

Week 4: From Addiction to Freedom

(Written by Carlos Flores)

Addiction is doing something compulsively **without the ability to stop**, even with the knowledge of the negative effects. Sin is the deliberate action, attitude or thought that goes against God. Due to this fallen state that we live in, we are addicted to sin. You and I both have to acknowledge that we are wretched sinners. To see this from a Biblical point of view, we will look at idolatry. The nature of addiction is related to the very nature of idolatry. In idolatry, we see the human heart desire something different than God.

Context behind Ezekiel 16:23-29: Ezekiel through the Word given to Him by God is speaking to Jerusalem regarding what God did for them and how they responded to the blessings. The people were supposed to represent God's bride. Scripture describes God as a faithful husband in the way He cared for His bride (Ezekiel 16: 8). Yet, the people of Jerusalem took what God had given them & used it to worship themselves or other gods. The same applies to us, we take the good things God gives us and make them ultimate things, idols. What we will read is God's rebuke of Jerusalem's unfaithfulness. A few key definitions to note:

- Idolatry is the worship of someone or something else other than God (Exodus 20:3).
- Worship: IT IS NOT JUST SINGING lol. Worship is when we give our deepest affections and highest praise to something, not just outward, but internally as well. We were made to worship, whether you are a follower or not, it is not a matter if you are worshipping, it is a matter of what.

[Read Ezekiel 16:23-29, 1 of 2 main scriptures]

This is such a powerful rebuke by God who is saying that they did it voluntarily and alone. God is not without reason to judge them and He tells them why. Some points about this excerpt:

- 1) **Jerusalem was influenced or peer pressured by the nations around them.** They kept worshiping false gods from Egypt and Assyria. The interesting part is they desired to do it by "offering yourself to any passerby and multiplying your whoring. Verse 25 (ESV)"
- 2) In this excerpt, 3 times Scripture states "**you were not satisfied.**" No matter how many times they worshiped other gods, no matter how much they compromised and looked like the rest of the nations around them, the people of Jerusalem were not satisfied. They had to continue to make more compromises for their idols, to try and satisfy themselves...

Application: Addiction is a story of not being satisfied. Idolatry is a story of not being satisfied in God, so you look to false gods.

- i) For those who struggle with addictive behavior, why do you think you crave your next hit or your next binge of food, video games, or porn? **BECAUSE** you are just not satisfied even after giving yourself over to these things. You **escape** to them to try to satisfy you when things get tough, when you're in your mind, but these idols strip you of your clothes and take your beautiful jewels and leave you naked and bare (Verse 39). In basic terms, **they leave you empty and that's why you crave your next fill.** The cycle continues just like for the people of Jerusalem.

- 3) This statement is backed up by Verse 30, which shows **the ROOT issue of their behavior “How sick is your heart,”** declares the Lord God. Their hearts are the ones dictating their actions. Their innermost being desired these idols over the God who has been faithful to them from the start.
- i) Application: Deep in the heart of every sinner can say they relate to this. See, your idol doesn't have to be a hardcore harmful thing. But anything you look to for something that only He can give you is an idol. “If only I had a partner, if only I had this amount of money, if only I got a little more high... then I would be happy” Then what happens, you chase and you chase, you give yourself over & maybe you get that “thing,” maybe you reach that high, **yet that still doesn't satisfy**, so you have to come up with a new “If only.” This is the wickedness of your heart and mine. See you the first step to recovery is admitting, just like salvation, I have to be able to admit I am a wretched sinner who desires to sin and in need of saving.
- (1) In his book, *Counterfeit gods*, Tim Keller points out two of many things regarding idolatry.
- (a) The heart is an idol factory.
- (b) An idol is a “god,” Tim argued, in the sense that: “Whatever controls us is our Lord. The person who seeks power is controlled by power. The person who seeks acceptance is controlled by the people he or she wants to please. We do not control ourselves, we are controlled by the lord of our lives.”

Hence, why idolatry and addiction share a lot of similarities.

4) Idols and addictions both take from you.

- a) They promise you something in return, but leave you empty like we stated previously. Furthermore, What makes this addictive behavior of sin worse is that WE VOLUNTARILY give ourselves over. The desire was always in you, it just took external circumstances to bring that out. No one forces an addiction upon someone. Yes, the culture around us can influence, BUT the desire is in you. God is making it completely clear in these verses, no one forced the people of Jerusalem to follow false gods, they compromised, they gave them the gifts God blessed them with, they gave them their hope, they gave them their burden. And the same thing can be said about you and I. Because that's what we do as fallen mankind, we want our idols to carry the weight of our burdens, but we are gravely mistaken if we genuinely think they can.
- 5) **To tie it all in**, the people of Jerusalem voluntarily were in captivity, they were in slavery. That's what idols do. It may not be harmful at first, but there's always a catch, & that catch is slavery. A pastor once said that the enemy doesn't present you with a big old chain, but it presents you with choices... a small link in the chain. (PLEASE SHOW THE PICTURES BELOW)

This link represents a choice. A choice to give into your addictive behavior to sin. It doesn't look bad right?



What about now?



Now, you have this big old chain that you're enslaved to and can't get free from. Now what?
GOOD NEWS!

Read **John 8:31-36 [2nd main scripture]** FREEDOM

- Jesus has burst those bonds of slavery, He broke the yoke of the fallen world. **For those under Christ**, you are set free FROM THE GUILT OF SIN AND FROM THE LIFE-CONTROLLING POWER OF SIN.
 - So unbeliever, you can think “I can stop this any time, I can do this on my own,” but let me tell you, you're gravely mistaken. Your strength is not enough, but there is good news, God offers you grace and His strength that breaks cycles of slavery. But first, you must come, be face to face with the chain of sin and admit you've made it yourself, REPENT, turn away and say there is only one way to break that chain and that is Christ.
 - Believer: Maybe you have given your life to Christ and praise God for that. Yes, we still struggle with sin on this side of Heaven, but you're no longer enslaved. You have been a believer for a while, but still struggle with an idol of comfort, video games, social media, drugs or porn... There are two things to say.
 - 1) One, the reality is that sometimes, we still have that enslaved mentality. Therefore, we think that we have no power over this behavior. Looks kind of like this.



BUT REMEMBER, when you put your faith in Christ, you trade a heavy weary yoke of slavery for a light, all-satisfying yoke of Christ. **WHOM THE SON SETS FREE, IS FREE INDEED.**

- 2) I encourage you to keep getting back up. (Proverbs 24:16) **THE ONLY TIME** you fail, is when you stop repenting and relying on God. If you fall short, keep getting back up.

Obviously, this is easier said than done, but that's why this walk is not for everyone and you can't do it alone! People think it is easy to be a Christian, but those people don't understand Christianity then. To deny yourself every day, every second for the sake of loving Christ, is not for the faint of heart. It is so worth it though to be satisfied with the love of Him who died on the Cross for you and I.

Galatians 5:1 "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."

Romans 12:1 "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship."