

Why Your Addiction Recovery Is 100% Your Responsibility

Men and women have been medicating their pain and bad choices throughout time. God always desires for us to leave our addictions to follow Him into spiritual adulthood.

He is always willing to empower and enable us to do so when we are teachable. I want to walk you through a well-known Bible story that outlines the process of addiction step-by-step.

The famous story of the prodigal son offers the best illustration of this progression. If you have been a Christian for a while, it is likely you have heard this story preached or taught, but I would wager you have never heard it exactly the way God has opened it up to me over my many years of working with addicts and their spouses.

Before I break this story down, you may want to take a few minutes and read it in its entirety in Luke 15:11-32.

Now let's go through each part of the process the prodigal son took through his addiction. If you're an addict, active or in recovery, you may relate to one or many of these stages.

Entitlement

Luke 15:11-12: "Then He said, 'A man had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, "Father, give me the share of the property that falls to me." So he divided his estate between them.'"

Addicts of all kinds, whether addicted to exercise, sex, money, hoarding, chocolate or anything else, live in what I like to call a "me" reality. This prodigal son felt entitled to what his father had worked his whole life to acquire. The son relegated to his own selfish desires the fruit of decades

of his father's hard work. The father became an object to the son, not a person or soul. To the son, his father was a means to an end, a thing to manipulate rather than a human being who loved his son.

Alienation

Luke 15:13: "Not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together, and journeyed to a distant country, and there squandered his possessions in prodigal living."

This young man got everything to which he thought himself entitled. It was not enough for him. He then did what so many addicts do, and alienated himself from his family and all those who truly loved him: friends, cousins, people in his spiritual community and more.

Addiction makes you value "it" (whatever "it" is for you) more than people. As a result, they will alienate themselves even from the people who truly love them the most: fathers or mothers, spouses, children, brothers or sisters, long-term friends and more.

Depleted Resources

Luke 15:14: "When he had spent everything..."

Addictions, regardless of type, are leeches on human beings. This young man squandered all of his money. Imagine winning a huge amount of money through a lottery, then spending every last penny in a short amount of time.

Supernatural Circumstances

Luke 15:14b: "...there came a severe famine in that country..."

God is God. He is much bigger than our little micro world. He is the God of the nations. When he is moving you toward home, he can create all kinds of macro circumstances so that you experience need or pain. In most addiction stories, there is a

story of a bizarre set of circumstances that resulted in some form of need or pain in the life of the addicted person.

Need

Luke 15:14 (NIV): "...and he began to be in need."

After exhausting all his resources, the prodigal son found himself in need. Need is a whole lot different from want. You may want a fancy blue coat, but when it's bitter cold, all you need is a coat—you're not picky. The addict may have many buddies to act out with, but what they need is a true friend. Need is different.

The need for health, for sanity or to get your children or spouse back is a great motivation to reevaluate, rethink and create a different life free of addiction.

First Attempt

Luke 15:15: "So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs."

What strikes me as bizarrely interesting is that this prodigal's need didn't take him home. Many of us make what I call "first attempts" to stop our addiction, or the impact from our addiction.

Because addicts so immerse themselves in secular ideas and people, this first attempt is honorable but incomplete. Good will not get us the freedom from addiction that Jesus Christ's death and resurrection can.

Trying Harder

Luke 15:16: "He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything."

When you go to the world to rid your spirit, soul and body of attraction to addiction, things can get harder. The prodigal

son was trying to fix an external problem, but the disease of addiction, spiritual separation and immaturity are internal problems solved by work and relationships.

Waking Up

Luke 15:17: "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death!'"

This is a favorite verse for me. When it comes to recovery, coming to ourselves is the turning point for so many of us. The road is often hard and harder, but we do eventually hit what we call our bottom. At the end of us, we are out of resources, ideas, willfulness and manipulation.

Having a Plan

Luke 15:18-19: "I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants."

The prodigal remembered what it was like to live under the blessings. No longer was he full of entitlement, arrogance and self-will. He was ready to submit to authority, follow the rules of his father, and serve instead of being served.

The prodigal son felt unworthy. You may feel this way as well. Know this: Jesus' blood makes you worthy. If you have never said the following prayer, I recommend you stop reading, say it out loud and return home to the Father: "Jesus, come into my heart and forgive me of my sins. I accept You as Lord of my life, and I will follow You."

Change of Direction

Luke 15:20: "So he got up and went to his father."

This is the turning point of the whole story. Without this one

verse, this man's story would have been just another fantasy to be free. However, this small verse is packed with important ideas that are necessary for those of us who want recovery to truly get it.

This was not a two-day walk to go home; it required weeks, perhaps months. He had to walk constantly and persistently in the opposite direction of his addiction lifestyle. He had to forsake people, places and things he might have grown fond of in his addiction. He had to leave all with which he had become familiar and walk a long way to reach home.

Like him, you are going to have to do life differently to get recovery. You may need to give up people, places and things to which you are emotionally attracted. You're going to have to make time to do recovery work: Complete the workbooks, attend the meetings, make phone calls and face the real issues. You're going to have to consistently, persistently stay focused on the Father and walk a different walk—every day.

Restoration

But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. The son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son." But the father said to his servants, "Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." So they began to celebrate (Luke 15:20-24).

This is the part of the story everyone loves. After the son changed his behavior constantly and persistently over time, he was changed inside and out. The boy who left was perfumed, arrogant and entitled. The son who came back was broken,

dirty, humble, repentant and willing to be of service.

When the father saw his son approaching, he ran down the driveway, hugged and kissed him, and welcomed him home. The father clothed and restored him as a son (not a slave) and celebrated the relationship.

God wants every addict who takes the journey and does the hard work of recovery to be fully restored as a son or daughter of the Most High God and be rid of all slavery thinking and behaving. His desire is to see them restored to him and to family members and friends.

You are on an amazing journey. Some of you feel (rightly so) that you're walking on the backstage of this story. I say ... keep walking. Some of you are in the restoring aspect of this story, changing your slavery thinking to that of a child of God—one He loves deeply. He wants you home and playing your part in the Father's business.

Your recovery is 100% your responsibility. You will need to work hard, make the calls, submit to the principles and do life differently than you did when you were doing only what you wanted to do.

I know from personal experience the work and journey are worth it. You have no idea how amazing your life can be and how you can become an important part of the miracle of recovery in other people's life. {eo}

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