

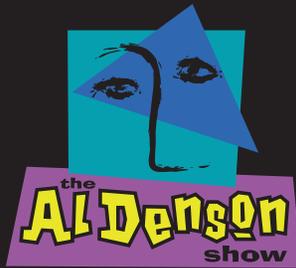
Dear Friends,

Thank you for your correspondence to the Al Denson Show and for tuning in every week to our program. My prayer for you is to be encouraged in your daily walk with Christ through the words of this booklet. Our hope is that in turn you will tell others of what God is doing through our ministry to youth and parents on TV. I am convinced you will not find another program on any network anywhere that deals with issues today's youth and their parents are facing, and provides answers from a Godly perspective.

In addition, we would love for you to help us by going to our web site at www.aldenson.com. Here you can write to us, order additional material like this booklet, check out all my music, have a daily bible study, and stay up to date on the ministry. You can also send us a prayer request and questions for the TV show. But more importantly, please continue to be in prayer with us as we work together to help those that are in need.

Thanks for watching and God Bless!

Sincerely,



An Outreach of Celebration Ministries

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For Overcoming Life's Addictions



Most artists create for only a brief moment in time. That phenomenon was once known as “15 minutes of fame”. Yet even in a fickle world, there still emerge a talented few that transcends time and trends. With nearly 15 years as a major label recording artist and seven hit

albums to his credit, Al Denson is that kind of artist.

But the attention and acclaim his artistry has brought him over the years are anything but the routine rewards of worldly success. Rather, they are the fruits of a life of purpose and passion, and a mission that has always reached far beyond merely making music.

The millions of young people Al has performed for, befriended, counseled, consoled and clowned around with in his career already know that. And thousands more are finding out every day.

This past year has seen Al expand his efforts to a global audience through the reach of his daily syndicated television production, “The Al Denson Show.” “You’ve got to reach out to people where they are with the most powerful means and this form of media allows you to build trust and a rapport,” says Al. “This has all been so amazing. I can’t imagine what lies in store when the Lord finally calls me home, but I don’t have to wait for heaven to receive rewards. I get them every time a kid comes up to me and says, ‘I heard what you said, and I accepted Christ.’ You can’t ask for anything more or better than that.”

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HOPE For Overcoming Life's ADDICTIONS

Corrie ten Boom once said: “Jesus Christ is able to untangle all the snarls in my soul, to banish all my complexes, and to transform even my fixed habit patterns, no matter how deeply they are etched in my subconscious.” This is the hope we will offer you in this booklet for overcoming your addiction. But this doesn’t mean God will always supernaturally remove your problem. More often, He offers the power (the same power that raised Jesus from the dead!) to help us discipline ourselves, choose the right action, and follow through on the right behavior.

God gives His power to help us overcome the problem and learn valuable life lessons from the experience. His power is not given as a “shortcut to perfection.” God will do His part, but we have to do ours, too. He won’t do our work for us, but He will provide the tools we need. It is up to us to use them. Philippians 2:13 says, “For God is at work within you, helping you WANT to obey Him, and then helping you DO what He wants.” Your tools will be among others, God’s Word, material like this booklet, other people to counsel you, pray with you, and to hold you accountable. Yet, never forget that it is Christ Himself who is your ultimate answer to your addictions and the only One who can meet your deepest

needs. He will heal from the inside out, if you will allow Him to do so.

When we choose behavior that robs us of control, we are voluntarily surrendering the responsibility for our lives. The Latin root word for addiction is *addicene* which means,

“to give assent, to assign or surrender.” In ancient times it was used to describe someone (usually an enemy) who was captured and kept in bondage or slavery. This is a good description of an addict--someone who is a slave to something. Anyone who has an overpowering, repetitive, excessive need for anything is an addict. The

Bible calls this sin (II Peter 2:19).

Addictions either stimulate and provide arousal and ecstasy, or they tranquilize and calm and reduce nervous tension, or lower anxiety. There are many different kinds of addictions; alcohol, drugs, pornography, sex, food, spending, work, exercise, to only mention a few. Dr. Arch Hart says that these addictions may seem very different, but in a sense they are all alike because they all have several things in common:

1. Addictions provide a form of escape from our real feelings. They help us avoid the problems and anxieties of life by disconnecting us from reality.

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2. Addictions totally control the addict. This is not to excuse them from responsibility and it doesn't mean that the person lacks the ability to change. It simply means that the addiction can't be overcome with logic or reasoning alone.

