

**REAL, REAL WORLD SERIES ONE
SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND ADDICTION**

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Ecclesiastes 1:12-18; Mark 2:1-5**

Intro

Ill-Tales of a Coke addict (**Slide**)- In high school I used to get up early and play basketball in the mornings. I ended up being pretty tired by the time I got to school. I started buying a coke from the machine every morning when I got to school to get a little pick me. I was doing it so often that one of my morning class teachers commented that he couldn't remember seeing me without a Coke in my hands. From that day onward he always referred to me as his Coke addict student. Even now when he sees me he likes to joke around and ask if I've kicked my Coke addiction.

- As I was preparing this week I got to thinking that what a simple life it would be if the biggest addiction we had to worry about was an addiction to Coca-Cola. However you and I don't know that life isn't that simple.
- Each of us knows someone who has struggled with or been impacted by a harmful addiction. Real, Real, World addictions aren't ones that you look back on and joke about years later but rather are ones that make you look back and mourn over the pain caused to everyone involved.

Part 1- Get to the root of the addiction

- Root is low self worth- both popular and outcast can suffer from this

Read Ecc. 1:12-18 (NLT) (Slide)

- A common expression of low self worth "When God was passing out natural talents and abilities and spiritual gifts He passed me by. I don't think He even saw me." (Helping the Hurting in Your Church, Dr. Steven Dowdle, pg 105)
- There is a connection between self worth and how people feel they are seen by God and man
- Whatever I'm addicted to elevates my self worth in my mind (**Slide**)
 - **Drugs and Alcohol:** Give me a sense of confidence (that's why drunk people say such bold and silly things, Ex Mel Gibson and his comments about Jews), makes me think I'm funny (one stereotype you see a lot about people who smoke a lot pot is that they laugh at almost everything when they're high).
 - **Food:** Fills me up and makes me feel good. Gives me pleasure. If I feel good I generally feel good about myself.
 - **Purging:** Satisfies my notion that all beautiful people are skinny and if I'm skinny I'm beautiful and if I'm beautiful I'll be wanted by others.
 - **Internet:** Internet chatting and gaming is really popular to the point that people are online to an incredibly unhealthy extent. I read about some cases where people can have an online addiction that adds up to 80hrs a week or more (that's most nights and weekends).

- **EX. There's a new online support group for people who are addicted to the internet. It meets on AOL each night from 6:00 P.M. till midnight.** This thing meets online for 6hrs a night every night. Simple math tells us this adds up to spending 42hrs a week online just to break the addiction of being online.
- When we think about addictions to being online it's about being able to communicate with people who can't see you thus they can't judge you by how you look or don't look.
- **Pornography:** Removes the work from a relationship. Makes meeting my physical desires easy. Also the person on the page of the magazine or the computer screen or the TV can't leave me or reject me. I get what I want from them and then I decide when it's over. Pornography is so dangerous because in addition to everything else unhealthy about it, it also causes a person to be addicted to the imagined power it provides over another person.
- Each of these things is something that people everywhere, everyday find themselves battling and struggling with. We go to these addictions because they seem to fill some hole that we feel we're missing. A hole in ourselves that communicate to us how valuable we really are.

t>> It's at this moment that the difficulty with addiction to drugs or alcohol or pornography or food or anything else really sets in. Reality is that if I'm addicted to something because I have a low self worth and sense of value I am not in control of making others find me valuable. The people in control of that are ultimately the community around me.

Part 2- What is the community's role

- A community has a responsibility to minister to the self worth of the people within it. It's not a very healthy community if its not making those within it feel valuable.
- There's a brief moment in the life of Jesus that gives us a good picture of what this looks like.

Read Mark 2:1-5 (NLT) (Slide)

- At this time much of your value was in what you did. Everyone was so poor you had to work to make money to buy food. There was no unemployment or disability. If you were paralyzed you were bound to have a strong sense of worthlessness. What could you contribute to anything? Especially if you were a man and supposed to be a provider for a family.
- In that culture it was often thought that if you were sick or infirm it was God punishing you. Imagine what people thought of a paralyzed man? You must be one of the worst people around
- See things for what they are. Easy to judge when we don't have the full scope. We easily see the messed up sinful part of the addiction but we don't see the hurt that's giving it strength.

Ill-Seth prays the wrong name @ the Hospice, son was upset (Slide)

- Instead of judgment or worthlessness this man's community rallies around him.
 - Pull the struggling friend into your positive/healthy experiences-Experiences where they hear that they are valuable to man and God.
 - Ex- Paintball (fun), Crossroads (fun?? Value to God), When you're family has dinner, when your friends go out to the movies, mall, etc...
 - It's hard to have low feelings of worth when everything and everyone around express just how valuable you are.
 - It's not a community's responsibility to make choices for another person and keep them out of an addiction. It is however a community's responsibility to be sure that they've communicated to someone how valuable they really are so that there is a far less chance for an addiction to start.
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- healing began the moment those friends began to tear apart the roof because they were communicating the value their friend had to them. It was simply a reflection of the value that they believed Jesus saw in their friend.
 - **"Their faith"**-twofold. Probably the faith of the friends and of the man. There still is a responsibility of the friend to make the right choice and to the work to kick the addiction. However it's never done alone.

(Devon goes to AA with a friend who slipped up all day. Only after the friend agreed to go do the work. Devon didn't go and take notes and bring them back and say here's what they said. She gave up what she was doing that day which, trust me was pretty important, and went with this person as a support. Communicated worth and value to someone who desperately needed it at that moment, while at the same time pushing that person to make the right choices that only they could make.)

Closing

- If there's one thing that we can walk out of here with it's a renewed passion to see the real value and humanity in a person.
- Really becomes an awareness of the people around us and what's going on in life

Ill-Unseen Value (**Slide**) -A man bought a painting at a flea market in France after World War II but did not recognize the artist's signature. He stored it in his attic for decades, then finally had it appraised by a Zurich connoisseur in 1993. It turned out to be a previously unknown still life by Vincent van Gogh, called "Still Life (Vase With Flowers)." It was worth millions; until then, art historians hadn't even known it existed. And all this time, this valuable painting was gathering dust in the owner's attic.

- Have a video for us to help dwell on what it means to see the value and humanity in our friends.