

## Could an Addiction Block My Christian Growth?

**1 Peter 5:6: (NASB) *Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time...***



Life can be difficult and unpredictable. It can be full of insecurity, unexpected disappointments, and events that press and overwhelm our coping skills. All of this can bring us to places that make us want to run from our reality and instead engage in a pseudo reality that makes us feel better - at least for the moment. Enter the pathway to potential addictive behavior. It often begins as a subtle escape, a convenient distraction or a thrilling experience. Destructive addictions always end in several layers of disaster. At the top of the addiction casualty list is our character, our integrity, our family, friends, work associates and often our financial standing as well. What should we look for and do to avoid or remedy the destructiveness of addiction?

Addiction, whether it be to a substance, thought pattern or behavior is a deeply serious issue. We highly recommend that if you think you may be in an addictive cycle - get help with it. While we believe prayer and determination are vital for any Christian fighting this fight, we also know that the vast majority of the time, we need the help of and accountability to others. There are many organizations in place to help with these issues. Please take this seriously!

Addiction absolutely can and will block our Christian growth!

Rick: To understand this difficult subject, we interviewed my dear friend, Merrily. Let's begin with her telling us the happy ending of her story.



### **Introduction:**

Merrily: I have known you for my whole life. You are my oldest brother. I have another brother, David. I am just so fortunate. I am married to a wonderful man. Been married for 20 years. And I have two beautiful daughters who next month will be 20 and 18 years old. No, I'm sorry, I have been married 21 years. (Do the math.) So, that's where I am. I'm in a really great place in my life. I have a very, very close connection with God, and I really try to follow His will. It wasn't always like that.

Rick: So, you actually in your earlier days went through alcohol abuse and drug abuse.

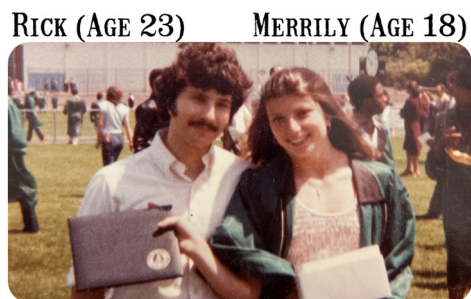
Merrily: Yes.

Rick: You were addicted to alcohol and drugs.

Merrily: Yes.



Rick: Merrily is six years younger than I am and it was very difficult to watch her walk down this road. We asked her to share her experience with addiction to help understand it from someone who has been there. I can think of no one better to tell this story than my own sister with the ups and downs, trials, tribulations and victories she has had.



**Merriam Webster Online Dictionary:**

**Addiction:** (noun)

1. a compulsive, chronic, physiological or psychological need for a habit-forming substance, behavior, or activity having harmful physical, psychological, or social effects and typically causing well-defined symptoms (such as anxiety, irritability, tremors, or nausea) upon withdrawal or abstinence: the state of being addicted
2. a strong inclination to do, use, or indulge in something repeatedly

Addiction can run someone's life. Let's go back to Merrily's story.



*What brought you towards addiction?*

Merrily: You know, I never aspired to become addicted to alcohol or drugs. That was never part of my plan. I had a wonderful upbringing - a Christian household with mother, father, both of my brothers, my sister. I'm the youngest of four and my parents did a wonderful job. Now I look back and I see how, being a parent myself, it's like I see how they handled things and where their strength came from. I really was a believer in God and Jesus, and we went to Bible conventions. I had friends there. We wrote letters to each other, and then there were the people that I met at school. And we would always be at conventions over holidays, like a three-day weekend, 4th of July weekend, and my friends were doing other things and WE were always at a convention. There were two roads. Some of my friends and I - it wasn't their fault - we just sort of were dabbling in things, with drinking and of course not telling anyone. And getting the taste was something that I remember, and I had fun and I thought that it was great.



Rick: You start young, with small things. You get the taste and start with the experiment, start with the thrill, and it gradually gets ahold of you. When all those things were happening it just looked like my kid sister was doing what a teenager would do. We had no idea what was really happening. It started with little things.

When we defined addiction, the first word we used was compulsive.

**Merriam Webster Online Dictionary:**

**Compulsive:** (adjective)

1. resulting from or relating to an irresistible urge, especially one that is against one's conscious wishes
2. irresistibly interesting or exciting; compelling

Compulsiveness is not always bad. We can be compulsive about doing the right thing - about trying to serve God. But too often, compulsive behavior brings us down a dark road to addiction. We must be on the alert.

