seventh Edition of Liddell and Scott’s Greek English Lexicon* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1996), 165; I. Howard Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 122.

<sup>20</sup> Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, 122.

requirements and obedience to these requirements.”<sup>21</sup> Listening to Jesus is what a good disciple does. When Jesus was with his disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration, God the Father spoke from heaven: “This is my Son, whom I love. . . . Listen to him” (Matt 17:5). You cannot be a disciple and not listen to Jesus. If knowing God involves knowing his character, a discipleship program is necessary. By teaching clients the nature of God, they learn how to live holy lives. Colin Kruse says, “Ongoing assurance that we are people who know God is dependent upon ongoing obedience to his commands.”<sup>22</sup>

Many new disciples wonder if they are truly a new creature and a real follower of Christ. John writes, “This is how we know that we know him: if we keep his commands” (1 John 2:3). Marshall expounds, “John is writing in the present tense with a positive purpose, to reassure his readers that their experience of God was genuine. We can know by this, he says: The test is whether we keep his commandments.”<sup>23</sup> By teaching the disciple to follow God’s commands, he gains assurance of his new life in Christ. When one becomes mired in sin and old habits, he feels as though he is no longer a follower. If one can stay in his sinful habits and desires and longs to return to his old way of life more than he desires to pursue his new walk with Christ, John says he is not a true disciple: “The one who says, ‘I have come to know him,’ and yet doesn’t keep his commands, is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1 John 2:4). To be a true disciple, one must want to do what the discipler does: eat what he eats, walk where he walks, and be who he is. Fausset explains that the requirement is “not faultless conformity, but hearty acceptance of, and willing subjection to, God’s whole revealed will.”<sup>24</sup> The one who is being discipled wants to conform to the image of the discipler.

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<sup>21</sup> Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, 122.

<sup>22</sup> Colin G. Kruse, *The Letters of John*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 77.

<sup>23</sup> Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, 123.

<sup>24</sup> A. R. Fausset, “The First General Epistle of John,” in JFB, s.v. “1 John 1:3” (p. 4308).

Verses 5 and 6 describe the disciple who keeps God's Word: "Truly in him the love of God is made complete. This is how we know we are in him: The one who says he remains in him should walk just as he walked." Rudolf Bultmann maintains that "the knowledge of God is not a theoretical or speculative knowledge but is rather a relationship to God."<sup>25</sup> When the Lord speaks, the disciple listens. The disciple should cling to every Word of the Lord as if that Word was the day's nourishment or a cold drink of water on a hot day. By heeding 1 John 2:3–6, the disciple becomes more like Christ, which should be the goal of all believers. Only by totally giving his heart, soul, and mind to Christ will he find real freedom from sin.

### **Recognize and Reject Worldly Temptation: Proverbs 23:29–35**

Proverbs 13:15 says, "Good understanding giveth favour: But the way of transgressors is hard" (AV). Those who remain in habitual sin will have a difficult life. Proverbs 23:29–35 begins with a list of questions: "Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has conflicts? Who has complaints? Who has wounds for no reason? Who has red eyes?" These questions are answered in Proverbs 23:30: those who "linger over wine; those who go looking for mixed wine." Solomon does not assign this person the name of drunkard, so this proverb could apply to anyone who occasionally abuses alcohol, prescription drugs, or something similar. There is a tendency for Christians to try to differentiate between the chronic drunkard or addicted drug user and the one who occasionally drinks a small amount or smokes a marijuana cigarette. Scripture shows that excessive substance use reflects a heart attitude of selfishness and self-worship.

The addict is subject to many sorrows and pains while on his quest for enjoyment. Many addicts drink or use drugs to escape emotional pain, only to experience

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<sup>25</sup> Rudolf Karl Bultmann, *The Johannine Epistles: A Commentary on the Johannine Epistles*, trans. R. Philip O'Hara, Lane C. McGaughey, and Robert Funk, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973), 25.

more extreme forms of pain than before they started using their drug of choice. Addicts complain of regret over lost fortune, ruined health, and alienated friends. Franz Delitzsch states that those who linger over wine, as Solomon described in verse 30, signify “meditation and speech, here sorrowful thought and sorrowful complaint (1 Sam 1:16; Ps 55:18) over the exhausted purse, the neglected work, the anticipated reproaches, the diminishing strength.”<sup>26</sup> Addicts cannot keep anything they have, even when it is dear to them. Albert Barnes goes on to show the ultimate end of the addict: “The picture ends with the words of the drunkard on waking from his sleep. Unconscious of the excesses of the night, his first thought is to return to his old habit.”<sup>27</sup>

They are likened to the Israelites in Haggai, who farmed and had wealth but placed all of their money in bags with holes in them (Hag 1:6). The addict may have made thousands of dollars by either working or by theft, but he often has nothing to show for it. He has wounds for no reason, often from stumbling while in a drunken stupor or getting into fights with other inebriated people. Addicts also find themselves in legal problems over actions committed while under the influence. The redness of eyes could be the look of despair that often accompanies debauchery.

Proverbs 23:31 says, “Don’t gaze at wine because it is red, because it gleams in the cup and goes down smoothly.” While this verse seems self-explanatory, there are several opinions on what exactly is being described in this verse. Fausset says that the text “gleams in the cup” literally means “gives its eye,” that is, it sparkles.<sup>28</sup> Sparkles is the rendering of the Hebrew idiom “shows its eye,” which suggests again that the wine is

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<sup>26</sup> Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 6, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, trans. James Martin (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1900), 121.

<sup>27</sup> Albert Barnes, *Notes on the Old Testament: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Jeremiah, Lamentations and Ezekiel*, ed. F. C. Cook and J. M. Fuller (London: John Murray, 1879), 66.

<sup>28</sup> A. R. Fausset, “The Book of Proverbs,” in JFB, s.v. “Pr 23:1–35” (p. 1474–75).

attractive in its appearance.<sup>29</sup> W. J. Deane, S. T. Taylor-Taswell, and Walter Adeney elaborate: “When it giveth his colour in the cup. For ‘colour’ the Hebrew has ‘eye,’ which refers to the sparkling and gleaming which show themselves in wine poured into the cup. It is as though the cup had an eye which glanced at the drinker with a fascination which he did not resist.”<sup>30</sup> This verse paints the picture of wine tempting the drunkard into its grasp. Dean, Taylor-Taswell, and Adeney go on to say, “Wine is like the subtle poison of a serpent, which affects the whole body, and produces the most fatal consequences.”<sup>31</sup> Many times, the bite of the alcohol is the last bite the drunkard will receive if his drunkenness leads to his death.

Jesus said sin is a heart issue (Matt 5:27–30). It is not about what goes *into* the mouth or whether one eats with unwashed hands. It is what comes *out of* the mouth or begins in the mind; these actions begin in the heart (Matt 15:18–20). Any reader of the Old Testament knows that the heart is desperately wicked. Jeremiah wrote, “The heart is more deceitful than anything else and incurable—who can understand it?” (Jer 17:9). Solomon advised, “Guard your heart above all else, for it is the source of life” (Prov 4:23). The sin of addiction begins in the heart and defiles the whole person, leading to other conditions of the body and mind that can make it harder to resist other worldly temptations.

Imbibing wine or drinking alcohol in this manner can lead to deadly consequences. Separation from family, job loss, a breakup with close friends, and even homelessness are all possible results of drinking. The concluding verses of Proverbs 23 provide the evidence of abuse. Addicts will see strange things (v. 33), feel dizzy (v. 34),

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<sup>29</sup> William David Reyburn and Euan McG Fry, *A Handbook on Proverbs*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 2000), 507–8.

<sup>30</sup> W. J. Deane, S. T. Taylor-Taswell, and Walter F. Adeney, *Proverbs*, Pulpit Commentary, vol. 9 (London: Funk & Wagnalls, 1909), 445.

<sup>31</sup> Deane, Taylor-Taswell, and Adeney, *Proverbs*, 445.

and wonder who struck them or why they stumbled and fell (v. 35), yet they will wake up from their drunken stupor and continue in the same old habitual sin (v. 35).

Christians are not on the same team as the world. They do not have the same goals, tasks, or loyalties. If addicts desire to put away sin and live anything that resembles a vigorous Christian life, then they need to recognize that the world is not their friend and they must build a new foundation in Christ.

**Build a New Foundation in Christ:  
1 Peter 2:1–6**

Peter has much to say to the Christians exiled in Asia, and in 1 Peter 2, he tells believers how they can become a part of the Holy Tabernacle. These displaced Christians have left their houses, businesses, and families because of Roman persecution. Peter encourages them in their walk during their sojourn in a foreign land.

*Lay Aside Sinful Ways*

Peter begins by telling them to lay aside common vices. The CSB and some newer translations use the words “rid” or “put away.” These words are translations of *ἀποτίθεται*, meaning “to strip off.” Robertson notes that *ἀποτίθεται* is also translated in a metaphorical sense either “to cleanse defilements (3:2; Jas 1:21) or to put off clothing (Rom 13:12; Col 3:5ff; Eph 4:22).”<sup>32</sup> Peter urges these exiles to strip off all the baggage of their old life. This exhortation originated in the first chapter, in which Peter calls the believers to love one another deeply and with a pure heart (1 Pet 1:22). The very things that they needed to strip off were the things that dirtied and soiled their love for one another.

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<sup>32</sup> Robertson, *Word Pictures*, s.v. “1 Pet 2:1” (p. 1874).

### *Desire the Milk of God's Word*

Peter knows that all those in Christ are like babies who need milk to survive. He encourages them to “desire the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow up into your salvation” (1 Pet 2:2). Charles Bigg describes the eventual results of such nourishment: “Milk causes growth; the growth will fit them for their place in the spiritual house, the royal priesthood.”<sup>33</sup> The word in verse 2, ἀρτιγέννητος, means “newborn babe.”<sup>34</sup> However all men and women who come to Christ may be adults in the physical sense, but they are babies in a spiritual sense and must be disciplined to spiritual maturity. Therefore, the apostle Peter stresses that they must desire the sincere milk of the Word because they must begin with basic doctrines of the faith; they are not ready for meat, or stronger doctrine. This is when the discipler is most important. The seasoned Christian must help the new disciple to learn to love God's Word just as they enjoyed milk as a baby.

The NRSV interprets 1 Peter 1:2: “Like newborn infants long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation.” When believers have put away divisive vices because of their love of God and one another, Paul Achtemeier says that “they must now yearn for God's word with the same single-mindedness with which an infant yearns for the milk that alone will nourish it.”<sup>35</sup> The word ἐπιποθέω means “‘to deeply desire, long for, crave’ (Rom 1:11; 2 Cor 5:2; Phil 2:26; 1 Thess 3:6; 2 Tim 1:4; Jas 4:5; 1 Pet 2:2), or ‘to have great affection for’ (2 Cor 9:14; Phil 1:8).”<sup>36</sup> Thus the new believer needs to have a love and desire for God's Word.

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<sup>33</sup> Charles Bigg, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1901), 125.

<sup>34</sup> Bigg, *Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude*, 125.

<sup>35</sup> Paul J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter: A Commentary on First Peter*, ed. Eldon Jay Epp, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 145.

<sup>36</sup> Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)*, s.v. ἐπιποθέω.



### *Grow Up in Your Salvation*

First Peter 1:2 concludes by saying, “So that by it you may grow up into your salvation.” God wants the Christian to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, so that he is no longer a spiritual babe or as a child tossed about with every wind of doctrine (Jas 1:6). He desires that his sons and daughters grow to become more and more like him, “to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:13–16).

When the new Christian is nourished on “the pure milk of the word,” they “will have tasted the kindness of the Lord” (1 Pet 2:2–3). God shows his graciousness by teaching his disciples how to live pure and clean lives. He also teaches them how to live in a sinful world by ridding themselves of worldly passions and vices (1 Pet 2:1) and becoming a living temple dedicated to him.

### *Become Living Stones*

After admonishing the believers to rid themselves of evil thinking and be nourished on the pure milk of the Word, Peter says they are to build on a new foundation (1 Pet 2:4–8). Peter does not describe an actual home, but a spiritual home. If a person wants to be a part of God’s building plan, he must place his life upon the cornerstone, Jesus Christ. This stone was rejected by the world because they wanted to build their lives as they desired. Therefore, they cast aside the stone of God.

This spiritual home is built with special stones, lively or living stones, representing believers who have become spiritually alive through faith in Jesus Christ. The building must begin with Jesus Christ. Roger Raymer points out, “And as they become more like Him, further conformed to His image, they are being built into a spiritual house.”<sup>37</sup> The disciple has one goal: to be like Christ. These living stones are to

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<sup>37</sup> Roger M. Raymer, “1 Peter,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, vol. 2, *New Testament*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 845.

become a holy priesthood in the new earthly temple built as a showcase of God’s love and mercy to all who come unto him. Robertson adds, “At any rate, Peter has the same idea of Rev. 1:6 (ἱερείς [*hiereis*], priests) that all believers are priests (Heb. 4:16) and can approach God directly.”<sup>38</sup> Before Christ’s death on the cross, man had no access to God except for the one time a year the high priest went into the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement. Now man is able to become a part of a new temple as a stone, a real living stone, and a partaker of this new kingdom.

**Prepare for the Spiritual Battle Ahead:  
2 Corinthians 10:3–5**

In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul writes, “For although we live in the flesh, we do not wage war according to the flesh” (10:3). Though he walks and talks as a human being (in the flesh), Paul acknowledges this warfare is not physical but spiritual. Paul Barnett says Paul “does not conduct his ministry ‘according to the flesh,’ as ‘some’ appear to be saying.”<sup>39</sup> This fight is a spiritual fight and must be fought on a spiritual plane. In the same way, the addict’s struggle is not a fleshly fight, as secular programs would assert when they say the addict is a product of his or her environment. The power to wage and win the battle against any sin is not fleshly power, but the power of Christ within us (2 Cor 12:9). Through discipleship, the former addict can prepare himself for the battle ahead.

Paul emphatically states that in this war, the weapons of warfare are not of the flesh and are powerful through God for the demolition of strongholds (2 Cor 10:3–4). The imagery behind verse 4 is of siege warfare. The Corinthians likely understood this

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<sup>38</sup> Robertson, *Word Pictures*, s.v. “1 Pet 2:5” (pp. 1875–76).

<sup>39</sup> Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 463.

metaphor because it alluded to the circumstances of the Third Mithridatic War against Rome when over a hundred rock fortresses along the Cilician coast were demolished.<sup>40</sup>

There has been much discussion about why the word “stronghold” was used. Many philosophers of the day used terms well understood by the audience, and Paul was most likely influenced by this general philosophical tradition.<sup>41</sup> Alfred Plummer suggests that “the metaphor is from walls and towers standing defiantly, rather than barriers have hastily thrown up to check progress; but the pass. [passive tense] is possible, that is ‘erected,’ ‘set up,’ as a towering obstacle.”<sup>42</sup> However, these are not physical strongholds but mental. Margaret Thrall notes, “The ‘strongholds’ marked out for demolition are λογισμοί, ‘thoughts,’ ‘reasonings,’ perhaps here specifically, ‘sophistries.’ There could be an allusion to intellectual forms of resistance to the apostolic preaching in general.”<sup>43</sup>

To demolish strongholds, Paul writes, requires more than weapons that are σαρκικά (“of the flesh”), or weak and ineffective; instead, Paul’s weapons are δυνατά (“powerful”).<sup>44</sup> The people of Israel are familiar with this language; as Thrall says, Paul’s reader “likewise detects in the background the Israelite tradition whereby the weapons of God’s people are effective because they are filled with divine power.”<sup>45</sup> Only divine power can “demolish arguments and every proud thing that is raised up against the knowledge of God” and “take every thought captive to obey Christ” (2 Cor 10:4–5). The weapons Paul describes are powerful in achieving God’s purposes, in God’s service.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 677.

<sup>41</sup> Margaret E. Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, vol. 2, *Commentary on II Corinthians VIII–XIII*, ICC (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 611.

<sup>42</sup> Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, ICC (New York: T&T Clark, 1915), 277.

<sup>43</sup> Thrall, *Commentary on II Corinthians VIII–XIII*, 611–12.

<sup>44</sup> Thrall, *Commentary on II Corinthians VIII–XIII*, 608.

<sup>45</sup> Thrall, *Commentary on II Corinthians VIII–XIII*, 609–10.

<sup>46</sup> Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 679.

