

# Can A Believer Struggle With Drug Addiction

by Tim Conway

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*This sermon addresses the struggle of believers with drug addictions, emphasizing the need for discernment between genuine struggle and being enslaved to sin. It explores the importance of true repentance, the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome sin, and the evidence of a transformed life in Christ. The discussion delves into the distinction between struggling with sin and practicing sin, highlighting the necessity of ongoing sanctification and the Lord's discipline in the believer's life.*

**Scripture:** 1 John 1:9, Romans 6:14, Philippians 2:12, Hebrews 12:6, Malachi 3:3

**Topics:** "Overcoming Addiction", "True Repentance and Transformation"

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## Description

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## Transcript

And I want you to biblically try to discern this. Here's the next one. This comes from Anonymous.

Can a believer struggle with drug addictions? I've been fighting this battle for some time. I believe in the doctrine of regeneration in the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit's work. I know I'm not bearing good fruit and also know I can be deceived.

I've been seeking the Lord and crying out to Him for mercy. I deserve hell, but I do want Christ. I'm so confused and defeated.

It's been an on-again, off-again struggle. I've gotten counsel from the elders of the church I attend. Can a believer struggle with drug addictions? What do you say to a person who asks you that? I think you can struggle with any sin.

You can struggle with coffee addiction. So in one sense, yes. Tell me more about this.

See, that's often when you get an email, I guarantee when he sat down with his elders, they didn't get a five-line summary. They asked a lot of questions. They probed very deeply.

But yes. I mean, yes. Yes, believers can struggle with drug addictions.

And you know, sometimes those drug addictions, it's not like... I know this. I know that there are many testimonies of people who get converted and they can be addicted to hardcore drugs, like heroin or crack, and God takes them off it without withdrawal, just like that. So I mean, there are those testimonies of people who are delivered, people who walk away from abusing alcohol.

They walk away and they don't ever do them again. There are those. But what would we say if somebody was a heroin addict and they get converted, and then they're still in and out of doing heroin? Well, I would say that drug addiction, it basically falls into the same category as alcohol.

It's intoxication. And clearly we know that drunks don't inherit the kingdom. Now, does that mean that a true Christian can't struggle with overly using alcohol? Well, certainly they can.

And the thing with drugs is it can be subtle. You say, how so? Well, it can happen a number of ways. You get in an accident, you get injured, and you start taking pain medication, and then you become dependent on it, and you begin misusing it.

There's various ways where you can... Now, it's probably going to be a sensitive area with some people because of certain health conditions. They think they need certain pain medication or certain medications. This is a tension for me with my migraines.

I don't want to... For me, the stuff I take for my headaches doesn't affect me like an opiate. The things that I'm taking are not addictive. And even those things, I don't want to destroy my liver and my kidneys.

I don't want to destroy my brain cells. So I try not to take things as much as I possibly can. I try not to take things.

But there are certain kinds of drugs that are very addictive. And then as pastors, James and I, we have to deal with situations where people are having psychotic episodes. And then, of course, the medical community comes in and sometimes we have police involvement and the authorities are involved and government institutions are involved and they're demanding and prescribing certain drugs.

And we're trying to help people in the church. Those of you that are in the church, you know about some of the people that are being prescribed certain drugs. It's a difficult thing.

I think we need to be really careful. The term pharmacia, it doesn't take a Greek scholar to hear that Greek word pharmacia. You see, that word has to do with sorcery and it has to do with witchcraft.

It has to do with things that are demonic. And yet you're hearing pharmacy in the word. Well, what's the connection there? Well, there is a connection.

And look, lost people in dark religions, occult religions, pagan religions, they're communicating with demons and almost hands down, 100% of the time, they're using drugs. They're using mind-altering drugs. Why? Because it seems to be a real playground for the demonic.

And so I think when it comes to drugs, we need to be very careful. And for me, it's kind of a stewardship thing. Okay, if I take that and I can avert this migraine, I'm probably going to save two days.

And for me, I need those two days. And a sister from the church in Denver gives me prescription medication for my migraines. But I try to use it extremely sparingly.

Because I don't like to use heavy drugs like that. But sometimes I'm weighing out. Okay, if I don't take that, I'm going to probably lose two days.

But can a true Christian struggle with that? Yes. Is there a possibility that this... Here's the question to you all. Is there a possibility that if somebody is falling into drug use, that the reality is that they're not converted? Well, of course.

So here comes the question. If you were the pastor for this guy, where's the threshold? If you're pastoring, do you need to know where the threshold is? If you're pastoring somebody and they are coming to the church, and they keep coming to the church, and they're professing faith in Christ, and they believe in the doctrine of regeneration, and they're coming and they're talking to the elders, and yet they keep falling back into... They're using the term drug addiction. I mean, what are you going to do? What are you going to say? What's the best way to help somebody like this? Is he saying prescription or is it illegal? He doesn't say? He doesn't say whether it's illegal drugs or... If it's illegal, he needs to stop doing that right away.

I mean, wherever he's getting from, that probably needs to cut it off. But prescription, I think it's harder. Yeah, but I mean, that's easy to say.

But is that really helping him? Did what you just say, if he's like the guy struggling, is he going to say, oh, thank you. That is exactly what I needed to hear. You really helped me, now I'm free.

I mean, I would try to understand. His struggle on one side, but then I'll shed light on the other side as to if this is characterizing the whole life. This is what's... But it sounds like he knows that.

I mean, he's saying to you, I know about the doctrine of regeneration. I know what the Christians... In fact, I know so much. That's why I'm really concerned and I'm asking you, do you think I can even be saved and have this drug addiction? But you see, when people talk that way, like if that guy had gone to the Lord, what do you think the Lord would have said to him? Do you even think he would have got into is he saved, is he not saved? Do you think he even would have gone there with him? Or would he have gone somewhere else with him? How did Jesus typically talk to people? I mean, think of that woman.

John 8. Go and sin no more. Yeah, some people probably would have thought Jesus' counsel there. Really? You can just say that? Just go and sin no more? Just that easy? The Messiah told me that? I mean, that was His counsel to me? I mean, my problem is falling into sexual sin all the time and He just says He forgives me and He's not going to cast a stone at me and He tells me to go and sin no more? I mean, the reason I think that is because it's Christ.

Earlier this morning, I'm in Mark right now devotionally and when Jesus first calls His disciples, I mean, just two words follow me. Just the force of that, I mean, it left behind everything. I'm just thinking in terms of who He is.

I mean, it's Christ. For Him to tell that lady to sin no more is forced behind that. I think you have to go to the root of what's causing this drug addiction.

I mean, He really needs to do some inventory and see what's causing Him to do this and then, I mean, maybe He needs to cut something off or He needs to forgive someone or something. You should really seek what's causing Him to do this and then make changes. I don't think He's embracing the truth more than He's embracing the drugs.

Because once He embraces the truth and He sees the truth, He will not find the drugs appearing. It's almost like, really? You're not going to throw a stone at me after what I did? You're going to show me mercy? The foul sinner I am and you're going to show me mercy? It's almost like His mercy and His love, it's enough. And then to hear Him say, go and sin no more.

And what does that mean? I mean, what are you saying, Lord? What if I trip up? What if I don't have a perfect day tomorrow? Or does He mean go trusting Me, not living for sin like you have been up until now? You mentioned where that threshold was at, how you discern that, just as much if someone is struggling with something all the time, where's that threshold at? I think of 1 John, it says if we say we have fellowship with Him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. It seems like if someone is struggling with something, it implies that they're falling into it, but they want to practice the things of Scripture. But they've fallen into that and they're struggling with it.

Whereas, I think that threshold might be if this man is consistently practicing. See, that's the thing, and I was going to get to that. That word struggle is so commonly misused.

We hear that on a regular basis, especially when it comes to sexual sin. I'm struggling with that. But they're not struggling with it.

They're a slave to it. But they use that terminology. And I think that's critical.

It's been likened to this, that if you take a pig and you bring it in the house and you clean it up and you get it all fine and you dress it with silk, and there's a muck pit out here, it's going to take off the moment that door opens. It's going to take off. It's going to be right out there in it.

But if you take a lamb and you throw it out in the middle of the mud, what's it going to do? It's going to try to get out. Because that's not where it wants to be. You see, that's the reality of regeneration.

We're new creations in Christ. And there really is a hungering and thirsting after righteousness. Those who are in Christ, they really have crucified the passions and the desires of the flesh.

Scripture says that. Sin won't have dominion. There's new desires.

There's hungering and thirsting after righteousness. You throw that lamb in the muck, he wants out. And he wants to be clean and he wants to be rid of it.

He may find himself in there from time to time, but he wants out because that's his nature. And I think what can happen is churches sometimes who ought to put people out of the church, they can kind of hesitate because you have somebody walking in darkness. And the church hesitates because his attendance is pretty regular and he uses the term struggle.

And so the church charitably takes that word struggle and they believe he's actually fighting. And so they seek to come alongside. And I'm not saying this is necessarily wrong.

They seek to come alongside of him. But you know the thing is if he continues in that state for too long, obviously he's practicing this thing. He's not the lamb trying to get out.

He shows himself to be the pig that's constantly going back in. And once the elders of the church recognize that pattern, they really do have the responsibility to put him out of the church. There is a hand.

I have personal experience with this. My mother, when she, I mean I don't know where the line is as far as generation, but my mother struggled with drug addiction while I was growing up. And when she got saved, her addictions didn't immediately stop.

But the thing was she was very persistent in her walk to where eventually the Lord did take it all away. But for her it took a while. So I'm not sure if it was a matter of her falling and getting back up or if it was a matter of it has to be something that she had to walk through.

But I personally don't know, but looking at my mother's struggle, it took years for her. And it was one thing at a time. But it wasn't all at once for her.

But for her it was a very persistent walk that she had to do. So for me personally, I don't know where that line is drawn, but I kind of see the other side of it as well. Yeah, definitely there are some sins.

When people get saved, there are some things they have immediate victory over and there are some things they have to fight like crazy. And we've seen different things with drugs and people overcome. And I'm thinking of one specific case, a young lady in our church right now.

Anyway, anything else on this? So when someone is saved and they are a believer, they have the Holy Spirit in them. And I believe they now have the power to say no to sin, whereas before they were complete slaves to it. So on the one hand, you mentioned there's a fine line between struggling and being a slave to something.

Is it a valid question to ask this person, my friend, has there ever been a time where you've been able to say no to this? Like I understand that you're struggling with it. Sometimes you fall into it. Has there ever been a time where you could point to, yeah, this time I had victory over it.

I didn't give in. I fought it. That seems like something that the Holy Spirit empowers us to do.

Yeah, if we practice sin, we're of the devil. The word practice, I know the KJV doesn't have that in there, but that's the idea. And so when does something become a practice? And I think it's... I saw maybe two months ago, I saw a Q&A on YouTube, Paul Washer, and somebody was asking him a question about the practice of sin.

Basically, what does the life look like? And he basically described it this way. He said, if you came into my kitchen and you had a camera and you took a snapshot of me right at a bad moment when I was raising my voice with my wife, he said if you had just that snapshot, he said that doesn't look saved. But he said you can't look at the Christian life that way.

You need to actually have the video camera rolling. And what you're looking for is the pattern. You're looking for the habitual nature of it.

You're looking for the practice in the life. Now, if my practice was being ugly to my wife all the time and not loving her, that's one thing. But if, yes, I raised my voice with my wife one time and that's all you look at,

you're going to rate my whole Christianity based on that snapshot.

That's not fair. But if you look at the whole, yes, what's the practice of the life? And that's the terminology used in Scripture. It's the whole life.

We want to look at it. Is the whole thing giving us the feel that they're a new creation? There's new life. There's new desires.

There's new longings. I mean, there are signs of life. And the thing is, sin... Look, every true believer knows the battle with sin.

Whether it was with drugs, whether it was with sexual desires, whether it was with alcohol. But those are the graphic manifestations kind of. But what about with anger? What about with impatience? What about with jealousy and envy and strife? What about in the area of the mind and the purity of the mind? And what about with regards to laziness and being a hard worker and just being honest in all your dealings with people? Swearing to your own hurt and not changing.

Just being a person of integrity and striving in all of that. I mean, what Christian has not sighed, has not groaned, has not shed tears, has not had to come back to the Lord repeatedly saying, Lord, forgive me? I mean, every one of us. So, I mean, we know that battle.

But is it a battle? I mean, you're coming to the Lord and you're really sorry. You want to be perfect. You want to overcome these things.

You desire that. You want to please Him. You don't want to go back in the muck.

And you go back to Him and you confess. But you're forgiven. And so you don't have to mope around all the time and live like you're a slave.

You're free. And you can live in the light of the doctrine of justification by faith. And you know, my sin's under the blood.

And so you can run back out and seek to live life to His glory all over again. And then you fail and you stumble and you sin again and you come back and you confess it. And at times, there's tears.

Sometimes in the Christian life, there's deep remorse and deep repentance. Sometimes the Spirit of God deals with us. Sometimes it's more of a casual thing.

You know, we're praying and we might think of something we need to confess. But there's times when God's dealings with us are deep. They're very deep.

I mean, He's cleansing. He's in the business of doing that, of cleansing. No idols.

Isn't that the promise of the New Covenant? He's going to cleanse them all out of there. And boy, you know, He comes back again and again and again to take hold of those idols and to take them out. It's like Tozer talks about those roots going right down into the very fabric.

It's like it's ripping part of us out. I mean, those seasons, they're so good, they're so healthy, but they can be violent. One thing I've noticed, if you're truly the Lord, it's like He will discipline you.

He won't leave you in your sin. If there needs to be a pruning, He'll prune you. And that's the thing, would the Lord allow one of His children just to habitually keep running in the way of some kind of drug addiction? I mean, He can actually come on with a great degree of violence to eradicate the idols out of our lives.

I mean, we're progressing to conform to the image of Christ. And the Lord's going to make sure we get there. I mean, not perfectly, but as Paul said, I have not yet attained it, but I press on.

I think, I can't remember, but there was like a ten-minute video that you did. It was way back, I think at that age. But it just came to mind how you talked about flooding your mind with the thoughts of Christ.

There is times that we battle sin, but there's also our responsibility to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. Me personally, at times of difficulties and temptations, I found it so helpful at times where the times where I'm really saturating myself with the Word and prayer, I feel like the next minute I'm just hit with a huge thought of temptation. But immediately, it's just Scripture just come and thoughts of Christ just come where it just shuts it all out.

It makes me become joyful to the Lord. And it's just eradicated immediately. But the times where I'm not, I mean, it's a season where I haven't been in much of my work, the temptation does come, I'm just seeing it falling to the cross.

I'm like, Lord, just help me. We hear that He'll refine the sons of Levi. And in the New Testament, we are the priesthood, brethren.

There's a refiner's fire for us. And I want you to biblically try to discern this. Try to answer this.

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