3. Addictions of any kind always involve pleasure whether the pleasure is derived from stimulation and excitement, or whether the pleasure comes from the tranquility or release related directly to the activity. The addict may hate the consequences of the addiction, but still find pleasure in the substance or behavior.

4. Addictions are destructive and unhealthy, and take priority over all other life issues. The addiction becomes the center of the addict's life and everything else revolves around it.

5. Addicts deny their addiction and the control it has over him or her. Recovery cannot begin until the denial is broken. This will be an ongoing process.

6. Many experts believe that all addictions are in some ways substance addictions. External substances like drugs, alcohol or nicotine cause the body to be "hooked" on chemicals. In the same way, other activities (sex, spending, food, work, exercise, pornography, etc.) may become addictive because they stimulate the release of certain biochemicals in the brain and thus create a physical or emotion state the addict finds pleasurable.

The fact that we can experience physical discomfort similar to the withdrawal symptoms of drug addiction, and tension, anxiety, and restlessness when we abstain from certain activities would tend to substantiate this viewpoint.

These kinds of addictions also have "tolerance effects" (ever-increasing demands) like substance addictions, where it takes more of that activity to produce the same level of satisfaction that was achieved with previous levels.

7. In any addiction psychological dependence is as important (and maybe more important) than physical dependence. Addicts don't continue in their addictions just to avoid withdrawal symptoms. They continue because they have developed a psychological dependence on the ritual of the activity, itself. For instance, even after a smoker's body no longer craves nicotine, that person will crave the "ritual" of holding the cigarette. Any activity can become addictive if the pleasure associated with it is powerful enough.

This is a powerful argument for the importance of our thought life. We can't control every thought that comes into our mind, but we can choose what to do with it. Memories of the pleasure associated with a certain activity can create a craving for more of the same. Dr. Victor Cline says, "Memories of experiences that occurred at times of emotional arousal get locked into the brain by an adrenal gland hormone, epinephrine, and are difficult to erase."

If thoughts can trigger addictions, then many addictions can be self-induced and self-perpetuated. This is why an important part of curing addictions must involve allowing the Holy Spirit to "renew" the mind. Philippians 4:8 says, "...whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things." The key here is CHOICE. All healings begin with choosing to be healed. The only way that memory will finally give up its power to control us is when we choose to stop doing certain things and continue to choose not to do them, then healing begins.

John 5:1-9 tells the story of a crippled man. Imagine this scene for a moment with me. Picture a beautiful pool with large marble columns. There are sick people with every kind of illness sitting and lying around beside

the pool. Some have been there for years because they all believe that periodically an angel comes and stirs the waters, and when that happens the first person in the pool gets healed.

The crippled man had been an invalid for 38 years. For some reason Jesus picked him out of the crowd that day and walked straight over to him. Jesus asked the man a strange but important question, "Do you want to get well?" Instead of saying yes, the man made an excuse. Jesus ignored the excuse and said, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk." At once the man was healed and did just that.

You may wonder why the man didn't immediately say "yes, I don't want to live this way any longer, I want to be different." The truth is he probably had become very comfortable settling for what he had. After all, the pool was familiar territory. All the other sick people that went to the pool everyday were his friends. He probably liked being around them because then he didn't feel so bad about himself. Being crippled also gave him an excuse not to do life like other people.

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We can be a lot like that man. We can become comfortable with where we live and how we live. Jesus is saying the same thing to us that he said to that man by the pool, "Do you want to be different?" Get up! Don't stay where you are or how you are. Move away from that pool of addiction, hopelessness and depression.

The mind is more than a brain. It is aware of feelings and seeks a purpose in life. This means when a certain behavior meets some significant psychological need, the person will tend to repeat the behavior. If the behavior is harmful and the person is very needy, addiction can result. Every person that has

ever been born comes into this world with three basic emotional needs: the need to be unconditionally loved and accepted, the need to feel valuable and capable, the need to feel that we are not alone. The risk factor for addiction in a person's life is in direct relation to the extent that one or more of these needs have gone unmet.

When people are emotionally needy they will also be looking for ways to:

- escape from worry and anxiety
- reduce guilt feelings
- have a sense of control in their lives
- avoid pain (physical, spiritual, or emotional)
- be perfect because they find worth and value in perfection



Addicts have emotional pain that is so great they can't tolerate it, so the addiction puts a pad between them and their pain. Some of the feelings that they are constantly trying to escape are stress, boredom, depression, feelings of inadequacy, imperfection, and low self-esteem. Anything that can help numb these feelings can become addictive.

What adds to the problem is the buildup of tolerance. Over time the addictive behavior becomes less effective at blocking the feelings that we are trying to escape, so we have to do more and more of the same activity to get the desired results. The very thing that started off offering freedom from the pain of life, slowly becomes a prison because the pleasure that it offers is temporary.

Excitement seeking plays a big part in the addictive process. Of course, excitement plays an important role in all our lives. Some degree of stimulation adds quality to life. But there is a price to pay for excitement: You can never get enough of it. The addict is driven by a need to maintain constant gratification: perpetual arousal. They don't understand that permanent stimulation is no pleasure at all. Every healthy life is characterized by point and counterpoints, mountains and valleys, work and

play, sadness and happiness, pleasure and pain, excitement and indifference.

The wisest man who ever lived, King Solomon, put it like this in Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, "there is a time for everything and a season for every activity under heaven: a time a be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain, a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away, a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak, a time

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to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.”

Without times of sadness you can never fully appreciate happiness; without work you can never appreciate times of play, without pain you can never appreciate pleasure. Unless you have ever been really dirty, you can't appreciate being clean, until you have been very thirsty, you can't appreciate a cool drink of water. You have to be in a valley to understand how high a mountain is; and unless you experience some monotony in your life, you can never really appreciate excitement.

The inability to tolerate a lull in stimulation is a major factor in creating addictions. God never created us for continuous excitement. Down times are given to us by Him so we can slow down, rest, and allow our bodies to heal. These times in our lives are very important and should be seen as friends and not enemies. They aren't something to run from or dread, they give value to our lives and make our "up" times even more pleasurable.

Instead of always seeking stimulation, begin to pursue satisfaction instead. Satisfaction is about being "content." It is more an attitude or a state of mind than anything else. The Bible says in Psalm 46:1, "Be still and know that I am God." To be still means to rest, not just physically but emotionally, as well. It means to "cease from striving." The focus of stimulation is always toward us, but the focus of satisfaction or contentment is always toward God. This scripture says that the only way

you can really get to know Him is to "be still." Focusing outward instead of inward is an effective antidote for any addiction, because it will always breed contentment. The way to avoid addictions in life is to be content. How do you create contentment in your life? With an act of your will. Ask God to help you choose contentment and develop a grateful, thankful heart.

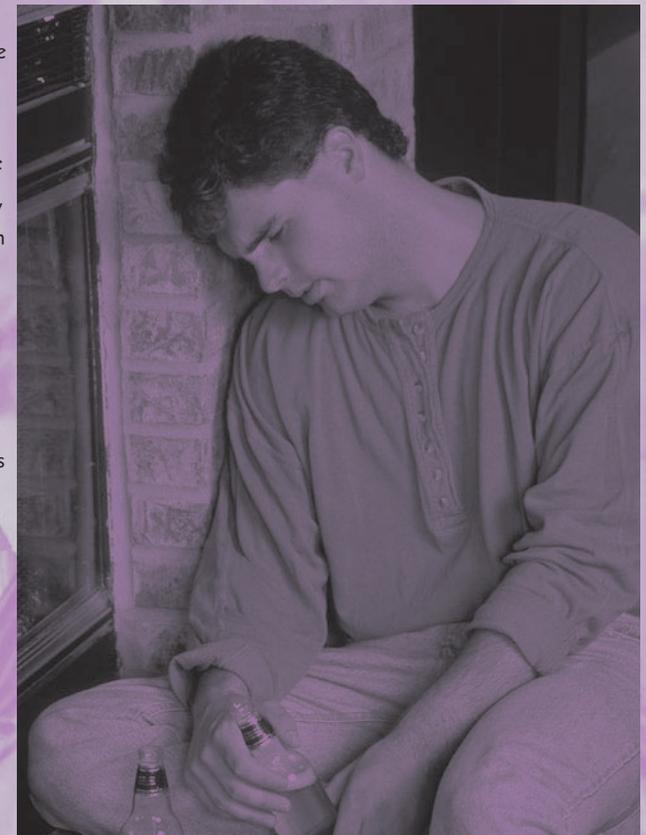
While some addictions meet the need for stimulation or excitement, others fulfill the function of tranquilizing or reducing tension. This is a multi-step process that starts with the addict experiencing an unmet need, or painful or frustrating situation in life. This unmet need or problem creates "pressure" and the addict looks to relieve the pressure or numb the pain by engaging in some behavior. Once they do this, there is a sense of relief, then denial. The denial is not that they have engaged in the behavior, but the denial is that the behavior is in any way connected to the problem. The greater the denial, the more powerful the addiction. (There is a principle to remember here concerning denial. Jesus said, "the truth shall set you free." It is important to understand, however, that the truth can only set you free when you are truthful.) The tension relief that occurs is temporary and unsatisfactory. Sooner or later the tension returns and the cycle begins again.