In likening arguments to strongholds that can only be defeated with divine power, Paul recognized that firmly held belief systems are hard to change and can only change in Christ. Paul speaks fundamentally of the obedience that comes from Christ and his saving work. Those caught in habitual sin need to bring every thought into the obedience of Christ and his Word. As Plummer suggests, “Submission to Christ is the new land into which they are carried captive.”<sup>47</sup> A new believer must submit his mind and will to Christ to be free from the habitual sin that entraps him. When one has yielded to Christ by setting down his weapons and coming to him in faith, it is important to follow his life very closely. In every area, the new believer must begin to think and handle matters differently, or the old ways from the past will return and ruin his new life. These changes are to a new way of thinking in Christ, and it is imperative that discipleship begins immediately when the new believer sees with new eyes the need to make drastic changes in his thinking and actions.

**Live Intentionally with a Renewed Mind:  
Ephesians 4:17–24**

Without an intentional plan concerning where he will go and what he will do, many times, the sinner will return to the habitual sins he is trying to forsake. Ephesians 4:17 says, “Therefore, I say this and testify in the Lord: You should no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thoughts.” The first command in this verse is to not walk as the Gentiles do. The Greek word περιπατέω means “to walk around” or “to conduct the walk of life.”<sup>48</sup> This word is commonly used for general walking about (Matt 4:18; Mark 1:16; 6:48; 12:38; Luke 7:22; 20:46; John 1:36; 10:23; Acts 3:6). In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul admonishes believers not to return to the old paths they traveled in

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<sup>47</sup> Plummer, *Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, 277.

<sup>48</sup> Heinrich Seesemann, “Πατέω, Καταπατέω, Περιπατέω, Ἐμπεριπατέω,” in *TDNT*, 5:941.

the past. He uses περιπατέω in the figurative sense, using “walk” to indicate the conduct of an individual’s lifestyle, or that which orients an individual toward a specific goal.

Paul warns these new believers not to return to living unintentionally. When men walk unintentionally, they can end up anywhere. No drunken man who has lived in his drunk state year after year comes to the church and announces that this was his plan from the beginning. Ultimately, he was not intentional in his thinking or planning. His sin has become a form of worshipping a created thing rather than his Creator.

Carl Grimm and Christian Wilke explain that the word futility in Ephesians 4:17 has a connotation of “perverseness and deprivation.”<sup>49</sup> Addicts will often do almost anything to get another hit of their drug, including stealing to sell or trade for their drug of choice. The level of their depravity has no bounds, and their hearts grow so callused that they cannot see the truth around them. They have become moral delinquents and are in danger of God turning them over to their reprobate minds (Rom 1:28), bringing them to a base sort of living. They are filled with unrighteousness, and all kinds of evil deeds emanate from their lifestyle (Rom 1:29–31).

Ephesians 4:18 describes Gentiles who were neither Christians nor Jews.<sup>50</sup> The following clauses describe a darkened way of life, repeating in a more concise manner the picture of ethical bankruptcy presented in the first chapter of Romans.<sup>51</sup> Romans 1:21 says, “Their thinking became worthless, and their senseless hearts were darkened.” When one progressively hardens his heart and the Spirit’s witness in his conscience, he eventually has no concept of wrongdoing. He has darkened his heart to God’s Word and does not listen to his teachings.

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<sup>49</sup> Carl Ludwig Wilibald Grimm and Christian Gottlob Wilke, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, trans. Joseph Henry Thayer (New York: Harper & Bros., 1889), s.v. “ματαιότης” (p. 393).

<sup>50</sup> Ernest Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 417.

<sup>51</sup> W. E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, and William White Jr., *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996), 355.

God has revealed himself to people in nature so that no one is without excuse for failing to seek him out and worship him. In the first chapter of Romans, Paul writes, “What may be known about God is plain to them because God has made it plain to them” (Rom 1:19). This verse does not mean that revelation of God in nature is a complete or saving revelation; there is more to God than what is revealed in creation, including everything about the work of redemption accomplished by Jesus Christ. The revelation of God in nature is limited. Paul refers to it as the revelation of “God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature” (Rom 1:20). Although limited, it is nevertheless a real revelation and sufficient to lead a man or woman to worship God properly. This revelation makes the failure of a person to know God a blameworthy offense.

Despite God’s revealing himself in nature, people have rejected or suppressed the revelation sent to them. Paul explains that people “by their unrighteousness suppress the truth” (Rom 1:18). They try to hide and deny God’s revelation of himself. They sense that if they concede the truth about the existence of God, they will have to change their thinking and living. Rather than change the way they think, they suppress the revelation.

This ignorance of God is willful, and because it is willful, God’s wrath is upon them (Rom 1:18). God judges them by giving them over to the inevitable working out of their sin. Paul writes of the darkening of their minds (intellect) and the decay of their moral lives:

For though they knew God, they did not glorify him as God or show gratitude. Instead, their thinking became worthless, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man, birds, four-footed animals, and reptiles. Therefore God delivered them over in the desires of their hearts to sexual impurity, so that their bodies were degraded among themselves. . . . For this reason, God delivered them over to disgraceful passions. Their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. . . . And because they did not think it worthwhile to acknowledge God, God delivered them over to a corrupt mind so that they do what is not right.” (Rom 1:22–24, 26, 28)

A similar though more concise sequence of thought is found in Ephesians 4:17–19. The Ephesians were surrounded by those who walked in the way of the unrighteousness

and became futile in their thoughts. Because of the ignorance within them, they rejected God. The God who should be their joy and glory was now their enemy.

Paul admonished the believers in Ephesus to walk in a new way, but he also showed them what happens when they refuse to walk in this new way. The Gentiles had hardened their hearts toward God. The AV translates the Greek word *πώρωσις* as “blindness.” New translations, including the NIV, translate *πώρωσις* as “hardness.” This translation creates a profound difference in the meaning of the text. The noun *πώρωσις* comes from *πωρός*, which means “stone.”<sup>52</sup> This noun is used in the hardening of joints, probably in an arthritic way. It is also used in forming a cast to mend broken bones. Blindness is another word for *πωρός*. However, as James Boice says, “A ‘blind heart’ cannot see God. Still, the trouble with ‘blindness’ is that it suggests an inescapable and morally blameless inability, and this is not the idea.”<sup>53</sup> Disease models propagated by secular groups like Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous teach that an addict cannot help himself.<sup>54</sup> They take away the addict’s responsibility for sinful behavior by giving him an out, suggesting that his addiction is only an illness and that he cannot help himself.

However, Scripture bears witness that addictive nature comes from a heart seeking another god to worship. Jesus said that the eyes are the lamp of the body (Matt 6:22–23). Jesus knew that what the eyes dwell on, the thoughts will soon dwell on as well. The heart will desire something it does not have. The search for a god to worship allows the heart to contemplate and think of habitual sin. After finding this new god, it

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<sup>52</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *Ephesians*, An Expository Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 153.

<sup>53</sup> Boice, *Ephesians*, 155.

<sup>54</sup> Bill Wilson, co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous, stated, “An illness of this sort—and we have come to believe it an illness—involves those about us in a way no other human sickness can.” Bill Wilson, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 4th ed. (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, 2001), 18.

becomes what the heart desires. However, God wants to be the heart's only desire. The chief aim of man is to love God and worship him forever.<sup>55</sup>

Ephesians 4:20 states, "But that is not how you came to know Christ." Here, the writer is explaining that believers did not learn such a sinful life from Christ. Christ did not live a sinful life, and he has not taught his followers to live a sinful life as other men live. If a man has heard Christ and been taught by Christ, then he has heard and been taught the truth. It is noteworthy that the teacher is Christ and not a minister or another person. Ernest Best states, "The basis of the readers' lives has been changed; ὑμεῖς is emphatic; it is not the basis of everyone's life that has been changed, only that of believers."<sup>56</sup> They were no longer walking as they did as pagans but as those being taught by a new master. Verse 21 points out that Paul assumes they have heard of Christ and are wanting to follow him and what he does. Best goes on to explain, "Acceptance of Christ implies not only some relation to him but also acceptance of some understanding of who he is and what he has done, i.e., the acceptance of some body, however slender, of doctrine."<sup>57</sup>

Being a disciple of Christ means a new walk and a new pattern of living. Sinners often repeat the same behaviors over and over even though they know the consequences. Paul is admonishing these believers that since they knew of Christ, they should be following his ways. In verses 23 and 24, Paul explains that the new disciple is to put off the old way of living. He speaks here of sanctification, a holiness of life that is personal but not a private holiness. Disciplers need to teach those newly freed from sins like addiction that personal sanctification is important. When God said, "Be ye holy; for I

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<sup>55</sup> Westminster Assembly (1642–1652), *The Westminster Shorter Catechism with the Proofs from the Scripture*, Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, last modified September 2013, 1, [https://prts.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Shorter\\_Catechism.pdf](https://prts.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Shorter_Catechism.pdf).

<sup>56</sup> Best, *Ephesians*, 425.

<sup>57</sup> Best, *Ephesians*, 428.



am holy” (1 Pet 1:16), this was a call for all men and women to sanctify their bodies for use by the master. F. F. Bruce avers, “The old ways are to be abandoned, renewal is called for, and this must be an inward renewal.”<sup>58</sup> This inward work is the work of the Holy Spirit working in the lives of men and women who are wholly dedicated to Christ.

### Conclusion

Whether sin is called an addiction, habitual sin, besetting sin, alcoholism, or drug addiction, it describes the same core problem: idolatry and selfish heart desires that create a gulf between man and God. When love for habitual sin is greater than love for God, a man is no longer worshipping his Creator. Mark Shaw writes, “Addiction is the outward manifestation of an inward problem—the lack of an intimate relationship with your heavenly Father.”<sup>59</sup> God wants an intimate relationship with every human being. Putting anything before God or in place of God creates a chasm between children and their loving Heavenly Father. First John 3:1–3 says,

See what great love the Father has given us that we should be called God’s children, and we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it didn’t know him. Dear friends, we are God’s children now, and what we will have not yet been revealed. We know that when he appears, we will be like him because we will see him as he is. And everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself just as he is pure.

Sinners need to have this close relationship with God. They are searching for something to worship and sell their souls for a cheap imitation of God. They think they are living the best life surrounded by the best people; however, they are like miners chasing fool’s gold. Iron pyrite is so close to gold that it fools the uninitiated. The beginning miner thinks he has struck it rich, but he soon learns that all he found was a cheap imitation of the real mineral. Like the novice miner, the addict spends time chasing

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<sup>58</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 358.

<sup>59</sup> Mark Shaw, *The Heart of Addiction: A Biblical Perspective* (Bemidji, MN: Focus, 2012), 213.

after that perfect high or replacement of a loving God in his life. The secular counselor has some nice ideas that could help the addicted, but addicts must turn to God's Word, the weapon of divine power, for instruction, exhortation, encouragement, correction, and training in righteousness (2 Tim 3:16). They need to commit to studying and meditating on God's Word. Church leaders and counselors must disciple those who have been set free from sin, showing them what it means to walk closely with the One who has set them free: Jesus Christ. He is the only one who can say, "A thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance" (John 10:10).

CHAPTER 3  
PHILOSOPHICAL, THEOLOGICAL, AND PRACTICAL  
DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE SECULAR AND  
BIBLICAL DEFINITION AND TREATMENT  
OF ADDICTION

For over 150 years, there has been at least one place the derelict man or woman could go to receive help: the rescue mission. Rescue missions are typically built on “skid row,” the poorer areas of our nation’s cities. Since 1872, the New York City Rescue Mission, founded by Jerry McCauley, has cared for the city’s poor and addicted men, women, and children.<sup>1</sup> In 1877, the Pacific Garden Mission was founded in Chicago for the poor and addicted who inhabited the city.<sup>2</sup> Many missions sprang up across the United States in the succeeding years. Billy Sunday and Mel Trotter were some of the most notable men who sought help for their alcohol addiction.<sup>3</sup> The famous hymn writer Fanny Crosby wrote many of her most beloved hymns for rescue missions and frequently visited their services, pleading for men to come to Christ. Rescue missions began to provide food, shelter, and gospel services for the poor in their cities. As the need for recovery programs became increasingly evident, rescue missions began to provide varying lengths of residential care to the men and women who walked through their doors.

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<sup>1</sup> The Bowery Mission, “Jerry McAuley,” accessed March 31, 2023, <https://www.bowery.org/legacy-of-transformation/our-stories/jerry/>.

<sup>2</sup> Pacific Garden Mission, “Our History,” accessed March 31, 2023, <https://www.pgm.org/who-we-are/our-history/>.

<sup>3</sup> Laurence Winship, “First Day Crowds of 40,000 Gather to Hear Billy Sunday; 15,000 Others Unable to Get into Tabernacle,” *Boston Daily Globe*, November 13, 1916, <https://www.massmoments.org/moment-details/evangelist-billy-sunday-draws-70000-to-boston-revival.html>; Michigan Genealogy Web (MIGenWeb), “Mel Trotter,” last modified March 22, 2007, <https://www.migenweb.org/kent/biographies/famous/trotterMel.html>.

This level of care has now become the norm in rescue work; however, there has been a similar increase in the number of secular programs working with those addicted to drugs and alcohol. There are philosophical differences between the Gospel Rescue Movement and its secular counterparts. Some secular models, including Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), are loosely based on religious ideas and are often thought of as “Christian” programs. Though programs like AA (and its sister organization, Narcotics Anonymous) seek to bring about sobriety, there are philosophical, theological, and practical differences between these mainstream secular programs and a biblical model. This chapter will present the historical background of two models of addiction treatment—the secular Alcoholics Anonymous model and the biblical counseling model—and describe their different approaches to defining addiction, treating addiction, and measuring treatment outcomes. Secular counselors and psychiatrists use AA as their tool to get clients sober. This is seen in an American Psychiatric Association article, “New Research Affirms Effectiveness of AA and Other 12-Step Programs in Treating Alcohol Use Disorder.” The article quotes National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism Director George F. Koob: “It’s important that clinicians and consumers make decisions about treatment for [alcohol use disorder] based in scientific evidence, and this carefully conducted meta-analysis suggests that AA should be on the list of options to consider.”<sup>4</sup> The secular world definitely uses AA as their go-to organization.

### **Historical Background of Alcoholics Anonymous**

To understand AA and its philosophy, one must first understand the significant impact of the Oxford Group Movement on a man named Bill Wilson, or “Bill W.” as he is known within AA. The Oxford Group Movement was founded in 1928 by Lutheran minister Frank Buchman. Buchman’s first parish was in the Philadelphia area, where he

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<sup>4</sup> “New Research Affirms Effectiveness of AA and Other 12-Step Programs in Treating Alcohol Use Disorder,” accessed March 3, 2024, <https://www.psychiatry.org:443/news-room/apa-blogs/new-research-affirms-effectiveness-of-aa-and-other>.

opened a small hospice for troubled and homeless youth. The hospice flourished, and in June of 1905, the Lutheran Church asked him to open a larger hospice for young men. However, after a dispute with his overseeing elders, Buchman traveled to England in 1920 to attend the Keswick Convention, an evangelical conference where he had a “spiritual awakening.”<sup>5</sup> In a small, half-empty chapel, he listened to a Salvation Army preacher speak on the cross of Christ, which led to a religious experience. This awakening was not a gospel-oriented conviction of sin, as Buchman did not see his need for salvation from his personal sins, but only, as Charles Bufe states, “a ‘conversion experience’ complete with ‘a poignant vision of the Crucified.’”<sup>6</sup>

Buchman returned to the States a changed man and began a Bible study at Penn State College that attracted many students. He soon developed a devotional time called “Morning Watch,” and those who were learning from him were told to read their Bibles, pray, and be “listening to God.” This soon became his catchphrase; if he was late to an appointment or did not complete an assigned task, he would say that he was just “listening to God.”<sup>7</sup>

In 1922, Buchman began to set up parties in the homes of wealthy patrons who lived near Ivy League schools. Party attendees would confess their shortcomings to others in the group and be encouraged to bear witness to the changes in their lives. Based on this success, Buchman returned to England and started a house party at Oxford University, taking without permission the name of this prestigious institution as his group’s name. Buchman felt the “Oxford Group,” later known as Moral Re-Armament, would restore a new standard of morality he said was waning in the United States.

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<sup>5</sup> Garth Lean, *Frank Buchman: A Life* (London: Constable, 1985), 26–28.

<sup>6</sup> Charles Bufe, *Alcoholics Anonymous: Cult or Cure?*, 2nd ed. (Tucson, AZ: Sharp Press, 1998), 15. Buchman’s biographer, Garth Lean, noted, “As he left the chapel Buchman’s one thought was not so much to forgive those he had hated, but to ask their forgiveness for the way he had behaved.” Lean, *Frank Buchman: A Life*, 31.

<sup>7</sup> Bufe, *Alcoholics Anonymous: Cult or Cure?*, 15.

