

I AM AN ADDICT

By Takalani Musekwa

It is very difficult to admit that one is an addict. Throughout my life I have been lying to myself and those around me.

Fortunately, one day it hit me on my forehead. I was an addict. I needed help. If you know somebody who is addicted, or are addicted yourself, read on...From one addict to another, you may find help.

I have come across many addicts. These are people who were addicted to different things like alcohol, cocaine, dagga (marijuana), heroine, tik (common in RSA) and many others.



In all the cases I witnessed, the results of the addiction are the same. Firstly, the person's body starts to deteriorate. I have watched people die a painful death from liver cirrhosis due to alcohol abuse. I have seen people's bodies shred to pieces in vehicle accidents caused by drugs or alcohol. You might have seen pictures of celebrities who turned into shadows or skeletons of their former selves.

Secondly, I have seen how the addict's relationships are utterly destroyed. He or she is alienated from family and friends, from children, parents, brothers and sisters, from bosses at work, and from neighbours. The only friends that remain for the addict, if you can call them that, are the drug dealers or the suppliers of the alcohol. Some of the addicts end up completely enslaved to their drug dealers through prostitution, committing crime and other illegal dealings for the benefit of the drug dealer. For example, Thandeka (not her real name) prostituted herself for food and drugs from her pimp until somebody saved her out of that life.

Thirdly, I have noted that the addict's thinking is also affected. Some start hallucinating, seeing and hearing things that do not exist. They start thinking anybody who denies them the drugs does not love

them. A life of drugs becomes the only thing there is for them. They actually start believing they cannot get out. In fact, they start believing drugs are good, and should be legalized for everyone to enjoy.

EACH DAY A STRUGGLE

In all cases where the addict lived to tell the story, I have found somebody who took pity on them and offered help. In most cases this person will take the addict out of the drug den and straight into the rehabilitation centre. They will pay everything that the rehabilitation centre requires. Those who run rehabilitation centres say that the chances of success are good if the addict accepts that they are addicted and need help. In fact, some try up to five rehab centres before they succeed.

I have met and talked to people who run rehabilitation centres. Quite a number of them are ex addicts. They are the first to admit that even after 10 years free of drugs, each day remains a struggle to stay clean. The biggest problem, they say, is that drugs follow them into rehab centres. One of them told me a rehab centre is one place where you can be sure to find drugs!

MY KIND OF ADDICTION

My addiction started with my ancestors. Somebody told them to eat of a certain plant because it would make them wise. No, the plant was not cannabis from which dagga (marijuana) is made, nor was it the coca plant from which cocaine is made. But it had similar consequences for them. Like it is with most addicts, their relationship with their father fell apart. In fact, relationships broke down so much that one of their sons killed his brother. After they ate of that plant, their bodies became addicted. I have inherited the addiction from them.

Let me tell you how I came to know of my addiction. If it was not for my brother Paul, who was also an addict, I would probably still be oblivious to the fact. After Paul realized he was an addict, he started

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METHAMPHETAMINE STIMULANT
ADDICTION
CRACK TERM NORMAL
HEALTH
OBLIGATIONS
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RESULTS SOURCE
SYMPTOMS
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HEALTH



writing letters to us, his brothers and sisters, to warn us about the addiction. Those addicted to alcohol are called alcoholics, others are simply called users, or junkies, or crackpots, or dopers. Those with my kind of addiction are called sinners.

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In one of his letters, my brother Paul said, “When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam’s sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned.” (Romans 5:12). Paul realized he was a sinner. Because of his addiction, his sin, he was busy going around killing his brothers and putting others in jail. In his warped, addicted (sinful) mind he thought he was doing a good thing. Like all addicts, Paul needed somebody to show him he needed help. So one day while he was on his way to Damascus on one of his murderous trips, Paul met the man Jesus. His whole mission in life was to free addicts like me from our sin addiction. He came to the house of sin to take us out. Like the man who went into the brothel to take Thandeka out of prostitution, he came and lived amongst us sinners, so he could help us.