Whether the addictive behavior is driven by excitement seeking or tension reducing, there

are usually trigger mechanisms that set the addiction in motion. Some common ones would be anxiety, isolation, boredom, depression, crises, failure, criticism, rejection, or abandonment, just to mention a few. When an addict is taught how to identify their painful emotions and to confront them head-on, they will better understand how these serve as triggers for their addiction and can be helped to formulate a plan for keeping the trigger from "working."

As you begin the process of overcoming your addiction there are some very important things that you must understand. First, get ready because you are going to be tempted constantly, and more than likely, temptation is something that you have not handled very successfully up until now. In fact, you may have given into temptation so many times that you feel winning over temptation is hopeless for you. Before we say anything else about temptation, you need a dose of hope and encouragement.

The Bible says in I Corinthians 10:13, "Many others have faced exactly the same problems before you. And no temptation (or problem) is irresistible. You can trust God to keep the temptation (or problem) from becoming so strong that you can't stand up against it, for He has promised this and will do what He says. He will show you how to escape temptation's (and problem's) power so that you can bear up patiently against it."





You may be facing the greatest temptation of all right now--the temptation to give up, to surrender to the enemy that you are fighting. God wants to give you the power to overcome temptation, but you must turn to Him for help. God can supernaturally deliver you from the guilt and hopelessness that you feel. God has confidence in you even if you have none in yourself. He says in this verse that NOTHING will come your way that is so strong that you cannot stand up against it. God believes in your ability to fight, to cope, and to win. If you don't believe in God as confidently as He believes in you, then simply ask Him for the courage and the faith you need to trust Him.

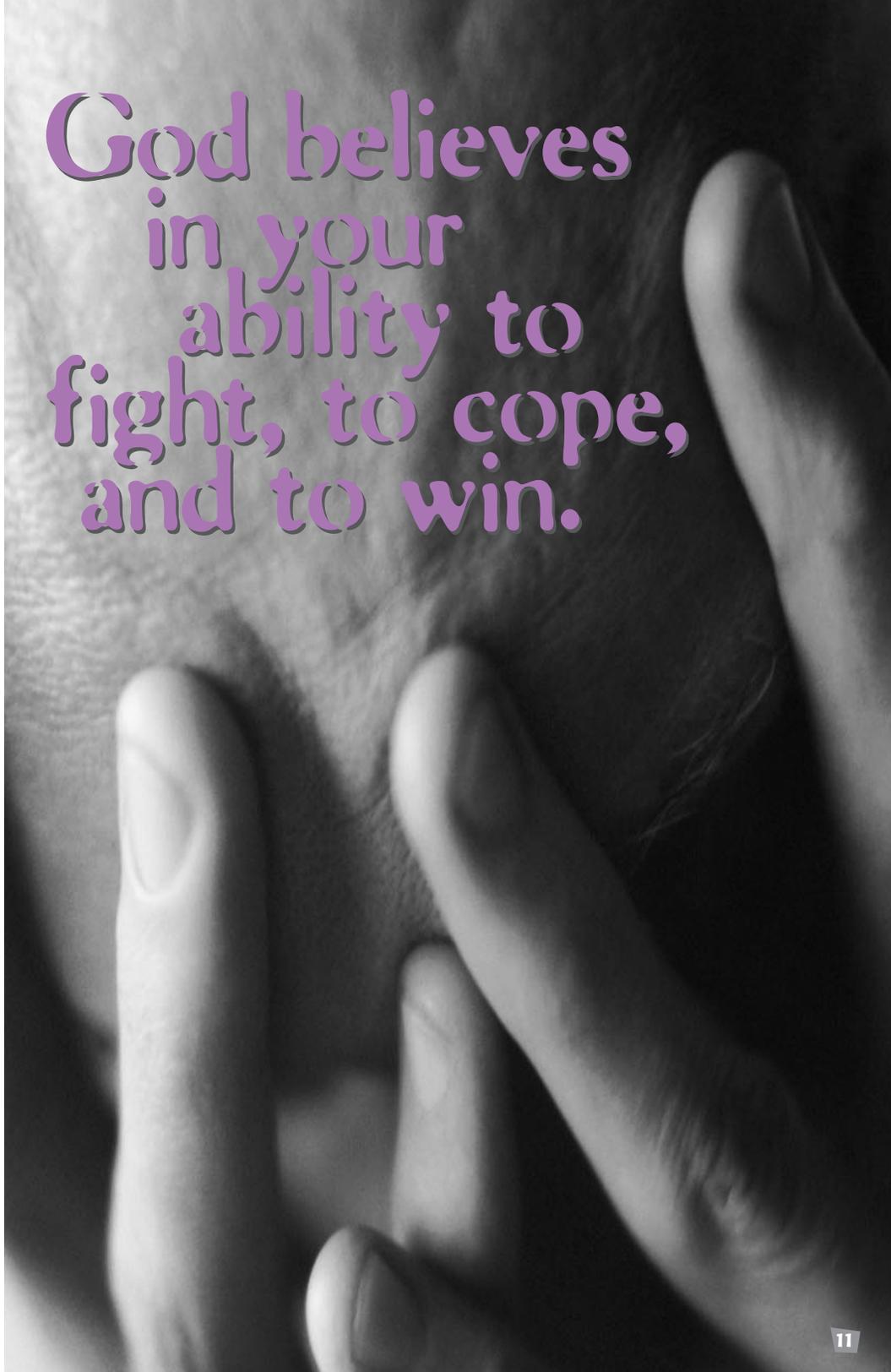
Remember the words of I Corinthians 10:13, "...You can trust God to keep the temptation (or problem) from becoming so strong that you can't stand up against it, for he has promised this and He will do what He says." Jesus said that heaven and earth will pass away but God's words will stand forever. We just read God's words and they will stand forever as the solid, unmovable truth. God says that you can make it, so you can.

Secondly, there is something that you need to know about temptation: Temptation itself is not a sin. Yielding to temptation is the sin. Temptation is Satan's attempt to get you to commit an act of sin. The whole aim and purpose of temptation is to cause you to violate

God's law and principles. You see, if you have committed your life to Jesus Christ, he has lost your soul. Your life now belongs to God, and Satan has lost you forever. But, this doesn't mean that Satan has given up on you. The next best thing he can do is to destroy your faith and your testimony by attacking you with temptation.

If you have been saved, you are free in Christ. You have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus and set free from the bondage of sin. Your sin debt has been paid and you are no longer condemned. You have been pardoned and given a new life in Christ. The only thing left for Satan to do is to target your weaknesses and tempt you to sin. If he can bring guilt and defeat into your life, he can make you miserable and keep you from being usable to God.

Don't let Satan put you on a guilt trip because tempting thoughts enter your mind. Jesus was tempted, the Bible says, but never sinned (Hebrews 4:15). It is not a sin to be tempted. Temptation is just the "bait" Satan uses to try and get you to sin. After you are tempted (which is not a sin), it is your own lust that pushes you to sin.



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Don't fear temptation. Just because it comes in your life doesn't mean that you have to be defeated by it.

Temptation always begins with a thought. Once your mind focuses and dwells on a tempting thought, you are in real danger of going through with it. You may try to talk yourself out of it. You may argue with yourself, but it is difficult to debate yourself out of a desire. Please understand that all of your desires are not necessarily wrong. The temptation that Satan always uses is to get you to fulfill those desires in the wrong way. He also tells you that the only way to make the desire go away is to give into it, but that is a lie. Every time you give into temptation, the desires will only be stronger the next time.

No matter how long you walk with God or how strong a Christian you are, you will always have to deal with temptation. Be prepared to deal with it at every turn. But don't fear temptation. Just because it comes in your life doesn't mean that you have to be defeated by it. And just because you have failed before doesn't mean that you will again. The Bible says in James 4:7, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you." "Resist" is a defensive term. It means that you are to stand firm, fearlessly look the devil in the eye, and tell him in the name of Jesus to beat it! The Bible promises that when you do, he will run from you!