Buchman believed that the right “guidance” was sufficient to solve all problems. He came to believe “there is nothing inherently wrong with coercion, domination and submission, with some giving orders and other taking them, and an unequal distribution of wealth and income.”<sup>8</sup> Buchman believed anything that called his “guidance” into question, including logic, conflicting facts, or simply questioning the motivation behind a decision, was an enemy to his movement.

Bill Wilson, or Bill W., came under the influence of the Oxford Group’s guiding principles in 1939 after a decades-long battle with alcohol addiction. His own troubled background led to a desperation to try any other method for treating his disease. Ironically, Bill W. was born in 1895 behind the bar area of a Family Inn. He and his sister had been abandoned by their parents and eventually left in the care of their grandparents.<sup>9</sup> Melancholy and “eaten up with self-doubt,” his grandparents did their best to raise him.<sup>10</sup> Wilson biography Susan Cheever writes that his grandfather instilled in him “an odd mixture of conservatism and a refusal to bow to authority.”<sup>11</sup>

In 1917, a self-conscious and awkward Bill W. enlisted in the Army and was invited to a party by a couple of sisters, one of whom was married to a young man fighting in France. Uncomfortable moving about in groups, Bill W. thought of leaving the party when one of the sisters arrived with a new drink. Cheever writes, “He tried to smile and avoid saying anything stupid. Then someone put a cocktail in his hand, a Bronx

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<sup>8</sup> Bufo, *Alcoholics Anonymous: Cult or Cure?*, 35.

<sup>9</sup> When Bill W. was nine years old, his father took employment in Canada and never returned to his family, leaving Bill and his sister Dorothy to be raised by a single mother. Soon after, their mother decided to go to college to “improve herself” and left them with her parents to be raised until she completed her education and could find employment. Stepping Stones, “Bill’s Story,” accessed May 5, 2023, <https://www.steppingstones.org/about/the-wilsons/bills-story/>. See also Susan Cheever, *My Name Is Bill: Bill Wilson, His Life and the Creation of Alcoholics Anonymous* (New York: Washington Square Press, 2005), 24.

<sup>10</sup> Cheever, *My Name Is Bill*, 30.

<sup>11</sup> Cheever, *My Name Is Bill*, 34. Wilson was born and raised in East Dorset, Vermont. Cheever notes that “the village charter of East Dorset is astonishingly similar to the charter that hangs at the front of every meeting room of AA” (34).

cocktail, it was called. . . . Bill Wilson was a man who had decided again and again that he would never drink. . . . Standing, there, a tall young soldier in uniform with a full-scale war going on inside his head, he somehow felt as if he had no choice.”<sup>12</sup>

The more Bill drank, the less he feared speaking in groups. He had discovered “both brandy and courage.”<sup>13</sup> Just before leaving to fight in World War I, Bill married Lois Burnham. Bill continued to drink during his time in the Army and for years afterward and was on “the verge of losing his marriage and family because of his drinking.”<sup>14</sup> When institutionalized in a hospital run by physician William Duncan Silkworth, Bill learned that Silkworth believed “alcoholism was not a failure of willpower or anything else. He believed that certain people have an allergy to alcohol. This allergy created the ‘phenomenon of craving.’ . . . Silkworth explained that since alcoholism was an allergy, it could no more be defeated by will power than tuberculosis could be.”<sup>15</sup> Silkworth did not perform any scientific studies before writing two articles for a medical journal. He published a pair of articles in the *Medical Record* titled “Alcoholism as a Manifestation of Allergy” and “Reclamation of the Alcoholic.”<sup>16</sup> In the former article, he likened alcoholism to a disease and described the symptoms, diagnosis, and physical basis for the disease. Bill thought he had found his saving grace; he was only “allergic” to alcohol. He vowed never to drink again but a few months later returned to his old habit. Though his doctor threatened to send him to an asylum, a common

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<sup>12</sup> Cheever, *My Name Is Bill*, 82.

<sup>13</sup> Cheever, *My Name Is Bill*, 83.

<sup>14</sup> Cheever, *My Name Is Bill*, 83.

<sup>15</sup> Cheever, *My Name Is Bill*, 120.

<sup>16</sup> William Silkworth, “Alcoholism as a Manifestation of Allergy,” *Medical Record*, March 17, 1937, <https://www.chestnut.org/resources/8b7ff2b0-522c-4496-8f0a-edc79be1ddc5/1937-Silkworth-Alcoholism-as-Allergy.pdf>; W. D. Silkworth, “Reclamation of the Alcoholic,” *Medical Record*, April 21, 1937, <https://silkworth.net/alcoholics-anonymous/reclamation-of-the-alcoholic/>.

practice in that period, and prescribed new drugs to fight alcoholism, nothing helped Bill quit drinking.

In 1939, Bill was introduced to the Oxford Group by his friend Ebby Thatcher. Ebby visited Bill one day at his home and refused Bill's offer of a drink. This stunned Bill because he and Ebby had been drinking buddies for many years. Ebby went on to explain that he had been able to quit drinking by following the Oxford Group's principles: "(1) admission of personal defeat; (2) taking a personal inventory; (3) confession of one's defects to another person; (4) making restitution to those one has harmed; (5) helping others selflessly; and (6) praying to God for the power to put these precepts into practice."<sup>17</sup>

The Oxford Group's guiding principles would make a significant impact on Bill's life and future. Even though Wilson initially scoffed at the movement, he soon had his own "spiritual awakening" at an Oxford Group retreat, became sober, and began advocating for others to follow his example. Bill and his wife Lois began attending Oxford Group meetings regularly, and Bill stayed sober. He became enamored with the Oxford Group's formula for treating recovering alcoholics, "called 'guidance for others,' an imposed quiet time in which the client would seek 'God's guidance.'"<sup>18</sup> This quiet time with God would lead them to precise instructions as to what the alcoholic should do in every area of his or her life.

Bill eventually partnered with a close friend, fellow recovering alcoholic and physician Dr. Bob Smith, to found Alcoholics Anonymous on June 10, 1935, believing "if he could help someone else to stop drinking, perhaps he would feel better."<sup>19</sup> Bill combined (1) Silkworth's theory that alcoholism was nothing more than an allergy or

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<sup>17</sup> Bufe, *Alcoholics Anonymous: Cult or Cure?*, 34.

<sup>18</sup> Cheever, *My Name Is Bill*, 129.

<sup>19</sup> Cheever, *My Name Is Bill*, 128. Dr. Smith is well-known in AA circles as "Dr. Bob."



disease that man was unable to overcome and (2) Buchman's Moral Rearmament teaching that men need to make moral changes in their personal lives and founded a group that synthesized these teachings into what is now known as Alcoholics Anonymous.

### **How Alcoholics Anonymous Describes Addiction**

Although Bill W. claims to have created the Twelve Steps of AA, they closely resemble the Oxford Group's guiding principles and many recommendations of Harvard professor William James, who postulated, "Sobriety diminishes, discriminates, and says no; drunkenness says yes."<sup>20</sup> Rather than a conversion experience leading to a morality based on following Christ, the AA model was heavily influenced by Bill's personal experience and the morality espoused by the Oxford Group, personal physicians, and popular teachings of the time.

### **The Disease Model**

AA teaches that alcohol addiction is a disease. Ed Welch elaborates,

The disease model was first popularized by Bill Wilson, the founder of AA in the 1930's. A devoted pragmatist, Wilson did not use the disease approach because it was well supported by research; he used it because he thought it helped men and women to be more open about their drinking problem. In other words, he was using a metaphor; drinking is *like* a disease. Over the past fifty years, however, the disease model has lost its metaphorical quality and it has been shortened to "*drinking is a disease.*" The disappearance of this little word *like* has made all the difference.<sup>21</sup>

Dr. Silkworth did not base his ideas on any scientific experiments. It was a thought that came to him that he wrote in a medical journal; it was then taken as gospel. Tim Clinton and Eric Scalise describe the AA disease model: "The *disease model* explains that there is a legitimate and verifiable difference between those who are

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<sup>20</sup> Cheever, *My Name Is Bill*, 128.

<sup>21</sup> Ed Welch, *Blame It on the Brain? Distinguishing Chemical Imbalances, Brain Disorders, and Disobedience* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 1998), 188–89 (emphasis original).

addicted and those who are not. Addiction is viewed as a *progressive disease*, making people incapable of not using their drug of choice once they start.”<sup>22</sup> AA’s *Big Book* states emphatically, “It is a disease that cannot be fought unless the client has the willpower to overcome its grasp.”<sup>23</sup> This presents a problem. If addiction is a disease, man has no alternative but to live with it. This is a common explanation from a secular counselor, who can then describe the alcoholic’s use of drinking as “medication.” This removes the responsibility from the addict and his choices; it is no longer a choice but a compulsion that is a symptom of a disease over which they have no control. Speaking on the disease model of addiction, Herbert Fingarette states, “According to the disease concept, alcoholism progresses stage by stage in a regular, fairly standard course that does not respect a person’s individual characteristics.”<sup>24</sup> Race and family background make no appreciable difference because once someone contracts a “disease,” he or she is in its grips and there is no way to change the outcome. The disease must run its course and can only be eradicated when the person who has contracted it realizes they are sick. This is another example of minimizing the personal responsibility of the alcoholic. Fingarette adds, “The essence of this rationale is that if chronic drinkers are told that there is no disease of alcoholism, they will see their drinking as a personal failing; out of guilt and shame, they will tend to hide or deny their problems.”<sup>25</sup> They do not recognize the truth: it is natural to hide sin from others and, ultimately, from God.

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<sup>22</sup> Tim Clinton and Eric Scalise, *The Quick-Reference Guide to Addictions and Recovery Counseling: 40 Topics, Spiritual Insights, and Easy-to-Use Action Steps* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2013), 27 (emphasis original).

<sup>23</sup> Scalise and Clinton, *The Quick-Reference Guide*, 28.

<sup>24</sup> Herbert Fingarette, *Heavy Drinking: The Myth of Alcoholism as a Disease* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 3. Fingarette (1921–2018) was a philosopher and professor whose research into moral psychology, addiction, and ethics led him to challenge the theory that alcoholism was a disease. See Beverly Beyette, “Alcoholism: Is It Really a Disease? Controversial Author Contends Drinking Is Modifiable Behavior,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 23, 1988. Retrieved November 2, 2011.

<sup>25</sup> Fingarette, *Heavy Drinking*, 25.

## The Genetic Hypothesis

The AA model also provides an explanation for how alcoholism is generationally passed down from one family member to another. Chapter 2 of the *Big Book* notes that “an illness of this sort—and we have come to believe it an illness— involves those about us in a way no other human sickness can.”<sup>26</sup> AA adherents can say, “My father was an alcoholic, so I am an alcoholic also.” This is called the genetic hypothesis. However, scientific studies on the genetic link to addiction are inconclusive. In February 1973, physician Donald Goodwin and four other physicians researched a group of men who were born to an alcoholic mother and father, put up for adoption, and placed in an adopted home shortly after birth to a non-drinking adoptive family.<sup>27</sup> They wanted to determine if these children showed a higher rate of alcoholism and other problems than a comparable group of adopted children whose biological parents were not alcoholics. The study did show a 3.5 percent greater instance of alcoholism in those adoptees from alcoholic parents; however, 82 percent of children who had an alcoholic parent did not logically become alcoholics. As Fingarette postulates, “We must say that about 82 percent of persons with an alcoholic parent will not become an alcoholic.”<sup>28</sup> Although books, articles, speaker groups, television, and radio purport a symbiotic relationship between an alcoholic adult and their children, a genetic explanation for alcoholism remains an unproven hypothesis.

Welch describes the difficulties in the research supporting the genetic hypothesis:

It doesn't account for identical twins (with the same genetic makeup) when one twin is a heavy drinker and the other is not. It doesn't account for the fact that there is no

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<sup>26</sup> Alcoholics Anonymous, *The Big Book*, 4th ed. (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, 2001), 18, <https://www.aa.org/the-big-book>.

<sup>27</sup> Donald W. Goodwin, Fini Schulsinger, Leif Hermansen, Samuel B. Guze, and George Winokur, “Alcohol Problems in Adoptees Raised Apart from Alcoholic Biological Parents,” *Arch Gen Psychiatry* 28, no. 2 (February 1973): 238–43.

<sup>28</sup> Fingarette, *Heavy Drinking*, 83.

clear biological difference between a heavy drinker and a nondrinker, other than the biological problems that stem from the drinking itself. It doesn't account for the way lower socioeconomic status is associated with both greater abstinence and greater addiction.<sup>29</sup>

Most social scientists today are quick to point out the genetic propensity to drink or abuse drugs, but as Welch submits, "People can be physiologically predisposed to enjoying a particular drug, food, activity, or physical experience, but there is a categorical difference between being *influenced* by genetics and being *determined* by it."<sup>30</sup>

### **How Alcoholics Anonymous Treats Addiction**

The *Big Book* states, "Our whole trouble has been the misuse of willpower. We had tried to bombard our problems with it instead of attempting to bring it into agreement with God's intention for us."<sup>31</sup> Two concepts stand out in AA's approach to treating addiction: willpower and God's intention.

### **Misuse of Willpower**

*Merriam-Webster's Dictionary* defines willpower as "the ability to control one's own actions, emotions, or urges."<sup>32</sup> It is the ability to resist temptation and not be influenced by other people, an inner strength of character, and a resolve to commit to specific causes or lifestyle choices that resist harmful or lazy things. Concerning willpower, the *Big Book* says that the failure of any client in their program is due to a lack of willpower:

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<sup>29</sup> Ed Welch, *Addictions—A Banquet in the Grave: Finding Hope in the Power of the Gospel*, Resources for Changing Lives (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2001), 27.

<sup>30</sup> Welch, *Addictions*, 27. Welch cites D. J. Armor, J. M. Polich, and H. B. Stambul, *Alcoholism and Treatment* (New York: Wiley, 1978).

<sup>31</sup> Alcoholics Anonymous, *The Big Book*, 40.

<sup>32</sup> *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed. (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 2003), s.v. "willpower."

Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path. Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program, usually men and women who are constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves. There are such unfortunates. They are not at fault; they seem to have been born that way. They are naturally incapable of grasping and developing a manner of living which demands rigorous honesty. Their chances are less than average. There are those, too, who suffer from grave emotional and mental disorders, but many of them do recover if they have the capacity, to be honest.<sup>33</sup>

In other words, if the client just had enough willpower and this willpower was channeled in the right direction, he could be free from the grip of addiction and live the fruitful life he dreams of. However, it is well known among the addicted that willpower alone is not enough to move a person to sobriety.

This introduces the idea that it is a loss of control or willpower that makes a person an addict. Fingarette states, “According to the classic doctrine, the breakdown of a drinker’s self-control mechanism is the key symptom of the disease of alcoholism.”<sup>34</sup> This is why the first step of AA’s program requires adherence to this statement: “We admitted that we were powerless over alcohol and that our lives have become unmanageable.”<sup>35</sup> AA suggests that an alcoholic cannot “control” their drinking due to the disease, just as a person with a cold or allergy cannot stop sneezing.

AA posits that there are people unaffected by this disease; these people can drink and enjoy alcoholic beverages with no substantial problems. However, those stricken by this disease cannot control their drinking because of a mysterious malady that only affects them. If alcoholics truly lacked control, they would drink everyday all day and never stop until they were incoherent or incapable of taking one more drink. Sadly, that does happen, but for the most part, many alcoholics go days without drinking even though it is available. They go to work, church, children’s birthday parties, theaters, shopping malls, and other places without a sip of alcohol. AA’s well-known slogan “You

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<sup>33</sup> Alcoholics Anonymous, *The Big Book*, 60.

<sup>34</sup> Fingarette, *Heavy Drinking*, 31.

<sup>35</sup> Alcoholics Anonymous, “The Twelve Steps,” accessed July 15, 2023, <https://www.aa.org/the-twelve-steps>.

are one drink away from a drunk” is just that—a slogan. Since the 1960s, numerous studies have examined an alcoholic’s alleged uncontrollable urge to drink.<sup>36</sup> Referring to multiple studies over several years, Fingarette shows that alcoholics many times stop drinking on their own. While he admits these studies are done in hospitals under careful observation, he goes on to say, “Given what they perceive as a substantial reason to limit their drinking—money, sociability, privileges, or conveniences—these drinkers do limit their drinking.”<sup>37</sup> In summary, many of those diagnosed as alcoholics go for weeks or months—even years—without drinking or drinking very little. If lack of control were the issue, this would be an almost impossible feat. The act of not drinking for long periods would seem to point to some semblance of control.

### **God’s Intention**

Step 2 of AA states, “We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.”<sup>38</sup> This statement implies that AA follows the guidance of God. However, AA’s definition of God is nebulous at best, as they define God as a supreme and loving being with whom one relates most closely. In the *Big Book*, step 3 proclaims, “[We] made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.”<sup>39</sup> The *Big Book* expands on this “understanding” of God in a chapter named “We Agnostics”:

Much to our relief, we discovered we did not need to consider another’s conception of God. Our own conception, however inadequate, was sufficient to make the approach and to effect a contact with Him. As soon as we admitted the possible existence of a Creative Intelligence, a Spirit of the Universe underlying the totality of things, we began to be possessed of a new sense of power and direction.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> See Lance M. Dodes and Zachary Dodes, *The Sober Truth: Debunking the Bad Science behind 12-Step Programs and the Rehab Industry* (Danvers, MA: HarperCollins, 2015), 1.

<sup>37</sup> Herbert Fingarette, *Heavy Drinking* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1989), 35.

<sup>38</sup> Alcoholics Anonymous, “The Twelve Steps.”

<sup>39</sup> Alcoholics Anonymous, *The Big Book*, 59 (emphasis original).

<sup>40</sup> Alcoholics Anonymous, *The Big Book*, 46.

The god of AA is a kind and benevolent directing force who does not require obedience to his commands or the repentance of sin. The god of AA did not sacrifice or save. Rather, the god of AA is more of a compassionate spirit who beams on our good deeds and wants us to be sober. The Alcoholics Anonymous website states, “The time you spend on AA Step 2 will depend on different factors, such as your commitment to sobriety. This step may also take longer if you have a hard time believing in a higher power or forms of spirituality, but remember, this step doesn’t mean you need to find religion.”<sup>41</sup> Many other options are given to the new client on the path of sobriety, including believing in a higher power like Allah, Shiva, Buddha, or Yahweh. Other options include trusting nature, embracing the laws of science, having faith in your moral principles, or placing your confidence in AA. However, the problem arises when a job is lost, a car breaks down, or a relationship ends. Whereas the God of the Bible says in Hebrews 3:5 that “He will never leave us nor forsake us,” the higher power of AA can make no such claim. Instead of leading the client to a Savior who frees them from sin, clients are left to an ambiguous entity of their own choosing. AA will only tacitly agree that there is a God, reducing the God of the Bible to a benevolent benefactor. This benefactor or guiding force presses the alcoholic/addict to change but does not directly influence how they should live.

### **How Alcoholics Anonymous Measures Success**

Lance Dodes and Zachary Dodes, authors of *The Sober Truth: Debunking the Bad Science behind 12-Step Programs and the Rehab Industry*, write that “Alcoholics Anonymous was proclaimed the correct treatment for alcoholism over seventy-five years ago despite the *absence of any scientific evidence of the approach’s efficacy*, and we have

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<sup>41</sup> Alcoholics Anonymous, “Step 2 of AA: Believing in a Higher Power,” last modified September 11, 2023, <https://alcoholicsanonymous.com/step-2-of-aa/>.

been on the wrong path ever since.”<sup>42</sup> AA has been the go-to organization for alcohol addiction for many years. Courts, psychologists, and secular counselors have recommended AA meetings to millions of addicted clients. Commonly known as “90 in 90,” clients are repeatedly reminded to attend “90 Meetings in 90 Days.”

AA does not report annually on success or failure. They promote clients who are successful in their sobriety, but generally, only those who are successful participate in the reporting. When one attempts to find success rates, one finds a convoluted description because first, as one recovering addict points out, one must “define success.”<sup>43</sup> He continues, “Are we talking about complete abstinence for life? Surely, there’s no accurate way to study that. Are we talking about alcoholics who make it 1 year sober? Or 5 years? 10 years? Does 1 relapse count as failure? What about those who manage to get sober after multiple relapses?”<sup>44</sup>

AA counts as successful those who have “achieved” sobriety in residential programs or as a result of incarceration in a state institution. As noted in the section on willpower, many alcoholics can go for weeks or months not abusing their drug of choice. A person who drinks a six-pack of beer each day can enter an environment where he cannot purchase or receive beer, going weeks or months without drinking; however, that person cannot be considered “cured.” When he once again enters an environment where beer is readily available, he may begin drinking again because the initial “cure” was created by lack of access, not lack of desire or willpower. This happens especially in the

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<sup>42</sup> Dodes and Dodes, *The Sober Truth*, 1 (emphasis added).

<sup>43</sup> Josh [pseud.], “What Is the AA Success Rate? The Truth about Alcoholics Anonymous,” accessed July 16, 2022, <http://www.cleandandsoberlive.com/what-is-the-aa-success-rate/>.

<sup>44</sup> Josh, “What Is the AA Success Rate? The Truth about Alcoholics Anonymous.”



case of incarcerated men and women, who often go many years living “sober” lives only to return to their use of alcohol or drugs when they reenter society.<sup>45</sup>

Finding success rates for AA treatment programs is challenging, but Dodes and Dodes claim that “many peer reviews peg the success of AA somewhere between 5 and 10 percent.”<sup>46</sup> No one can say that AA has not helped some to overcome alcohol addiction. However, so have abstinence, prison time, self-determination, and many other fixes. The difficulty is not that AA is a bad organization; the obstacle is that AA is not the cure they advertise themselves to be. Furthermore, AA is not the paragon of Christianity many people think it is. AA may be seeking God and may be advocating for sobriety, but the addict needs more than determination to quit; they need a change of heart and soul to be free from their addictions.

### **Historical Background of the Biblical Counseling Model**

To begin to describe biblical counseling requires a working definition. What is biblical counsel, and how is it different from regular counsel? Counseling happens repeatedly in all societies and in many ways. It happens when a boss calls in an employee to speak about job performance. It happens when a child commits an infraction, and a parent sits down to talk to him about it. Counseling happens when a sick person sees her doctor for advice. Sadly, all counseling is not necessarily biblical in nature, so what makes counseling *biblical*?

Biblical counseling is counsel from the Bible, God’s handbook for living. John Piper defines biblical counseling as “God-centered, emotionally-in-touch use of language

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<sup>45</sup> Adam Chamberlain et al., “Illicit Substance Use after Release from Prison among Formerly Incarcerated Primary Care Patients: A Cross-Sectional Study,” *Addiction Science & Clinical Practice* 14, no. 1 (February 2019): 5, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13722-019-0136-6>. See table 2 in the report (p. 5), which displays post-release illicit substance use for 751 participants who received medical care following release from prison. Approximately 18 percent had resumed illicit drug use between their release and their first post-release primary care appointment (p. 6).

<sup>46</sup> Dodes and Dodes, *The Sober Truth*, 3.

to help people become God-besotted, Christ-exalting, joyfully, self-forgetting lovers of people.”<sup>47</sup> Heath Lambert describes how people have historically considered the task of counseling:

Two very different groups have been guilty of cutting the theological foundations away from the counseling task. The first group is secular psychotherapists who are very well intentioned but ultimately seek to help people solve their problems while ignoring Christ and his Word. . . . A second group misunderstanding this issue is—ironically—conservative. Bible-believing, Christ-exalting ministers of the Gospel.<sup>48</sup>

Both of these groups meant well. The first group tried to heal a problem via secular thinking, while the second group did not counsel those who came to them because they felt unqualified or under-educated.

Biblical counseling needed someone to address both of these thought processes. Jay Adams (1929–2020) was a pastor seeking to understand how to counsel his people. Like many pastors, he sent his parishioners to “qualified counselors and psychiatrists” only to see them never improve or change for the good.<sup>49</sup> He decided to do graduate work in practical theology and enrolled in a pastoral counseling course. At the end of two semesters, he found out he knew even less than when he began his journey. He gravitated toward counseling patterns emanating from applications of scriptural exhortations. He was surprised to realize he was becoming more successful in his practice. Adams stated, “Spelling out and getting commitments to biblical patterns of behavior after an acknowledgement of and repentance for sin seemed to bring relief and results.”<sup>50</sup> Thus, the biblical counseling movement was born.

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<sup>47</sup> John Piper and Jack Delk, “The Glory of God: The Goal of Biblical Counseling,” in *Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling: Changing Lives with God’s Changeless Truth*, ed. James MacDonald, Bob Kelleman, and Steve Viars (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2013), 24.

<sup>48</sup> Heath Lambert, *The Biblical Counseling Movement after Adams* (Wheaton IL: Crossway, 2012), 21–22.

<sup>49</sup> Jay E. Adams, *Competent to Counsel: Introduction to Nouthetic Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2009), 90.

<sup>50</sup> Adams, *Competent to Counsel*, loc. 95.

## How Biblical Counseling Describes Addiction

Chapter 2 explicated the mental strongholds Paul described in his letter to the Corinthians. When secular programs assert that addiction is a product of genetics or disease, they view the battle as merely physiological. However, biblical counselors see more than just a fleshly fight that manifests in physical trauma and social dysfunction. Satan rules the life of the addict, so the power to wage and win the battle against addiction (or any sin) is not fleshly power but the power of Christ within us (2 Cor 12:9). Through biblical counseling, the addict is exposed to “the word of God, [which] is living and effective and sharper than any double-edged sword, penetrating as far as the separation of soul and Spirit, joints and marrow. It can judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Heb 4:12).

God’s Word is so sharp and penetrating that it can cut through into the inner man, search the hardest heart, and bring the man to brokenness. Only when addicts see the broken lives they live and accept personal responsibility can they begin the process of overcoming addiction.

As noted, the secular world classifies alcoholism and drug addiction as a disease. In 1977, the American Medical Association (AMA) classified alcoholism as a disease, and poll after poll of the American people show overwhelmingly that people believe this to be true.<sup>51</sup> The disease idea takes the responsibility of addiction away from the addict and lays it wrongfully on the Creator who “created them this way.” The reason many people classify drugs and alcohol as a disease is because it feels like a disease. In Romans 7:15–20, the apostle Paul writes,

For I do not understand what I am doing, because I do not practice what I want to do, but I do what I hate. Now if I do what I do not want to do, I agree with the law that it is good. So now I am no longer the one doing it, but it is sin living in me. For I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my flesh. For the desire to do what is good is with me, but there is no ability to do it. For I do not do the good that I

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<sup>51</sup> E. W. Desmond, “Out in the Open: Changing Attitudes and New Research Give Fresh Hope to Alcoholics,” *Time*, November 30, 1987, 80–86, 89–90.

want to do, but I practice the evil that I do not want to do. Now if I do what I do not want, I am no longer the one that does it, but it is the sin that lives in me.

Paul spoke like many of those caught in addictions: “Why do I do what I do? It feels like something outside me is taking over.”

One of the foundational truths of the biblical counseling movement is the sufficiency of Scripture. Another tenet is personal responsibility. Welch emphasizes, “If you come to believe that alcoholism is a disease even though Scripture says it is something else, then your confidence in Scripture will erode.”<sup>52</sup> Either God’s Word is true and answers the addict’s problems, or it does not. In *Blame It on the Brain*, Welch described interacting with an alcoholic friend who decried God for giving him the disease of alcoholism: “I realized that his view of how he became an alcoholic was very important. Apparently, his theory put the blame (at least in part) on his brain, and since God made his brain, God shared responsibility for my friend’s temptations and vulnerabilities.”<sup>53</sup> If the addict accepts AA’s designation of alcoholism as a disease, the addict can continue to ask why God made him that way, why other friends and family members can enjoy alcohol without abusing it, and why he has a gene that “makes” him crave alcohol all the time. The biblical counselor confronts this thinking with the truth that the addict’s sinful nature and choices landed him in his current circumstances. This is one of the first steps in treating addiction.

### **How Biblical Counseling Treats Addiction**

AA’s method of treating addiction assumes that man would be good (sober) if only he had the willpower to do the right thing. However, Scripture reveals the futility of this thinking (Eccl 7:29; Eph 2:1–5; Phil 2:12–13). Because of his sinful nature, the unsaved man will never be able to make the correct choice consistently. AA’s method

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<sup>52</sup> Welch, *Blame It on the Brain?*, 183.

<sup>53</sup> Welch, *Blame It on the Brain?*, 183.

also approaches addiction as a disease to be treated rather than a sin to be confronted.

Paul Tautges summarizes,

We must reject the disease model as inferior to the sin model, and most unhelpful, because it implies that the root problem in the drunkard is biological rather than spiritual, which severs all connection to the lesser hope of being a lifelong “recovering alcoholic.” The Bible enthusiastically offers the drunkard full deliverance from his or her sinful habit and a completely new life.<sup>54</sup>

Only the saving power of Jesus Christ and the truth of God’s Word provide a man with the tools necessary to combat addiction. After he receives the blessing of salvation, he then is able to confront sin in his life with the conviction power of the Holy Spirit because he has been made alive in Christ. In his old life he was walking in darkness but now he is able to walk in the light of God’s glory and mercy.

Scripture teaches that first we choose our addiction, and then our addictions choose us. Ed Welch likens it to a warped marriage.<sup>55</sup> We enter this marriage with hopes and dreams that it will be the greatest event of our lives. Once we have spent a little time with our partner, we begin see downsides to this relationship. However, we have committed to this partner and while we may want to leave, there are many downsides to this action. Welch states, “And so the addict goes back and forth, like a spouse in a bad marriage, sticking with the substance and trying to make the relationship work. On some days it is bad, and on others, not so bad. But it feels familiar, even comfortable—if you keep your expectations low enough.”<sup>56</sup> This is the logic of an addict: they hate where they are and hate what addiction does and is doing to them, but they cannot leave what is comfortable. As illogical as it sounds, living in the storm is sometimes the most normal thing an addict can do. Addicts living with the belief that their addiction is a disease are

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<sup>54</sup> Paul Tautges, *Counseling One Another: A Theology of Interpersonal Discipleship* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 2015), 56.

<sup>55</sup> Welch, *Blame It on the Brain?*, 190.

<sup>56</sup> Welch, *Blame It on the Brain?*, 190.

left with, as Welch says, “no clear understanding of [their] wants, passions, and desires.”<sup>57</sup>

When addicts bring their thoughts to subjection under Christ, they can be freed from their old thinking and develop new ways to handle the pressures of day-to-day living. The stronghold of alcohol is in the alcoholic’s heart, but it must be pulled down. At first, the addict can no more think of living in a world of sobriety than a sober person can imagine living in the addict’s chaotic world. It takes mighty weapons to break through the fortress of selfish desire and into an addict’s heart. Though these weapons are just a few of the tools God gives the repentant sinner, they are the most used and spoken of in his Word. Scripture is replete with warnings to the habitual sinner. While on earth, Jesus had much contact with sinful people. He showed great compassion, but he disapproved of sinful actions. Scripture shows that Jesus would not allow people to stay in sin without correction.

### **Confronting Sin**

The biblical counselor tries to help the addict see that what he is doing is more than just self-destructive behavior; the addict needs to see that he has violated God’s law. Welch states, “The Bible pushes us hard to face the Godward motivations that govern our choices. It argues that addictions reveal what or whom we worship.”<sup>58</sup> As the addict is drawn toward a relationship with Christ, the biblical counselor shares the passages that address his sin and show him how his current lifestyle leads to physical and spiritual death. Romans 13:13 calls him to avoid drunkenness and immoderate self-indulgence. The addict always puts their wants and needs first, but 1 John 4:7 calls the addict to love others, for by loving others, he puts their wants and needs before his own. The addict’s drunkenness or high satisfies his own desires, whereas 1 Corinthians 10:31 says that

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<sup>57</sup> Welch, *Blame It on the Brain?*, 190.

<sup>58</sup> Welch, *Blame It on the Brain?*, 193.

everything one does should be to the glory of God. Addicts worship the high; Scripture says to have no other gods besides God alone (Exod 20:3–5).

Addicts need to see their addiction not as a disease but as sin. They need to see that who and what they worship matters. Welch summarizes, “When you look at it closely, drunkenness is a lordship problem. Who is your master, God or your desires?”<sup>59</sup>

### **Made Alive in Christ**

The counselor helps the addict understand Ephesians 2:1–5, that we were dead in trespasses and sin, but God, in his mercy, “quicken” us in Christ. The term “quicken” comes from a Greek word that means to be made alive together.<sup>60</sup> The spirit of man is made alive or awakened to spiritual ideas when he comes to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. By showing the addict what it means to forsake his own gratification and abandon his sinful desires, the biblical counselor demonstrates what it means to conquer sin, have freedom in Christ, and be in a right relationship with God.