Compulsive behavior that leads to addiction can bring us to a point of abandoning what is good and righteous in our lives to follow a new master of darkness and deception. The nation of Israel gave us dramatic examples of this when they would abandon God for idols. Jeremiah describes this process. We are going to look at this process in four steps and compare it to Merrily's journey throughout the podcast.

 **ISRAEL'S**  
**FIRST STEP TOWARDS THIS PIT OF DESPAIR:**

**They ignored the goodness and righteousness of God's deliverance:**

*Jeremiah 2:4-6: (NASB) <sup>4</sup>Hear the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel. <sup>5</sup>Thus says the LORD, What injustice did your fathers find in Me, that they went far from Me and walked after emptiness and became empty? <sup>6</sup>They did not say, Where is the LORD who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, who led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought and of deep darkness, through a land that no one crossed and where no man dwelt?*



**The result of this step: They left home without God and were therefore vulnerable and defenseless.**

Weren't the Israelites supposed to celebrate the Passover once a year as a reminder of how God miraculously rescued them from slavery? How quickly we forget. If we are going to forget something, forget the little things. They forgot the big things and ended up in big trouble as a result. Another one who ended up in trouble as a result of forgetting the big things was my sister, Merrily.



**What was your thought process as you dug into this compulsiveness which eventually led you to addiction?**

Merrily: I consciously chose it, and I was attracted to the wrong. I didn't know what to do with it. I didn't know. Do I talk about it? No, I don't want to talk about it because I was already starting to make my little pile of shame. What am I going to feed? And I wasn't mature enough to recognize that there were other things that are greater than "the moment." I didn't want that either because of course, being a teenager, I kind of liked boys. And I really wanted to be liked back and I didn't feel like I was. So, then I was like, "Oh what's wrong with me?" When I was under an influence, I felt different. It created a fake me. One that would say things that I would never say. I would do things that I would normally not do, and it wasn't a good choice.





It is dangerous to do things to get attention, especially when someone is young. When we do things for the purpose of gaining someone’s attention, we essentially sell our life for the gaining of that attention. Israel went down that same road of walking away and forgetting the things they were given. There is a parallel of walking away from that which is good.

We will be referring to the following article throughout the podcast. Kevin McClone is very eloquent on writing about addiction.

(Source: Psychospirituality of Addiction, Kevin P. McClone, M.Div., Psy.D.) ...At the root of the compulsive and addictive pattern is a self that feels incomplete, insecure, and lacking adequate resources to cope with life’s many changes, losses and challenges. The direction of that search is clearly misguided by false idols or attachments that promise quick answers to life’s complexities and suffering. Hope lies in recognizing these psychological and spiritual maladies that plague the lost soul.

Back to our theme question: “Could an addiction block my Christian growth?” God knows us and our weaknesses. Do we continually need to battle these sins if we are already forgiven or “saved” through Jesus?

Yes! We need to battle them. Just because we have come to Jesus does not mean we are staying there. When we sin, we need to be accountable, even if we think we are saved or not.



What do WE do with the temptation to ignore righteousness because of the lure of our pain-hiding compulsions?



**ASK FOR HELP!**

1 Peter 5:5-11 will serve as a guideline for choosing our thought process and actions as we compare the experiences of Israel.

1 Peter 5:5: (NASB) *You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.*

This admonition is a place to start as we battle sin.

*Recognizing and Facing Addiction:*



As a Christian, I will REMEMBER who I am and what I am called to be. I will humbly seek help from those whom I respect spiritually and if needed, those who have experience with my issues.

For many of us, the elements of Merrily’s story are all too familiar. Let’s pause and consider - “where am I going?”



## Everyone has compulsive thoughts. How do we know when to be aware and when to be on high alert?

Compulsive thinking is a very common human trait, and it can be a great tool for growth and accomplishment. As with any tool of humanity, it may also easily be used for breaking us down and eventually trapping us in a dark place. Our first key is to pay close attention to where our compulsions are bringing us.

It is important to keep balanced with a spiritually-based conscience.

(Source: Psychospirituality of Addiction, Kevin P. McClone, M.Div., Psy.D.) Addiction is misguided because it seeks to replace God with objects or attachments that command our allegiance. At the heart of the addictive process is a restless spirit that is seeking answers but has set off in the wrong direction. The path is an outer-directed search that denies one's true self while caught in the web of idolatry and self-deception. Indeed, denial is the hallmark of the addictive process.

This is exactly what Merrily just described. It is what happens when you are going in a wrong direction seeking something.