Sadly, even when he was in the house of sin, offering his help, some thought they did not need his help. Jesus himself said, “I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners and need to repent.” (Luke 5:32, NLT unless indicated otherwise)

Paul came to his senses. He realized he needed help. He realized that his addiction was so strong that despite telling himself he would stop, he kept doing the very things he detested. In one of his letters he lamented his condition, “I don’t really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don’t do it. Instead, I do what I hate” (Romans 7:15). Like most addicts who cannot resist another

fix, Paul realized he couldn’t help himself. Even when he was in rehab (some sinners call it church), the addiction remained so powerful he could have given up. But he realized Jesus was serious about helping him escape that life of sin.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, SET FREE?

“But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death? Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord. So you see how it is: In my mind I really want to obey God’s law, but because of my sinful nature I am a slave to sin” (Romans 7:23-25).

Like dagga or cocaine or heroine, this sin drug is addictive. You become a slave to it. Jesus warned about it. If you have seen an alcoholic or drug addict, you will have realized that they are enslaved to their drug. They have lost control. Unless somebody offers them help, and unless they see they need help, they will perish by their addiction. When Jesus was offering help to some of the sin addicts like me, some thought they were not slaves to anything or anybody.

Jesus said to the people who believed in him, “You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

“But we are descendents of Abraham,” they said. “We have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean, ‘You will be set free’?” (John 8:31-33)

A drug addict is a slave to the drug. He no longer has freedom to decide whether to take the drug or not. In fact, the only real choice the drug addict has is to choose not to take the drug. Same applies to sinners as you see above. Paul lamented the fact that he knew he should not sin, yet he found himself doing exactly that which he did not want to do. “Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave of sin.” (John 8:34)

Jesus became a human to free humans from this slavery to sin. *“For freedom did Christ set us free: stand fast therefore, and be not entangled again*

in a yoke of bondage.” (Galatians 5:1 ASV). You see, when Jesus was born a human, he came to change our very humanity, so that we are no longer addicted to sin. He was able to live without sin, and never became a slave to it. He now offers that sin-free humanity to all humans, for free. That’s the good news Christians celebrate at Christmas.

RECOVERING ADDICTS

About 25 years ago, I realized I was addict to sin. I realized I was a sinner. Like Paul, I realized I needed help. Some recovering addicts told me there was a rehab centre they went to. They told me if I came along, I could be encouraged by those who were also trying to leave behind a life of sin. I started attending their meetings on Sundays. It has been tough going. I still sin from time to time, but Jesus told me I must focus on his life. He took my sinful life and made it his own, and he gave me his sinless life.

So the life I live now, I live by trusting in Jesus. This is a secret that seemed to help Paul. He said, *“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”* (Galatians 2:20 KJV)

I have come to realize that in this addicted body, I have no hope. But Jesus is transforming me. Sin has completely destroyed my body. I need a new

one. Jesus has promised it. He came to live in me to help me fight my addiction. In the end, though, he will actually give me a brand new body, which will no longer be enslaved to sin. He lived his whole life without sin. I can’t wait for that day. I currently facilitate meetings of a rehab centre for sinners in Johannesburg. It is called *Hope Christian Fellowship*. It is commonly known as a church. There are many of these around the world. If you think you are an addict, you can join us in our walk. You can experience freedom.

You see, the truth is that Jesus has already set you free. It is *knowing* the truth that sets us free. If you can meet Jesus face to face, he will help you too. *“And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”* (John 8:32). You do not have to do anything for Jesus to want to help you. In fact he died for me when I was still a sinner. *“God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can’t take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.”* (Ephesians 2:8-9)

I know many people look down on addicts, even condemn them. But Jesus doesn’t. He said he came to save sinners, not to condemn them. *“For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved”* (John 3:17).

Have a Merry Christmas! 