It is only through the power of the Word of God that a man’s eyes are opened to his sinful condition. Once spiritually awakened, he can begin the hard work of sanctification and discipleship. Only after understanding his freedom in Christ can the new Christian become hopeful about being free from his addiction. Sin has beaten him down, and he needs to have hope things can change. Jay Adams emphatically states, “Every counselee needs hope.”<sup>61</sup>

The drunk needs hope more than anything or anyone else in his first days of treatment. Many will experience withdrawals and sickness in the first days of treatment. Without hope that it will get better, many will leave and go back to using because it is comfortable. The counselor helps the new Christian to understand examples from

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<sup>59</sup> Welch, *Addictions: A Banquet in the Grave*, 23.

<sup>60</sup> James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages* (Logos Research Systems, 1997), 5188.

<sup>61</sup> Adams, *Competent to Counsel*, 40.

Scripture that demonstrate hope. For example, even though God punished Adam and Eve for their sin, he gave them hope of a Redeemer (Gen 3:15). The woman with the issue of blood who had been to doctor after doctor for healing hoped for Christ's healing and was made totally clean (Luke 8:43–48).

Sanctification is the goal of every Christian; just as a child grows to manhood or womanhood, every believer grows in the likeness of Christ. This is completed through the work of the Holy Spirit, who convicts us of sin and brings us into a right relationship with God. The sanctification process is often not easy or pleasant; the new believer will need spiritual tools to fight against the temptations arising from a sinful past. The counselor helps the new Christian to develop these tools of warfare. There are many tools that could be placed in the addict's toolbox for sobriety; the section below highlights a few of the most helpful tools but does not present an exhaustive list.

### *Walking in the Light*

The first tool of warfare is walking in the light. The addicted individual has been trapped in a walled compound of his own making. He may think this is normal since everyone around him uses the same drugs or drinks a similar amount of alcohol. The addict lives in a windowless room where no gospel light penetrates. The addict needs a spiritual light switch to recognize the desperation of their situation. Ephesians 5:8–15 says,

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light—for the fruit of the light consists of all goodness, righteousness, and truth— testing what is pleasing to the Lord. Don't participate in the fruitless works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what is done by them in secret. Everything exposed by the light is made visible, for what makes everything visible is light. Therefore it is said: Get up, sleeper, and rise up from the dead, and Christ will shine on you. Pay careful attention, then, to how you walk—not as unwise people but as wise.

The light Ephesians is speaking of is none other than the light of the gospel. The gospel of Jesus Christ, the light of the world, is the only remedy for the addict and their



problems. Those who have been trapped in addiction need to have their eyes opened to how they succumbed to addiction and how to fight against future temptation. The light of the gospel will illuminate their wrong path and show them the way of salvation.

### *The Local Church*

The second tool of the recovering addict is the local church. Men who come to the mission may have attended church in their childhood, but many have not attended church in years. Some congregations host groups like Celebrate Recovery and Reformers Unanimous. However, programs that are not integrated into the life of the church but instead run parallel to the church can result in recovering addicts being distinct from the regular church membership. It is important for those coming out of addiction to sit alongside fellow church members. The authors of *The Gospel for Disordered Lives* remind us that “rich gospel hymns and songs can fuel their faith and give them a fresh glimpse of Someone more glorious than that substance, activity, or state of mind that competes for their affection.”<sup>62</sup> In his book *Discipleship*, Peter Maiden states, “The goal of the church is the maturity of its members together: maturity together.”<sup>63</sup> The church has gifts and many ministries that benefit the whole body. By becoming part of the church body, the addict will grow in the Lord and become more like Christ while making friends and acquaintances that will bolster their newfound sobriety.

### *Prayer*

The third tool of warfare is prayer. Constant communication with God is essential to one’s ability to become sober and stay sober (Eph 4:14–19). Many who live in habitual sin worry about everything. Philippians 4:6 teaches us to “not be anxious about anything.” Many sources of fear and anxiety that once troubled addicts disappear

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<sup>62</sup> Robert Jones, Kristin L. Kellen, and Rob Green, *The Gospel for Disordered Lives: An Introduction to Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2021), 346.

<sup>63</sup> Peter Maiden, *Discipleship* (Secunderabad, India: Authentic Books, 2017), 127.

when they become Christians and forsake sinful ways. No longer do addicts get excited when they pass a police car, panic about taking an unannounced drug test, or worry if someone will find a website on their computer or phone. Being free from sin is genuinely being free.

The same chapter in Philippians reads, “But everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God” (Phil 4:6). Those coming out of an addictive lifestyle are accustomed to scheming their problems away: “If I can just get the judge to do this or if I can just get my wife or husband to give me one more chance, I will make it.” Teaching the former addict to rely on God and his power is a miraculous tool. Many of those in addiction have actually turned to prayer for past problems—praying that the police would not catch them or praying that the rent would miraculously be paid. When Jesus showed the disciples to pray, “Give us today our daily bread” (Matt 6:11), he was not saying pray and bread will drop from the sky, He was admonishing the disciples to pray for their needs but also look for ways to earn and provide for themselves. We must teach the addict to work for their needs, advise them to ask God to help them in their search, show them what needs to be done, and give them the wisdom to make the right choices. This empowers and encourages the addict; they learn that God does care about small items such as jobs, rent, transportation, and daily food.

### *The Holy Spirit*

Tying together these tools is the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the energizing force, providing the power that makes the tools in the toolbox come alive and work synergistically. When Jesus was about to leave the disciples and ascend to the Father, he promised that the Father would send another Comforter to be with them (John 14:16). The principal work of the Holy Spirit is to sanctify those who have been regenerated. Romans 8:15 says, “You did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into

fear. Instead, you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’” The Holy Spirit has come to motivate and encourage by being a helper (John 14:16). Just as Jesus taught the disciples (Matt 5:2; John 8:2), the Holy Spirit has come to teach men (John 14:26). The Spirit has come to testify of Jesus (John 15:26). The Holy Spirit convicts (John 16:8). Before an addict comes to Christ, the Holy Spirit has nothing to do with him. After an addict receives Christ, the Holy Spirit begins to convict, teach, and help the new Christian live a sanctified life. The hope of the sinner lost in habitual sin is Jesus Christ. Nothing will change without Jesus’s healing power and the Holy Spirit’s work in the sinner’s life.

### **How Biblical Counseling Measures Success**

If sobriety is the only goal, then almost any secular program will work if a client is willing to put down their drug of choice. AA and NA have a “spiritual” component; however, it is a god of one’s own choosing. AA and NA are very secretive about their results, but no thinking person could say that their programs are utter failures. Hundreds of those caught in the web of addictions have gone through their programs and have stayed sober and in a sense, defeated addiction. However, sobriety is not the goal of the biblical counselor. Sobriety alone is like a thief who has his hands amputated and says, “Look! I am no longer a thief!” Biblical counselors confront the heart issues and controlling desires present in the lives of each counselee. In short, secular counselors see success in sobriety alone, and biblical counselors see success in Christlikeness.

The biblical counselor will see success in counselees by first bringing them into a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Without this relationship, all efforts will fail. Adams used to quip, “A proper concept of nouthetic counseling must have deeply embedded in it the premise that man cannot be helped in any fundamental sense apart

from the gospel of Jesus Christ.”<sup>64</sup> Without our counselee coming to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, all efforts will fail. Ephesians 2:4–5 says, “But God, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love that he had for us, made us alive with Christ even though we were dead in trespasses. You are saved by grace!”

Stuart Scott emphatically proclaims, “We must give them Christ and His truth (John 17:17; 1 Corinthians 1:23; 1 Timothy 2:2–13). We must encourage a true repentance from their sins and futile pursuits (2 Corinthians 7:10–11; 1 Thessalonians 1:9–10; 1 Timothy 6:2–12).”<sup>65</sup> Those in the throes of addictions live lives full of futile pursuits. Only with a heart change will they be able to make the changes necessary to truly live a life free of addictions. This is why the Scriptures are the most important part of the biblical counselor’s toolbox. The gospel is foundational to the biblical counselor. As Scott states, “It is pointless to move forward with the gospel application if the issue of salvation has not first been carefully explored and established to the best of our ability.”<sup>66</sup> It is not a big book of rules and regulations by which to live. The counselor shows the counselee that by accepting Christ, his position in God’s eyes has changed. By introducing the counselee to Christ and his saving power, the counselor opens the door to heart change.

If the first measurement of success is found in the regenerating power of Jesus Christ, the second measurement of success to the biblical counselor is for the addict to continue working to learn the statutes of God’s Word. Many of our clients will feel that they have reached the finished line by accepting Christ; however, this is just the beginning. As J. C. Ryle explains, “He who supposes that Jesus Christ only lived and died and rose again in order to provide justification and forgiveness of sins for his people

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<sup>64</sup> Adams, *Competent to Counsel*, 67.

<sup>65</sup> Stuart Scott, “The Gospel in Balance,” in MacDonald, Kellemen, and Viars, *Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling*, 167.

<sup>66</sup> Scott, “The Gospel in Balance,” 168.

has yet much to learn.”<sup>67</sup> While Christ died and rose again for the forgiveness of man’s sin, he also calls us to live a life of discipleship and holiness, growing more and more like him each day. Biblical counselors call this progressive sanctification. Sanctification is being conformed to God’s Son. Romans 8 tells Christians that we are preordained or predestined to be conformed to the image of Christ. Thus, the successful counselee is one who is being conformed to his image. This is a long and arduous process but one that can be accomplished with the Spirit’s help. Only by constant work and patience will a former addict see progress. Their addictions did not begin all at once but gradually, until they were trapped in sin’s vice grip. So, too, must their Christian walk be nurtured and encouraged.

While AA has sponsors who work with those in the beginning stages of sobriety, the local church offers more than a listening ear. The church not only helps the client with their sobriety, but the church can also offer greater assistance to this newly sober man or woman through the body of believers. The body of Christ can provide biblical instruction for every facet of life. There are those who are adept in job training and child-rearing. Many churches also have a benevolence system in place. Most AA groups do not have the breadth of services a local church can provide and do not have the ultimate focus of helping a person grow in their knowledge of Christ.

Without the fellowship and encouragement of other believers, new believers can fall back into their old habits of sin. To facilitate accountability and sanctification, the counselor will encourage and/or help the counselee to find a local, called-out assembly of believers for regular fellowship. The local church holds the new believer accountable and helps him grow in his spiritual walk through the preaching of the Word. Accountability groups can be an important part of the counselee’s growth. Whether a small group, a

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<sup>67</sup> J. C. Ryle, *Holiness: Its Nature, Hindrances, Difficulties, and Roots* (1879; repr., Lancashire, England: 10 of Those, 2014), 26.

men's or women's group, or an individual Christian friend, the new Christian needs the fellowship of other believers. The sin of addiction is such that those who practiced it are accustomed to isolating themselves from family and friends who love them because of the selfishness and shame involved. Former addicts need to learn that fellowship and accountability are good.

In counseling the former addict/new Christian, success is predicated on regeneration of the counselee, seeing the counselee begin to walk in the way of Lord, making him the Lord of his life, joining a church, and becoming accountable to this fellowship of believers. By living a life of personal holiness and walking in the statutes of the Lord, his life will change. He will be able to complete the Westminster Catechism's first question: "What is the chief aim of man? To love God and enjoy him forever."<sup>68</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Secular counselors and secular counseling centers use a secular approach to fight a spiritual battle. In reality, they can do no more than place a band-aid over the deep wounds that addictions bring to those caught in the sin and to their extended families. Programs like AA seek to bring about sobriety, but the deep philosophical, theological, and practical differences between their methods and biblical counseling lead to a truncated approach to the addict's problems.

The church must proactively and biblically counsel those caught in Satan's grip. Rescue missions and residential programs are popular because many churches are unaware or unwilling to be trained to use the power of biblical counsel. If the church leaders and membership were trained in this vital tool, they could address the problems of addictions in-house. The church has the tools to define addiction, treat it with a biblical approach, and demonstrate the power of the gospel of Christ. If churches were to fulfill

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<sup>68</sup> Westminster Assembly (1642–1652), *The Westminster Shorter Catechism with the Proofs from the Scripture*, Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, last modified September 2013, [https://prts.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Shorter\\_Catechism.pdf](https://prts.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Shorter_Catechism.pdf), "Q.1." (p. 1).

their calling and their potential, the combination of their organization and God's sustaining and ordaining power would soon make organizations such as rescue missions obsolete.

## CHAPTER 4

### DETAILS AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

As stated in chapter 1, this project aimed to create a biblical discipleship curriculum that promotes and introduces clients to faith, repentance, and power through the gospel of Jesus Christ. This chapter describes the project planning, curriculum development, project implementation, and data analysis involved in the project.

#### **Project Planning and Preparation**

My original teaching goal was to have thirty men in our residential program participate in an eight-week class. However, as time grew closer to the kick-off date for my lessons, I saw that I would not accomplish this goal. After speaking to my advisor, I reduced the eight weeks to four weeks, teaching twice a week. I also reduced the goal of thirty men to fifteen men.

#### **Pre-study Survey Development and Administration**

After writing the initial survey in the proposal process, I began the Applied Empirical Research course. This course was very helpful in refining my survey to ask better questions to achieve the goals of my project. Through peer review and review from Professor Joseph Harrod, I changed the wording of a few questions and added a section of questions focusing on the background of each participant. The final survey included 25 questions (5 demographic questions and 20 Likert-scale questions) and took approximately 10 minutes to complete.

I administered the pre-study survey three days prior to the beginning of the classroom study. Since the first two classes were focused on our need for salvation, this



gave me time to make additional changes to the later lessons based on the pre-study survey results. The survey showed that our men's spiritual understanding was greater than I originally expected. Men come to us for help with their lives, often because they have lost jobs, families, homes, and their self-respect due to drug and alcohol abuse. When they come to UGRM, many have lived on the street for months and sometimes years. Initially, I assumed that their spiritual knowledge would be slight, which would be typical of men who have just begun our program. However, all of the men attending this class and taking the survey had been with UGRM for four months or more. I believe this also affected the post-study survey scores, which are discussed later in this chapter.

I discovered from the pre-study survey that I needed to make changes to lesson 3 regarding the addictive nature. I changed lesson 3 to "The Problem of Addictions" because I felt there needed to be a more direct and specific class on what causes addictions in our hearts, what James calls the lust in our hearts (Jas 4).

### **Curriculum Development**

The curriculum design was developed after my Foundations of Teaching class. The men who come to our mission are not always spiritually attuned, so the first two lessons were on salvation and their need for salvation. Lesson 3 focused on the problems of addiction. Lessons 4 through 8 focused on becoming a disciple of Christ. The curriculum was evaluated by a pastor who received an MDiv from SBTS and currently pastors Emmanuel Baptist Church in Doniphan, Missouri; the Chair of Biblical Counseling at Baptist Bible College in Springfield, Missouri, who is also a council member of the Biblical Counseling Coalition; and an ordained minister, published author, and Director of the Addictions Connection in Florence, Kentucky. Two members of the panel are certified biblical counselors with the Association of Biblical Counselors (ACBC), and the third panel member is seeking certification. They rated the lessons as exemplary and faithful to biblical teaching. Pastor Francis's comments were a factor in

changing my lesson 3. The lessons are summarized below.<sup>1</sup> After teaching each of the eight lessons, the clients were to reread all the provided Scripture and answer the following:

1. How does this Scripture apply to me?
2. What is the Scripture specifically asking me to do?
3. Pick one verse and journal your thoughts concerning it.

### **Lesson 1**

Lesson 1 provided an overview of the destructive power of sin. In this lesson, we learned that we cannot deny the fact that sin abounds in us and around us. Using Romans 6:23 as a jumping-off point, I tracked four distinct points. First, it is needless to deny the fact of sin. Romans 3:9–11, 23 shows us that we are all sinners. We need to recognize that fact and that Christ came to save sinners (Luke 19:10). Secondly, we need to realize it is needless to minimize the power of sin. Using illustrations of Samson and Lot, we saw the destructive power of sin, finally ending with the point that the unsaved soul is damned to hell (Rev 21:8). Third, using the illustration of Achan in Joshua 7, we saw that man cannot hide his sin from God. Finally, we saw that the only remedy for sin is Jesus Christ.