*What brought you towards addiction? Was it a secretive journey? Did you live a dual life?*

Merrily: Yes, and it was very hard to conceal. I know I got caught a couple times by yours truly.

Rick: Yeah, by me.

Merrily: It was awful. I've got to say, Rick, you really tried very hard to help me. I remember an incident specifically where I was under the influence of drugs, and I had to come home for a meal. I was seeing things on the walls, and I needed to get out. I needed to leave the house to go back to the party because that's where it was okay. You followed me. I think you followed me, and I remember seeing your car and you were just sitting there. I was like, oh no. What do I do? I felt compelled. I felt called to go to your car. Like there was an invisible energy. I'm sure you were praying for me and that must have been the pull. And I didn't want to, but I wanted to, but I didn't want to. You were like, "So Merr, what are you going to do?" And I remember very specifically that I said, "I want to go back to the party, but will you still love me?" It was really hard. It was a hard thing for me to do because the love that you felt, the commitment that you felt to try to help me - I didn't want it then. I wasn't ready then and it was an awful thing to then walk away.

Rick: I remember that incident like it was yesterday. I remember following her and sitting there in my car literally saying, "Lord, what do I do now?" I remember driving away just heartbroken and shattered because she had made a choice. If I knew then what I know now, I probably would have acted differently, but I didn't. I did the best I knew how. I remember it was like getting stabbed in the heart because my kid sister was getting hurt, and I didn't know what to do.

 ISRAEL'S  
SECOND STEP TOWARDS THIS PIT OF DESPAIR:

**They polluted the purity of the gifts God gave them:**

Jeremiah 2:7-9: (NASB) <sup>7</sup>I brought you into the fruitful land to eat its fruit and its good things. But you came and defiled My land, and My inheritance you made an abomination. <sup>8</sup>The priests did not say, Where is the LORD? And those who handle the law did not know Me; The rulers also transgressed against Me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal and walked after things that did not profit. <sup>9</sup>Therefore I will yet contend with you, declares the LORD, and with your sons' sons I will contend.

In 1 Kings 18:21, Elijah was challenging the prophets of Baal and Asherah. It was one against 950 men. Remember Elijah's words - *if the Lord is God, follow Him*. Fire came down from heaven and consumed the sacrifice, and all of Israel turned back to God. What happened?

That is the constant question - what happened? When someone is on the road to addiction, they are drawn to something else. As powerful as the power of God was, Israel still walked away.



**The result of this step:** They became comfortable without God as they indulged in sinful idolatry.

It just does not make any sense, but neither does addiction.



*What were the signs you were in over your head?*

Merrily: You know when you have experiences and you participate in things that you normally wouldn't participate in, and then it's like the next morning you're like, oh no, what did I do? That should be an indicator. I just kind of added it to the pile of shame and said, well, okay, I probably shouldn't do that again, but I didn't really make any changes to create that not to happen again. Yeah, big trouble came later. Big trouble came after I got married. I think I was 20. It was someone else that was drinking and drugging, and I was like, "Oh yeah, he is the one," and so then we just continued together doing our thing. I was working; I had a good job. Things got bad before they got better. We were dealing drugs. You know you're in trouble when you would try to save money but every time the bank account got up to \$300, you would have to withdraw and buy drugs because, "Oh yeah, we could sell it." But then we wouldn't sell it. It was really sad. I didn't recognize it as being as sad as it was.





When we look at Israel, we say, how could they do that? But when we are in the middle of it, and we are being drawn by it, we don't see it. Merrily is a smart individual but she could not see outside of the compulsive behavior that had drawn her into this trap and was slowly destroying her life piece by piece.

Let's return to the article by Kevin P. McClone:

My belief is that we cannot fully understand the road to recovery until we see that these addictions and our dependencies serve a deep need that is still unmet in the person.

**King Solomon was engaged in compulsive behavior that clearly led him away from the Lord his God:**

1 Kings 11:3-4: (NASB) <sup>3</sup>He had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines, and his wives turned his heart away. <sup>4</sup>For when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been.

This is a great comparison. Solomon had all this wisdom, but his heart was turned away by all his wives. The scripture says *his heart was not wholly devoted to God like David's had been*. There was a tremendous disconnect and the wives were drawing him away. He made the choice and he followed.

1 Kings 11:7-9: (NASB) <sup>7</sup>Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable idol of Moab, on the mountain which is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the detestable idol of the sons of Ammon. <sup>8</sup>Thus also he did for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods. <sup>9</sup>Now the LORD was angry with Solomon because his heart was turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice...