If you are serious about winning over temptation, the two keys to victory are found in these verses:

Romans 12:1-2 says, "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer (present) your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve of what God's will is. His good, pleasing and perfect will."

1. Present, offer, yield your body to God.

This means you are to dedicate yourself to God in a deliberate and intentional manner. Before you can win over temptation, you must understand that your body belongs to God. The Bible says in I Corinthians 6:19-20, "...You are not your own; you were bought with a price. Therefore honor God with your body." Christ died for your sins and His blood "redeemed" you.

Years ago when purchases would be made at the local grocery store or the gas station, the merchant would give you S&H Green Stamps. The number of stamps you would get was determined by the amount of money you spent. You would take the stamps home and paste them in books. There was an S&H catalog that was filled with all sorts of things that you could exchange for your books of Green

Stamps. Whenever you saved up enough stamps, you could take them to an "S&H Redemption Center." There you would exchange your books of stamps for the gift you wanted. In other words, you were "redeeming" your stamps for something of much greater value.

When you gave your heart and life to Jesus, He redeemed you. He exchanged your old, sinful, broken life, for His life. If you are a Christian, you belong to Him. Your body is not your own; Jesus redeemed it with His own blood. So, now it does matter what you do with His property. Understanding that fact will help you view temptation differently.

2. Be transformed by the "renewing of your mind." The Bible tells you not to let the world squeeze you into its own mold. In other words, don't be like the world in the way you think and live your life, but rather be transformed into the image of Christ by having your mind renewed. To win over temptation you must guard what you feed your mind and begin to think God's thoughts. The Bible says in Isaiah 26:3, "You will keep in perfect peace, him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you." If you are struggling with thoughts of

Whatever you feed is going to grow, and whatever you starve is going to die.

temptation, commit your mind and your thought to God every day. Determine with an act of your will to let Him have total control of your thoughts and to keep your mind fixed on Him. Remember, whatever you feed is going to grow, and whatever you starve is going to die.

Overcoming an addiction will never happen by willpower alone. The harder you try, the easier it will be to fall back. Forcing yourself to stop only drives you further into the addiction. Once an addiction is well-entrenched it may feel uncontrollable, but this does not change the fact that we still remain at all times morally responsible for what we do and the choices that we make. Recovery can only begin when a decision is made to begin the recovery process. You cannot do this alone. You must seek the help of a professional Christian counselor and immediately get into a support group, such as a 12-step recovery program, that will demand accountability to God through another human.



There is an even deeper issue, a spiritual one, because at the root of every addiction is sin. To look to anything or anyone other than Christ and Christ alone to meet the needs in our lives is sin. We were never created to be fulfilled by anything or anyone other than Him. This is why simply forcing an addict to stop an addictive behavior rarely works in the long term. The bondage that addicts find themselves in, is at its core, a bondage to sin. Addiction is first and foremost a spiritual issue, so the healing must begin with repentance. Addiction is an attempt to meet the deepest needs of our lives, our way. It is playing god in our own lives. This is sin, in its truest form. Jesus said in Matthew 4:10, "Worship the Lord your God and serve Him ONLY." So healing begins with genuine repentance which is acknowledging this and with an act of our will, turning the control over to the Lord and allowing Him to be God in our life.

Repentance is the beginning, but only the beginning. Just as addiction cannot be defeated by willpower alone, neither can it be overcome by assuming that simply because we have repented that God will do the rest. That's not how it works. We must be willing to cooperate with God by accepting the responsibility for our problem, not blaming others, and by being willing to do whatever it takes to be healed and get free.

This will be a process and a struggle as we confront our dishonesty and our denial. We must be willing to face all the pain, problems, the emptiness, and the unmet needs in our lives we have been trying to escape. Our search for pleasure or escape in life is simply a search for meaning and purpose in life. God wants us to allow Him to fill all the empty places in our lives and empower us to live lives that are full and free. Addictions promise to be "short-cuts to happiness" and "instant gratification," but they are not. Addictions are very powerful, but God's power is greater.

Regardless how long the addict has been controlled by the addiction, there is hope. Turning to God will empower them for healing. God honors the willingness to participate with Him. God doesn't help those who really don't want help because He is wise enough to know how pointless that would be. But, to the person who really desires freedom, God will set that one "free indeed."