### **Lesson 2**

Lesson 2 was from Proverbs 13:15 and titled “The Way of the Sinner.” There were four points to this lesson. First, we covered what sinners are. Using Psalm 107:11 and Jeremiah 5:21–15, I showed that sinners are rebellious against God. Then, turning to Romans 1:29, I showed there was nothing right about a sinner and emphasized in John 3:36 that sinners are under God’s wrath. Second, I spoke of the attitude of the sinner and showed how, in Romans 1:32, they approve of sin. The sinner also wants the preacher to

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<sup>1</sup> The full text of the eight lessons is provided in appendix 3.

soften the gospel so they can stand it. Using Isaiah 30:9–11, we saw how sinners told the seer to speak what they wanted to hear. The third point described the appearance of the sinful way. Proverbs 16:25 shows that there is a way that seems right to a man, and the end thereof is death. Using Hebrews 11:25, I showed how the pleasures they were chasing were only temporary. This brought us to the fourth point: the end of the sinful way. The end of the sinful way is clearly shown hellfire and damnation (Rom 6:23; Rev 20:14–15). I concluded the lesson by saying that today is the day of salvation (2 Cor 6:2).

### **Lesson 3**

Lesson 3 was titled “The Problems of Addictions.” This lesson was based on James 4. There were two main points and several subpoints. First, we saw the pollution in the human heart. The root problem was shown in James 4:1—wars and fighting come from the lust in our hearts. The root problem of all addictions is envy and wicked desires. Bad roots always equal bad fruits, and the fruits that are manifested by the bad roots are fighting, quarreling, killings, total breakdown of prayer, loving the present world, grieving of the Holy Spirit, slandering, and boasting about the future. Those in the throes of addiction exhibit some or all of these fruits. Second, the solution is found in James 4:6, 10. These verses show that the humbling of the heart toward God is a twofold blessing. First, God will give you the grace to endure the temptation, and second, he will lift you up. The end of the chapter shows the new believer he needs to submit to God, resist the devil, repent from his sin, and depend upon God for his future.

### **Lesson 4**

This and the following lessons centered on becoming a disciple of Christ. Using John 15:12–17 as a starting point, we first observe Christ’s investment in our relationship. He not only calls us to be slaves of Christ, but he is also calling us friends. Second, we see his intimacy in our relationship. Jesus wants us to be included in his inner circle. The inner circle is not designed to promote itself but only exists to carry out the

King's will. Using the story of Abraham in Genesis 18, we see how he became a friend of God. Third, we see his involvement in our discipleship. I showed how God chose us; we did not choose him (John 15:16). Using the cultural description of a Rabbi, we learned how the Rabbi would choose his own disciples, and, in the tradition of the day, the student took on all the aspects of the rabbi: he wore what the rabbi wore, he ate what the rabbis ate, and he did everything that the rabbi did. As disciples of Christ, this is the picture of us doing everything that Christ would do. John 15:16 shows that not only were we chosen, but we are ordained for a purpose: to go and bring forth fruit. His promise is that the fruit will remain. Last, in John 15:16, God promises to answer our prayers so that we might get the job done for him. Our motivation for his service is our love for him in reaching out in love to those around us. As we love like Jesus, we will respond vertically to him and out-reach horizontally to others around us.

## **Lesson 5**

Lesson 5 was titled, "I Have Decided to Follow Jesus (Part 1)." Using Luke 9:57–62, I showed how God molds us, moves us, and changes us as he commissions us to do his will. The Christian life is a committed, sold-out life to Christ as our Savior and our Lord. Jesus revealed the true cost of following him by telling the first potential follower that he needed to let the dead bury the dead. The follower wanted to go bury his father first. At first glance, this sounds harsh, but when we get to the actual meaning, we see this man was not seriously seeking to follow. He wanted to wait until his father passed away and get his inheritance first. Jesus said that he must leave all behind to follow him. First, we must surrender our pleasures (vv. 57–58). People today are told to follow their hearts. The sad reality is that Jeremiah 17:9–10 states, "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked who can know it? I, the Lord, search the heart; I test the mind to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings." One cannot trust his heart. When Christ said the Son of Man has no place to lay his head, he

was stating he had no bank account, no house, no anything, and we must be willing to lose all comforts to follow him. He requires us to give up our plans, our desires, our everything, and follow him. Jesus was asking that we give up all. An excellent example of this is the apostle Matthew. Luke 5:27–28 describes, “After these things He went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, ‘Follow Me.’ So he left all, rose up, and followed Him.”

At UGRM, we work with men who have literally lost every possession, often through their own negligence or through theft. Some do not even have a birth certificate or their Social Security card, creating major challenges to rebuilding their broken lives. These men have nothing but their newfound faith. While this sounds sad—and it is—it also simpler for them to follow Christ because they do not have the material items that hold some people back. They have a brand-new slate from which to begin their new walk of faith in Jesus Christ.

## **Lesson 6**

Lesson 6 was titled, “I Have Decided to Follow Jesus (Part 2).” Picking back up in Luke 9:57–62, we see the second potential follower who says, Let me go back and say goodbye to all my family first. This man’s focus was not right because he was focused on his family rather than on the Father. Our people can sometimes hinder our focus. Our family and friends must realize that our relationship with Jesus Christ comes first and foremost. The scriptures prove that the Lord rewards those who diligently follow him. Jesus said that we cannot look back after we have begun our journey (v. 62). If we look back, we are evidencing that we are not following Jesus. Putting your hand to the plow signifies making a decision to serve. Making a decision to follow means we must step out.

## **Lesson 7**

Lesson 7 was titled, “Beginning a New Life (Part 1).” In this lesson, we reviewed several salient points on living the Christian life. The local church is a vital part of this new life. In the local church, the clients can learn all the steps to becoming successful in their new lifestyle of discipleship. First, salvation is a genuine regeneration. Titus 3:5 shows it is a new beginning, and Ephesians 2:10 shows that it is a life of glorifying God. Second, salvation brings a new nature. Second Peter 1:4 and Hebrews 3:14 show we are partakers of a divine nature. Third, salvation brings a new life because the Lord Jesus is in us (Col 1:27). Fourth, we have a new hope because we have been made heirs of God (Titus 3:7), and Christ is a steadfast anchor (Heb 6:19). Fifth, salvation gives a genuine experience. It brings certainty (Phil 1:6) and knowledge of salvation (2 Tim 1:10–12). Sixth, salvation produces a righteous life. A righteous life results in righteous behavior (1 John 3:7) and causes the Christian to honor God (1 Pet 3:1–4). Seventh, salvation brings the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is a witness that we are a child of God (Rom 8:16); the Holy Spirit reveals that God is our father (Gal 4:6); and the Holy Spirit reveals that we are sealed until the day of redemption (2 Cor 1:22; Eph 1:13–14).

## **Lesson 8**

Lesson 8 was titled, “Beginning a New Life (Part 2).” Continuing with the salvation theme, we see that first, salvation brings peace of mind. Perfect peace of mind comes through the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom 5:1), and this perfect peace surpasses everything else in the Christian life (Phil 4:7). Second, salvation brings praise to God. Peter reveals that Christians should bring forth praises to God (1 Pet 2:9). The apostle Paul exhorts Christians to pray with thanksgiving (Phil 4:6). Third, salvation brings an enjoyable experience. The unsaved may have temporary happiness, but only Christians have genuine joy in God (Rom 5:11). Fourth, salvation brings a new destination. Those who are unbelievers are headed for eternal damnation (Rev 20:15). Those who are

believers are assured of being in Heaven forever with the Lord Jesus Christ (Col 1:5). Fifth, salvation brings eternal glory. Christians shall have reserved for them in Heaven eternal glory with the Lord Jesus Christ (Rev 22:1–5).

### **Project Implementation**

Project implementation began on November 6, 2023, and continued through December 1, 2023. The class was one hour each Monday and Tuesday evening for four weeks. The men who participated in the four weeks of classes did not necessarily want to attend. In a church setting, I would have asked if anyone was interested in attending a class on discipleship, and only those who wanted to participate would be present. In this setting, the men who attended are part of a year-long recovery program. Bible studies are not optional, so everyone who attended was required to be there. The men, however, were optimistic about attending. Many asked questions that were pertinent to the subject being taught.

Two men who began the process left in the first week. This is precisely why I wanted to teach eight weeks of lessons in four weeks. The transient nature of the men we serve is part of the nature of our work. The men who completed the class did show interest in the lessons that were taught; one said it was excellent teaching; and they learned some new things concerning discipleship.

### **Post-study Survey Administration**

At the end of the implementation, I administered the post-study survey to the remaining twelve participants. As mentioned in the pre-study survey assessment section, the men who participated in the project had been with UGRM for four or more months. This may have accounted for a greater initial understanding of biblical principles, resulting in a positive, although slight, difference in the pre-study and post-study mean scores. Additionally, I believe the educational backgrounds of the participants affected the survey results. Most of the men dropped out of formal education, and those who did

graduate struggled in an academic environment. It is possible that they were unsure of how to “take” the test and just answered the way they thought I would like them to answer. Although untrue, some men may have thought that if they scored a question lower than I expected, they might lose their place at the mission. This may account for the participant who scored every question a “6 = Strongly Agree” in both the pre-study and post-study surveys.

### **Project Results**

After completing the teaching series, the participants completed the post-study survey. The results of this survey showed a slight improvement in the participants’ thoughts concerning discipleship and being free from addictions. I feel there are several reasons for the small percentage of growth between the two tests. First, as previously mentioned, the participants were not taking the class because they wanted to learn; they were there because they were required to attend as part of the program. As a result, they may not have taken the test as seriously. Second, there was a disparity in the education levels of the participants. Two men could not read, and their tests had to be administered orally. To reduce the possibility that the participants may be influenced by my presence, my assistant administered the surveys. Others were confused by the Likert format. One participant admitted that he had reversed the scores; when he intended to put Strongly Agree, he accidentally marked Strongly Disagree. In hindsight, I realize I should have used a simple (and more familiar) 1 to 10 system, 1 being “never” and 10 being “always.” This may have improved the participants’ ability to understand the scoring and answer in more conclusive ways.



Table 1. Difference between the pre-study and post-study survey mean scores

No.	Question	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Diff.
7	I have a strong desire to be free from my addictions.	5.250	5.250	0.000
11	I believe my failure to follow God’s Word has caused me to suffer consequences in my life.	4.333	4.917	0.583
12	I believe Jesus Christ understands the painful circumstances I have endured in my life.	5.333	5.583	0.250
13	I believe the Scriptures address the subject of addiction.	4.750	4.667	-0.083
14	I believe my spiritual health directly impacts my ability to be clean and sober.	5.000	5.167	0.167
15	I believe knowing God is the starting point for rebuilding my life.	5.083	5.167	0.083
16	I know I have been saved by God’s grace.	4.833	5.417	0.583
17	I enjoy spending time with God by reading his Word.	4.583	4.917	0.333
25	I have hope for a bright future.	5.167	5.500	0.333

The difference between the pre-study and post-study survey mean scores (see table 1) showed an overall increase in their knowledge on most survey questions. The results for question 7 demonstrate that participants scored higher in taking personal responsibility for their addictions (question 7). Question 11 shows a significant increase in their understanding that a failure to follow God’s Word has resulted in life consequences. They also showed improvement in questions 12 through 17, concerning the understanding and belief that they could live a godly life. Keeping in mind that most

participants had no exposure to Christianity before entering the Rescue Mission's program, the fact that they see a need to have God in their lives is very encouraging.

### **Conclusion**

The United Gospel Rescue Mission wants to see an active discipleship program involving men who are free from addictions. Overall, the project showed increased spiritual awareness, although not to the extent I hoped to see. If I did the tests over again, I would run them differently. Building a discipleship program would not only help the men who are in recovery become sober, but also it would bring them into a closer walk with Christ as their Lord and Savior. Chapter 5 will provide an evaluation of the project.

## CHAPTER 5

### EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

This ministry research project was an exciting journey. Prior to the implementation of this project, I had a passionate desire to change the UGRM program into something different. The mission needed to be more than a drug/alcohol rehabilitation center; it needed to be a place where any man who came to the mission, whether addicted to drugs and alcohol or just aimlessly wandering through life with no real-life purpose, could find lasting change in their life.

#### **Evaluation of the Project's Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to create a biblical discipleship curriculum that promotes and introduces clients to faith, repentance, and power through the gospel of Jesus Christ at United Gospel Rescue Mission in Poplar Bluff, Missouri. The project achieved the stated purpose, shown in the increase in spiritual understanding. Although the test results may have only increased slightly, it was a good sign the men understand that sobriety is not the goal. They know that a close walk with Christ is not only doable but is the desired goal. The men are now learning to be free in Christ. There is hope for living a drug and alcohol-free life, but they now have a desire to do so.

#### **Evaluation of the Project's Goals**

Three goals determined the effectiveness of this project. The first goal was to assess the spiritual beliefs of at least fifteen incoming clients. The second goal was to develop an eight-session classroom study, taught over a four-week time period. Each class taught the clients a scriptural basis on how to walk in a Christlike manner. The third

goal was to implement the classroom study with the intent to equip new clients with the biblical tools to worship God.

### **Goal 1**

The first goal was to assess the spiritual beliefs of at least fifteen incoming clients. It is helpful to keep in mind that the men were not all “willing” participants. The rescue mission requires all men to attend Bible study, so the participants had no choice but to attend. A class full of willing participants would have been an ideal setting. Ultimately, fourteen participants took the pre-study survey at the beginning of the project. On the second day, two participants dropped out of the study. However, the remaining twelve men finished the course and took the post-study survey. I felt that the men showed a good grasp of spirituality, but I would also say these men had been at the mission for several weeks or months before taking the class; many of them have accepted Christ and are involved in becoming more Christlike each day.

### **Goal 2**

The second goal was to develop an eight-session classroom study, taught over a four-week time period. Each lesson taught the clients a scriptural basis on how to walk in a Christlike manner. The curriculum began with two lessons containing a strong salvation message, followed by one lesson on how addictions affect the heart and five lessons on being a disciple of Christ. The goal was to bring the men to an understanding that they need to be Christ followers, and, as followers of Christ, they need to be teaching other men to follow Christ as well.

One of the panel members responded to lesson 1 suggesting that I explain what it meant that the New Testament still speaks of Lot as righteous. He suggested, “I would make that point but show that our righteous testimony is found in Jesus, and that is how Lot is still called righteous.” I took these comments to heart and added that to my teaching. Another panel member suggested that in lesson 4 it may be helpful to think

about our union with Christ, “how we are not only friends but united to Him and coheirs with Him.” I used his suggestion to point out that Jesus refers to us as his friends, but more than friends, Jesus calls us co-heirs of the kingdom, privy to the innermost secrets.

### **Goal 3**

The third goal was to implement the classroom study with the intent to equip new clients with the biblical tools to worship God. The pre-study survey showed that the men desired to increase in their spirituality, and the post-study survey showed a slight increase in this spiritual desire. The overall mean pre-test score was 99.583, and the overall post-test mean score was 102.917. While the increase was not very high, I was excited to see any increase at all. I was encouraged that certain questions (7, 11, 12–17) showed significant increases in the men’s (1) willingness to take personal responsibility for their addictions, (2) understanding that a failure to follow God’s Word has resulted in life consequences, and (3) understanding and belief that they could live a godly life. Most of the men who come to the mission have suffered from a prolonged stint of homelessness. Along with other factors, homelessness separates the men from most family relationships but also from spiritual relationships. To see even a slight increase in spiritual aptitude is a blessing.

### **Strengths of the Project**

This section will highlight two strengths of this project. First, while the test results did not show remarkable improvement, it was not a complete loss. I discovered that the men had more spiritual inclination than I imagined. The men we work with come from our nation’s penitentiaries, jails, and homeless living on the streets. Many have become invisible to the average citizen, and when they come to us, they are usually antisocial and sometimes in a state of depression. The fact that they began the project with higher-than-expected results on their spiritual knowledge and desire to know more

shows me that (1) they have the willingness to learn and (2) our Bible studies are working to bring them to a closer walk with Christ.

Second, this project revealed the need to do additional testing with the men when they arrive at UGRM. It would be helpful to assess each man's initial spiritual depth and later retest them to determine if they have changed in any areas. This will help UGRM staff to answer three questions: (1) Does the program have an effect on their spiritual lives? (2) Is the program working? and (3) Are we achieving the desired results? I would not have thought of this had I not completed this project. This is something we have needed for many years. I see this having a lasting impact on our future ministry.

When I was a new counselor, I was only exposed to secular thinking and models in relation to the treatment of addiction. The Alcoholics Anonymous model (or a hybrid model based on AA) was the most frequently used model in training. This led me down a path of integrationist thought. Although I told everyone who came to UGRM that I was a biblical counselor, it was not until I was exposed to the books and teaching at SBTS that I discovered what I was practicing was far from biblical counseling. Chapters 2 and 3 of this project were based on what I learned from the reading for my classes and for my project research. They contributed to a changed understanding of counseling—from an integrationist point of view to a thoroughly biblical point of view. This greatly impacted our program at UGRM as well, which I can now confidently say is biblical throughout.

### **Weaknesses of the Project**

The weakness of the project was the survey process itself. I think the lessons were appropriate and needed to be taught. I realized the weakness in my survey process when the post-study survey was administered. The men had trouble understanding and answering questions on a Likert scale. Most men who enter the UGRM struggled in school or did not complete enough schooling to be able to understand the questions; two

of the men could not read and had to have the questions read to them by one of the staff members. Some of them have been physically and mentally affected by years of drug and alcohol abuse and have difficulty following a train of thought or answering questions on a scale (one participant later admitted to reversing the scale in his confusion). For future studies at UGRM, the following section will address how I would remedy these weaknesses.

If I had changed the format of the test to something more familiar, like questions ranked on a scale of 1 to 10, with “1” being “Not at all” and “10” being “Always,” I believe the exam would have had a better chance of success. The clients that come into the mission have either lived in prison or on the streets for so long that rankings like “Disagree Strongly” or “Agree Strongly” are foreign to them, primarily because their cognitive thinking processes have been subdued by habitual drug and alcohol use. Asking subjective questions is counterproductive to achieving accurate results.

### **What I Would Do Differently**

If I could do the survey and class over again, I would teach it in one week, with two classes each day until the training is complete. This could raise the class’s completion rate since the men who come to UGRM are transient, and trying to keep a group together for an extended period of time is very hard to accomplish.

I would also change the test completely. Instead of scoring it on a six-point Likert scale, I would just use the numbers 1 to 10, with 1 being “strongly disagree” and 10 being “strongly agree.” I think a number system is generally more familiar and would be easier for the men to understand. I also would put that score key on every question instead of at the top of the page. I feel that the scoring I created confused the participants, and I am not sure I received a true reading of their thoughts. I would also add a personal

interview of each man at the initial assessment and at the end of the training to make sure they understood the questions and their meaning.

### **Theological Reflections**

The ministry project increased my understanding of discipleship. Before Christ ascended into heaven in Matthew 28, he left instructions that the disciples should be making disciples of all people. Before I began this study on discipleship, I had a rudimentary knowledge of discipleship. I was not actively attempting to make disciples. As I reflected on my spiritual journey, I realized I was never discipled; I was just left to figure everything out on my own. This left me adrift, and for a long time I felt as alone and lost in a world of churchy words but no real actions. I now know that the men we serve may be the same way as I was—lost and not knowing what they should do to be more like Christ.

Discipleship needs to be an active ministry of the UGRM. Obviously, the Word of God must be a priority in everything the men learn or do while at the mission. Teaching the men to be disciplers while they are being discipled themselves will make them stronger in their faith and also make them less likely to relapse into their negative lifestyle of drugs and alcohol. I now believe that we are not attempting to make men sober. Sobriety is no longer the goal. Making men followers of Christ is the goal. If a man is following closely to Christ, he is not going to use drugs or alcohol because the Master is not using those things and they are trying to be like the Master.

While teaching through the eight lessons, I emphasized to the men that church membership was key to continued sobriety. The mission is not a long-term answer for those seeking to grow in Christ. As men leave the mission, they are taught to find a local gospel-preaching church and get involved. The rescue mission is an arm of the church, but it is not a church, and the men need to grow in faith and fellowship as part of a local, called-out assembly.



## **Personal Reflections**

Pursuing an advanced degree was never something that I set out to do. The first impetus for me to secure an advanced degree came from a dear board member of the United Gospel Rescue Mission, Dr. Tom Lawson. Tom encouraged me to get my doctorate because it would aid me in leading the mission into the next generation. Sadly, Dr. Lawson passed away before I finished my course of study. However, it was not until my brother-in-law, Dr. Timothy Paul Jones, suggested Dr. Lawson may be correct—a doctoral degree may be something I could use in the future in my ministry at the rescue mission—that I began to consider it. Mostly, though, I desired to be better at my chosen craft of biblical counseling, which led me down this path. I pursued work in biblical counseling because it is such a prominent area of need for my rescue mission and many others like it. The seminars, books read, friendships made, and this project have all been invaluable in helping me to become a stronger and more capable pastor. That does not mean that this journey has always felt rewarding. At times it was quite the struggle. I have never undertaken an academic exercise as demanding as this before. It has required some long hours, moments of deep self-reflection, and a burden on me and those I love. I have struggled with anxiety and bouts of depression, and at times this work has exacerbated those issues, but for each moment of struggle, I can confidently say that God's grace is more. He has remained faithful to me through this journey and provided me with blessings too numerous to count.

## **Conclusion**

When I began this project, I had lots of ideas concerning what I would learn and what I would find. What I learned about discipleship was vast and deep, and I realize I only have touched the edge of what discipleship with Christ should or could be. I learned that the men we serve are actually seeking to have a close walk with Christ and that they have a desire to live a better life, but they do not necessarily know how to accomplish it. What was accomplished by this project was the development of a

comprehensive plan to teach the men how they can walk with Christ in a close relationship.

APPENDIX 1  
BELIEF ASSESSMENT

The following research instrument was used as part of goal 1 to measure the knowledge of participants concerning the impact of addiction on their lives and their belief that the power of the gospel can help them overcome addictions. Some general questions are followed by a twenty-question survey measured on a six-point Likert scale.

## BELIEF ASSESSMENT

### Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure your knowledge concerning the impact of addiction on your life. This research is being conducted by Greg Kirk, Executive Director of the United Gospel Rescue Mission, for the purpose of collecting quantitative data for a ministry research project. In this research, you will answer questions before the project, and you will answer the same belief assessment questions at the conclusion of the project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses.

*Participation is strictly voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time. Indicate below your agreement to participate in this project.*

I agree to participate.

I do not agree to participate.

**Identifier Code:** This code will ensure anonymity while also allowing the opportunity to measure the results of the project.

\_\_\_\_\_ (1) last two letters of first name

\_\_\_\_\_ (2) day of birth (01-31)

\_\_\_\_\_ (3) two-letter abbreviation of the state in which you were born or first two letters of birth country name

**Life Assessment:** Please circle your answer.

1. What is your age in years?
  - a. 18-24
  - b. 25-34
  - c. 35-44
  - d. 45-54
  - e. 55-64
  - f. 65 and over
  
2. What is your current marital status?
  - a. Single, never married
  - b. Married
  - c. Divorced: How many times? \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. The last time I felt I was in a stable living situation:
  - a. Less than 6 months ago
  - b. 6 to 12 months ago
  - c. 1 to 2 years ago
  - d. 2 to 5 years ago
  - e. More than 5 years ago
  - f. Never

4. I have attempted sobriety
  - a. Once
  - b. Twice
  - c. Three or more times
  - d. Never
  
5. I have met with an accountability partner
  - a. Once per day
  - b. Several times per day
  - c. Once per week
  - d. Several times per week
  - e. Once per month
  - f. Several times per year
  - g. Not at all

**Belief Assessment:** Answer the following questions by placing a check mark in the box that most closely represents your current practices or beliefs.

The scale is as follows:

SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, DS = Disagree Somewhat,  
 AS = Agree Somewhat, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree

#	Question	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
6	All people struggle with addictions.						
7	I have a strong desire to be free from my addictions.						
8	I believe I <i>can</i> be free from addictions.						
9	I have gone through long periods of abstinence from my addiction.						
10	I believe I have been caught up in addiction to cover up the pain of broken relationships in my life.						
11	I believe my failure to follow God's Word has caused me to suffer consequences in my life.						
12	I believe Jesus Christ understands the painful circumstances I have endured in my life.						
13	I believe the Scriptures address the subject of addiction.						
14	I believe my spiritual health directly impacts my ability to be clean and sober.						

#	Question	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
15	I believe knowing God is the starting point for rebuilding my life.						
16	I know I have been saved by God's grace.						
17	I enjoy spending time with God by reading his Word.						
18	I believe God wants me to obey Jesus Christ no matter how hard life may become.						
19	I believe God designed man to be productive through honest work to provide for his family.						
20	I believe I need to become a man who can be trusted by my family.						
21	I believe I need to develop a good plan for reentering society rather than returning to my old way of life.						
22	I must find a biblically faithful church to stay grounded in the good news of Jesus Christ.						
23	I consider personal accountability with another man or a group of men to be a vital part of being free from addiction.						
24	I believe I can be a godly man who loves his family, his church, and his community.						
25	I have hope for a bright future.						

APPENDIX 2  
CURRICULUM EVALUATION

The following evaluation was provided to an expert panel, who evaluated the biblical discipleship curriculum to ensure it was biblically accurate, sufficiently thorough, clear in presentation, and practical. This evaluation was part of goal 2 in the project. The evaluation on the next page provides the results of the panel's review. The number of responses by the panel is provided under each metric, and any comments by the panel are provided in the comments column.

<b>Curriculum Evaluation Results</b>					
<b>1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary</b>					
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Biblical Accuracy</b>					
Each lesson was sound in its interpretation of Scripture.				3	Everything looked really good. One helpful point would be to think about lesson 1 part 2 when dealing with Lot. I understand the point, but the NT still speaks of Lot as righteous. I would make that point but show that our righteous testimony is found in Jesus, and that is how Lot is still called righteous.
Each lesson was faithful to the theology of the Bible.				3	Lesson 4—It may be helpful to think about our Union with Christ. How we are not only friends but united to Him and coheirs with Him. The friends is great and totally sufficient, but could go deeper if you wanted.
<b>Scope</b>					
The content of the curriculum sufficiently covers each issue it is designed to address.				3	The destructive nature of sin and the sweet salvation of the savior were covered well. The detailing of the changed life is a great way to end the study.
The curriculum sufficiently covers a biblical pedagogical methodology.				3	Clear and concise. The questions sprinkled throughout were helpful
<b>Pedagogy</b>					
Each lesson was clear, containing a big idea.					Easy to follow.
Each lesson provides opportunities for participant interaction with the material.			1	2	A couple more questions in the different lessons could be helpful.
<b>Practicality</b>					
The curriculum clearly details how to develop a lesson to teach the Bible.				3	All the framework is there for any teacher to use this to expand upon.
At the end of the course, participants will be able to better teach others the Bible.				3	If they don't it is because they did not listen.



## APPENDIX 3

### BIBLICAL DISCIPLESHIP CURRICULUM

The following curriculum was designed as part of goal 2 with the intent to equip new clients with the biblical tools to worship God. It consists of eight lessons that were delivered over a four-week period.

# LESSON 1

## The Destructive Power of Sin

### Romans 6:23

#### INTRODUCTION

*Sin is in the world today; it has touched every person. It is the world's worst sickness, the individual's worst enemy.*

#### I. IT IS NEEDLESS TO DENY THE FACT OF SIN. Rom 3:9–11, 23

- A. All men are sinners. Ps 14:2, 3
- B. Let us recognize this fact about ourselves. Christ came to save sinners. Luke 19:10

#### II. IT IS NEEDLESS TO MINIMIZE THE POWER OF SIN.

- A. Sins will wreck our lives: Example—Samson. Judg 16
- B. Sins will wreck our testimony. Example—Lot. Gen 19
- C. Sin will damn a soul to hell. Rom 6:23; Rev 21:8

#### III. IT IS NEEDLESS TO TRY AND HIDE ITS PRESENCE. Prov 28:13

- A. Achan is an example of this: Read Josh 7

#### IV. THERE IS ONLY ONE REMEDY FOR SIN, IT IS NEEDLESS TO SEEK ANOTHER.

- A. Jesus is God's remedy for sin. Acts 4:12
- B. His blood alone can wash away sin. Heb 9:22; Rev 1:5, 6

## LESSON 2

### The Way of Sinners

Ps 1:1; Prov 13:15

#### I. WHAT THEY ARE:

- A. They are rebellious against God. Ps 107:11; Jer 5:21–25; Neh 9:26
- B. They are filled with all unrighteousness. Rom 1:29. Note v. 18: nothing right about them.
- C. They are under the WRATH OF GOD. John 3:36

#### II. WHAT THEIR ATTITUDE IS:

- A. They approve of sin. Rom 1:32
- B. They condemn God for punishing sin. Amos 3:8, 9
  - 1. This is seen in the social gospel of the Modernist. Jer 5:30, 31
  - 2. This is seen in the no-hell doctrine of the “isms.”
  - 3. This is seen in the compromise of the Bible believer. Isa 30:10
- C. They condemn the righteous for not being partakers of their sinfulness. 1 Pet 4:1

#### III. THE APPEARANCE OF THE SINFUL WAY

- A. May appear to be all right to man. Prov 16:25
- B. May offer temporary pleasures. Heb 11:25

#### IV. THE END OF THE SINFUL WAY

- A. Death and hell. Rom 6:23; Matt 7:13; Rev 20:14, 15

#### V. CONCLUSION: GET IN THE RIGHT WAY

- A. John 14:6; 10:1, 2, 9.
- B. And do it now. 2 Cor 6:2

## LESSON 3

### The Problem of Addictions

#### James 4

- I. The Pollution in the Human Heart (4:1–5, 11–13, 16–17)
  - A. The root of the problem (4:1a): Envy and wicked desires.
  - B. The fruit of the problem (4:1b–5, 11–13, 16–17)
    - 1. *Constant fighting and quarreling* (4:1)
    - 2. *Killings* (4:2a)
    - 3. *Total breakdown in prayer* (4:2b–3)
      - a. Not asking God for spiritual things (4:2b)
      - b. Asking God for sinful things (4:3)
    - 4. *World lovers* (4:4)
    - 5. *Grieving the Holy Spirit* (4:5)
    - 6. *Slandering* (4:11–12)
    - 7. *Boasting about the future* (4:13, 16–17)
  
- II. The Solution for the Human Heart (4:6–10, 14–15)
  - A. Humble yourself (4:6, 10): This act alone results in a twofold blessing.
    - 1. *God will give you grace* (4:6).
    - 2. *God will lift you up* (4:10).
  - B. Submit to God (4:7a).
  - C. Resist the Devil (4:7b).
  - D. Repent (4:8–9).
  - E. Depend on God for the future (4:14–15).
    - 1. *The wrong action* (4:14): James reminds his readers that no one knows what tomorrow will bring.
    - 2. *The right action* (4:15): James urges his readers to simply preface their plans by the following words: “*If the Lord wants us to.*”

## LESSON 4

### Becoming a Disciple of Jesus

#### John 15:12–17

These verses give insights into His friendship that are important for us to understand.

#### I. HIS INVESTMENT IN OUR RELATIONSHIP (v. 13)

**Note:** Our relationship is only possible because He died for us while we were still trapped in our sins, **Rom 5:8**. There has never been a more significant, nobler, or more costly display of love than that selfless moment when Jesus died for us on the cross.

He died for those He referred to as His “*friends*.” At the same time, they were still His enemies, **Rom 8:7**. In truth, no one else would willingly die for His enemies. No one else would give his life for those he knew would dishonor and neglect him. Thank God, for His love for us runs far more profound than we can comprehend!

#### II. HIS INTIMACY IN OUR RELATIONSHIP (v. 15)

**Note:** Jesus refers to His disciples as His “*friends*.” This is a term used to refer to a king’s inner circle. Those who are still his servants but are privy to his innermost secrets. This inner circle was not to promote itself but existed only to carry out the monarch’s will. **III.** This must have been a rebuke to the disciples who, even that night, were spending their time seeking first place, **Luke 22:24**.

**Note:** His love for His people moves Him to lead us into the green pasture and beside the still waters of His Father’s will for our lives. Because He loves us, He will not keep us in the dark concerning the Lord’s will for our lives. **III.** Abraham—**Gen 18**.

#### III. HIS INVOLVEMENT IN OUR DISCIPLESHIP (vv. 12, 14, 16–17)

**Note:** His desire is for more than our salvation, and his passion is to remake us in His image, **Rom 8:29**.

**Note:** He does this by becoming intimately involved in our lives.

- **He chose us; we did not choose Him, v. 16** **III.** In that culture, disciples picked their own rabbi. We did not get in this thing by choice!
- **He ordained us, v. 16.** We have been appointed to the task! What task? That of doing, without question, the perfect will of the Lord. We are told here to “*go and bring forth fruit*.”
- **His promise is that our “*fruit will remain*,” v. 16.** Neither Satan, the world, nor time can erode the impact of the ministry we perform for Him here. Why? The fruit has within itself the seeds for more fruit. Manufactured results will undoubtedly fade, but what is done for Him will bear fruit long after we are gone!

- **He also promises to answer our prayers so that we might get the job done for Him, v. 16.** The kind of prayers that work are those prayed in accord with God's will and kingdom work, **Matt 6:9–13.**

**Note:** As we come to the place of unquestioning obedience, we enter the realm of friendship with Jesus, v. 14. Our relationship with God becomes a reality when saving faith is exercised. However, our friendship is not automatic but conditioned upon obeying His commands!

**Note:** We are to “*do whatsoever*” He commands us. That verb refers to continuous, consistent service, not the hit-and-miss service rendered by so many in our day. His saving grace and work in our lives transform us from rebels into obedient, humble servants for His glory.

**Note:** Our motivation for this service is our love for Him in us reaching out in love to those around us, vv. 12, 17. As we love like Jesus, we will respond to His commands with obedience vertically and outreach horizontally. Ill. Love is the supreme fruit of our lives, and all we do must be filtered through our love for Him and others. We would be far better off losing anything we have, even our lives than losing our love for Him and our brethren! Why is this so important? **John 13:35; 1 John 4:19–21; 1 John 3:6–19.**

Let me close with just a couple of questions.

1. *Are you the friend of Jesus?*
2. *Are you a friend like Jesus?*
3. *Are you willing to become His friend and a friend like Him?*

## LESSON 5

### I Have Decided to Follow Jesus: Part 1

#### Luke 9:57–62

As God molds us, He moves us; as He changes us, He commissions us; as He grows us, He guides us; and as He builds us up, He sends us out.

The Christian life is a life sold out to Jesus—entirely devoted and committed to His Lordship! A Christian is a person that is saved by God’s grace, born again by God’s Spirit, forgiven and cleansed by God’s blood, and devoted and surrendered to God’s plans and purposes. A Christian is a follower, or disciple, of Jesus Christ. Many have desired to follow, begun to follow, or thought about following, but some have forgotten about following.

Following Jesus means that we die to ourselves, and we allow the Holy Spirit to lead us in the footsteps of Jesus.

#### **Have you decided to follow Jesus?**

Jesus revealed the true cost of being a true Christian.

- A true disciple leaves, loves, and lives for Jesus!
- We must place Jesus as number one, pursue Jesus daily, and put away all sin.
- Let us become fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ.

This text gives us some requirements for following Jesus. Following Jesus:

#### **I. Requires that we surrender our pleasures. (vv. 57–58)**

“Now it happened as they journeyed on the road that someone said to Him, ‘Lord, I will follow You wherever You go.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head’.”

- Someone had heard Him preach, watched Him live and wanted to be with Him.
- This statement sounds good, “Lord, I will follow You wherever You go.”
- I could not question the validity or sincerity of this statement, but Jesus could.
- He is God and He knows our hearts.

Jeremiah 17:9–10 states, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Who can know it? I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings.”

**Some of you have decided to tell Jesus that you will follow Him but have never followed up or followed through, and your life has never been changed.**

Jesus knew nothing of fairweather discipleship, the Bible knows nothing of easy believism, and true Christianity knows nothing of wayward commitments.

Have you said in the past, “Lord, I’ll follow you wherever You go?”

- Are you following Jesus today?
- When we follow Jesus, He calls for us to surrender our pleasures!

“And Jesus said to him, ‘Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.’”

**Following Jesus means that we embrace some changes in our lives.**

- The Son of God did not own a home, have a bank account, own a horse or mule, have a bed, have a library, have a wardrobe, have gold or silver, or have seminary training.
- Jesus gave up the pleasures of life to follow the Father’s plan.
- When we follow Jesus, we will have to give up some pleasures.

**Jesus called this man to make significant adjustments if he followed Him.**

- He told this person, “You need to count the cost if you are serious about following Me.”
- I believe the Lord is telling this man that following Him takes total surrender—giving all of who we are to all who He is.

**We need to be willing to give up some things for Jesus.**

- Jesus wants our all! We must count the cost! Have you given Jesus your all?
- Do you truly understand what it means to be a Christian?
- Sometimes God calls for us to give up the comforts of home for the ease of heaven.
- Our home is a place of security, a place of our passions, a place of our possessions, and a place of rest.
- Have you heard it said, “There’s no place like home”?
- When we follow Jesus, we can say, “There’s no place like the presence of Jesus.”

Following Jesus requires that we surrender our pleasures. Following Jesus also:

## II. **Requires that we surrender our plans. (vs. 59–60)**

- “Then He said to another, ‘Follow Me.’ But he said, ‘Lord, let me first go and bury my father.’ Jesus said, ‘Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God.’”

This happened in rapid-fire fashion—one after the other! Jesus offers the greatest gift to this man, and **he calls and commissions this man to follow Him.**

Follow: (*akoloutheo*) means to accompany.

- The word is used for one *going in the same way*.
- It comes from a root word that expresses union or likeness and describes being a follower or disciple.
- This word is used 77 times in the gospels in the context of following Jesus Christ.



**Jesus asked this man to become a follower or a disciple of His.**

- Jesus makes the request, and the man gives a response. He said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.”
- This man responded with a request that was a contradiction in terms. To call Jesus “Lord” means He is your Master, Ruler, and Authority!
- Jesus knew this man’s heart was not with Him but with his Father and inheritance.
- The words “me first” are interesting, coming after “Lord.” We can never put “me first” and be a disciple of Jesus Christ. Only when He is first can we truly be disciples of His.

**Why did the man ask permission to go and bury his Father?**

- This practice was considered a fundamental cultural obligation of children to their parents in honoring them.
- Jewish tradition required that a person mourn for his deceased Father or mother for a period of thirty days.

**The final act of devotion to parents was seeing that they were properly buried.**

- Burial of the dead was considered a religious duty that took precedence over all others, including the study of the Law.
- The burial of a father was a religious duty of the utmost importance that took precedence over everything else.
- Only in the case of a temporary Nazarite vow, or if one were the high priest, could a person be released from this obligation.
- Scholars believe that the man’s request was selfish because his Father wasn’t dead yet. That’s why Jesus told him what he told him.

**The man who asked Jesus this question wanted to wait until he got his share of the inheritance.**

- When we become disciples of Jesus, we are not to wait around or fool around because we have been eternally bound to the King of kings and Lord of lords.
- How did Jesus respond to this man’s request? “Jesus said to him, ‘Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God.’” Jesus said, “Let the spiritually dead go and bury the physically dead.”
- The call to follow Jesus will mess up our plans. God changes our hearts, our desires, our destination, and even our plans.

**Jesus gives a sense of urgency in this response! Jesus was not being heartless or insensitive. He is God, but He knew where the man’s heart was.**

- He knew that this man must put Christ first if he were truly going to follow Him.
- Jesus had something very important for this man to do.
- Jesus is saying that going and preaching the kingdom of God is more important than all of our plans.

**When Jesus calls us to follow Him, He expects us to lay aside all that we are.**

- An excellent example of this is the apostle Matthew. Luke 5:27–28 describes, “After these things He went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, ‘Follow Me.’ So he left all, rose up, and followed Him.”

Kingdom work is greater than any other work going on in this world. What the church is doing is the greatest work of all time.

God calls out each and every day.

Some of you have come to church for years, heard the gospel’s message, and been convicted by the Lord of your sin but have never decided to follow Jesus.

Jesus gave this man the greatest invitation that he could ever receive. Preaching and proclaiming the gospel is very important to God. Is it to you?

God commands us to go and preach the kingdom of God. To follow Jesus means that we must go with Jesus. Following Jesus requires that we surrender our pleasures, our plans, and next we see that following Jesus:

### **III. Requires that we surrender our people. (vs. 61–62)**

Our people will hinder our focus. (vs. 61)

“And another also said, ‘Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house’.”

The key word in this verse is not “Lord,” it is the word “but.” The man said, “But let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house.” I’ll go, Lord, but! I’ll serve the Lord, but! I’ll pray Lord, but! I’ll preach Lord, but! I’ll give Lord, but! What is your “but” today?

Many of us have made plenty of excuses, and that’s why we don’t follow!

- I will follow You, Lord, but first, let me see if my parents approve.
- I will follow You, Lord, but first, let me go to a few more parties, and as soon as I get that out of my system, I will settle down.
- I will follow You, Lord, but first, let me get married. As soon as I establish a home, I will follow You.
- We will follow You, Lord, but first let us raise our children. They are so small now, and carrying them along while following You is difficult.
- We will follow You, Lord, but first let us get our children through high school. We have to work six days a week to pay the bills, and the children are so busy with school activities that there is no time to follow You.
- I would like to follow You now, Lord, but I must first see if my husband will come. I do not want to follow You alone.

## LESSON 6

### I Have Decided to Follow Jesus: Part 2

#### Luke 9:57–62

I will follow You, Lord, but first let me retire. Then I will have time to follow You.

I would like to follow You, Lord, but it is too late now. I have not done it all these years, and You cannot teach an old dog new tricks.

#### **To follow Jesus means we must have this resolve**

- “Lord, if I have to go alone, I know that I’ll not be alone.”
- Sometimes we have to journey this road only with Jesus.
- This man’s focus was not right because he was focused on his family rather than on the Father. We need to get our focus on Jesus.
- Our people will sometimes hinder our focus.
- This man said, “Lord, let me go home and say my goodbyes, weep and mourn, reflect on all our family has done and been through, so that when I do follow You, I can be more miserable.”

#### **Our family and friends must realize that our relationship with Jesus Christ comes first and foremost.**

- Where is your focus at today?
- Where has your focus been in the past?

#### **The Lord will reward those who follow Him.**

- Mark 10:28–31 tells us, “Then Peter began to say to Him, ‘See, we have left all and followed You.’”
- So Jesus answered and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel’s, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life.”

#### **But many who are first will be last, and the last first’.”**

We are not to let our people hinder our focus!

Our people will not only hinder our focus, but we also see:

#### **Our people will hinder our faithfulness. (vs. 62)**

“But Jesus said to him, ‘No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.’”

- When we look back, we give evidence that we are not following Jesus.
- Jesus does not want us to be hindered in our faithfulness.
- Many times when we look to our family, we have to look away from the Father.

Jesus gives a straight response to this man's selfish request.

- Putting your hand to the plow signifies making a decision to serve.
- Making a decision to follow means we must step out.

## LESSON 7

### Beginning a New Life: Part 1

#### 2 Corinthians 5:17

A person is not a genuine Christian until he has been born again. Salvation is Christ living out His own life in and through the individual by the life-giving Spirit of God. Spiritual deeds are evidence of this transformation.

When an individual receives the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, he discovers that there are things that salvation brings.

1. Salvation is genuine regeneration.
  - A. It is a new beginning: Titus 3:5
  - B. It is the beginning of a life glorifying to God: Eph 2:10
2. Salvation brings a new nature.
  - A. True Christians are partakers of the divine nature: 2 Pet 1:4
  - B. True Christians are made partakers of Christ: Heb 3:14
3. Salvation brings new life.
  - A. This new life comes through the Lord Jesus Christ: John 10:28; 20:31
  - B. This new life is eternal life: 1 John 5:11
4. Salvation brings new hope.
  - A. This is because the Lord Jesus Christ is in us: Col 1:27; 1 Thess 5:8
  - B. This hope makes believers heirs: Titus 3:7
  - C. This hope is a steadfast and sure anchor: Heb 6:19; 1 Pet 3:15
5. Salvation gives a genuine experience.
  - A. It brings certainty: Phil 1:6
  - B. It gives every genuine Christian a *know-so* salvation: 2 Tim 1:10–12
6. Salvation produces a righteous life.
  - A. A righteous life results in righteous behavior: 1 John 3:7
  - B. A righteous life should cause the Christian to honor God: 1 Pet 3:1–4
7. Salvation brings with it the ministry of the Holy Spirit.
  - A. The Holy Spirit bears witness that Christians are the children of God: Rom 8:16
  - B. The Holy Spirit reveals to Christians that God is their Father: Gal 4:6
  - C. The Holy Spirit reveals to Christians that they are sealed until the day of the redemption of the body when Christ returns: 2 Cor 1:22; Eph 1:13, 14.

## LESSON 8

### Beginning a New Life: Part 2

#### 2 Corinthians 5:17

1. Salvation brings perfect peace of the mind.
  - A. The perfect peace of the mind comes through the Lord Jesus Christ: Rom 5:1.
  - B. The perfect peace of the mind surpasses everything else in the Christian life: Phil 4:7; Eph 2:14
  
2. Salvation brings praise to God.
  - A. The apostle Peter reveals that Christians should show forth praises to God: 1 Pet 2:9
  - B. The Apostle Paul exhorts Christians to pray with thanksgiving: Phil 4:6
  
3. Salvation brings an enjoyable experience.
  - A. The Psalms abound in expressions of joy: Ps 51:12; 132:9
  - B. The Lord Jesus spoke of His joy being in His disciples: John 15:11; 17:13
  - C. The Apostle Paul prayed that God would fill the Romans with all joy: Rom 15:13
  - D. The Apostle Peter wrote that believers should rejoice with joy unspeakable: 1 Pet 1:8
  - E. The unsaved may have temporary happiness, but only Christians have genuine joy in God: Rom 5:11
  
4. Salvation brings a new destination.
  - A. Those who are unbelievers are headed for eternal damnation: Rev 20:15
  - B. Those who are believers are assured of being in Heaven forever with the Lord Jesus Christ: Col 1:5
  
5. Salvation brings eternal glory.
  - A. Christians have a foretaste of glory in this life by talking and walking with the Lord Jesus: 1 John 1:1–4
  - B. Christians shall have eternal glory with the Lord Jesus Christ reserved for them in Heaven: Rev 22:1–5

APPENDIX 4  
PRE- AND POST-STUDY MEAN SCORE RESULTS

No.	Question	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Diff.
6	All people struggle with addictions.	4.167	4.583	0.417
7	I have a strong desire to be free from my addictions.	5.250	5.250	0.000
8	I believe I <i>can</i> be free from addictions.	5.583	5.417	-0.167
9	I have gone through long periods of abstinence from my addiction.	5.083	4.833	-0.250
10	I believe I have been caught up in addiction to cover up the pain of broken relationships in my life.	4.417	4.833	0.417
11	I believe my failure to follow God's Word has caused me to suffer consequences in my life.	4.333	4.917	0.583
12	I believe Jesus Christ understands the painful circumstances I have endured in my life.	5.333	5.583	0.250
13	I believe the Scriptures address the subject of addiction.	4.750	4.667	-0.083
14	I believe my spiritual health directly impacts my ability to be clean and sober.	5.000	5.167	0.167
15	I believe knowing God is the starting point for rebuilding my life.	5.083	5.167	0.083
16	I know I have been saved by God's grace.	4.833	5.417	0.583

<b>No.</b>	<b>Question</b>	<b>Pre-Test</b>	<b>Post-Test</b>	<b>Diff.</b>
17	I enjoy spending time with God by reading his Word.	4.583	4.917	0.333
18	I believe God wants me to obey Jesus Christ no matter how hard life may become.	5.250	5.417	0.167
19	I believe God designed man to be productive through honest work to provide for his family.	5.417	5.500	0.083
20	I believe I need to become a man who can be trusted by my family.	5.500	5.500	0.000
21	I believe I need to develop a good plan for reentering society rather than returning to my old way of life.	5.500	4.917	-0.583
22	I must find a biblically faithful church to stay grounded in the good news of Jesus Christ.	4.750	5.167	0.417
23	I consider personal accountability with another man or a group of men to be a vital part of being free from addiction.	4.500	4.833	0.333
24	I believe I can be a godly man who loves his family, his church, and his community.	5.083	5.333	0.250
25	I have hope for a bright future.	5.167	5.500	0.333



APPENDIX 5  
T-TEST RESULTS

<b>T-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means</b>		
	<i>Pre-Test Total</i>	<i>Post-Test Total</i>
Mean	99.583333	102.916667
Variance	172.265151	180.265152
Observations	12	12
Pearson Correlation	0.585830	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	11	
t stat	-0.955438	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.179941	
t Critical one-tail	1.795884	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.359882	
t Critical two-tail	2.200985	

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## ABSTRACT

### DEVELOPING A BIBLICAL DISCIPLESHIP CURRICULUM FOR UNITED GOSPEL RESCUE MISSION IN POPLAR BLUFF, MISSOURI

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2024  
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Matthew D. Haste

The purpose of this project was to create a biblical discipleship curriculum that promotes and introduces clients to faith, repentance, and power through the gospel of Jesus Christ at United Gospel Rescue Mission in Poplar Bluff, Missouri. Chapter 1 explains the context and the rationale for developing and presenting this teaching to those addicted to drugs and alcohol. Chapter 2 discusses the biblical and theological basis for the project. Chapter 3 presents the philosophical, theoretical, and practical differences between the secular and biblical definition and treatment of addiction. Chapter 4 recounts the implementation of the project. Chapter 5 summarizes the results of the project and provides theological and personal reflections on the implementation.



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