God appeared to Solomon twice. He should have kept God first and foremost in his life. God appears to us through providential overrulings and through answering prayer, yet we can fall prey just like Solomon. We need to guard ourselves from anything that replaces God in our lives. Idols can be sports teams, politics, immoral lusts, and even food and clothing.

All those things can become compulsive, and whatever becomes compulsive has the danger of becoming addictive. We need to be watchful, not just of ourselves but of one another. Look over the shoulder of your brother and your sister and see if there is something that does not seem right. Please ask and connect with them so that we can protect and build each other up.



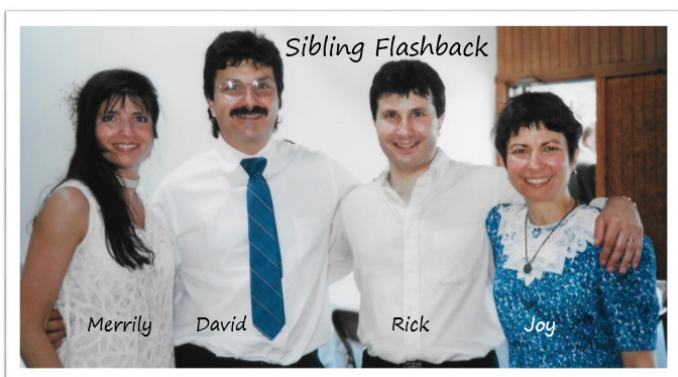
Practically applying the first two Commandments to Christians today

Solomon had SO much power, wealth and influence, he saw his own fleshly desires as more relevant than the Law of the Lord his God. BIG mistake of thought and action! At the end of his life he realized how far off he had gone and said, *all is vanity*. He lamented his own decisions.



*When did you realize you were in over your head?*

Merrily: It was during that year of him (my husband) being in jail that it got my attention. Although I wasn't quite ready. There was a party at our apartment, and he was somewhere else, doing what he wasn't supposed to be doing and I wanted to go somewhere else because they had the kind of drug I was looking for. I went there, and I ended up getting arrested. I got arrested for possession and it really wasn't mine. People always say that. But you know, I was very scared, and I had some stashed in my purse that WAS mine, but what was in front of me that the police walked in on wasn't mine. Anyway, I spent the night in jail, and I was like, oh my goodness. What is going to happen? I was really afraid. I mean, it was scary enough; I'm arrested. What's going to happen? But what scared me almost even more than that was what happens when the fear wears off? Because I knew I would use again and it sounds insane, but it didn't matter because that's the grip. The grip that the addiction holds is like, "Oh well, if you just use again, it'll be all better." It's like, no, it won't. I spent a lot of time by myself (thank you, Lord) in my little cell and someone had given me a pack of cigarettes, and I chain smoked the pack of cigarettes that night. I was thinking in my head there's this crystalline line of cocaine going into this jail cell with the caption underneath, "Is this the end of the line?" And that really got my attention because, oh my goodness, what is going to happen? So that's how I knew that I was in trouble. I prayed that night. I don't exactly remember my prayer. I hope my prayer was, I don't remember, help me to learn to not do this anymore.



We appreciate the way Merrily described the fear and "Is this the end of the line?" Is this the end of it or is this the beginning of something even worse? She had to cope and learn to work through this desperation.



What do WE do when we find ourselves polluting the purity of God's gifts to us and His providences for us?



Ask for help!

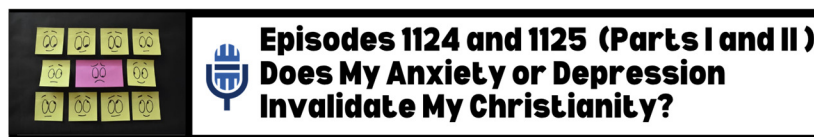




### Seek help in the Scriptures and with those who are capable:

1 Peter 5:6-7: (NASB) <sup>6</sup>Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, <sup>7</sup>casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.

We addressed the topic of anxiety and depression in Episodes 1124 and 1125.



Revealing the protective building blocks needed to repel my anxiety

*Recognizing and Facing Addiction:*



As a Christian, I will **RETHINK** what can bring me true comfort, even if I am not yet strong enough to consistently act on it. I will hold onto this comfort in God as I know it has the power to prevail **IF I ALLOW IT TO.**

Compulsive and addictive behavior self-soothe for the present moment and destroy as an end result, whereas faith in God can truly exalt us in HIS time because He legitimately cares for us!

This entire addiction discussion really boils down to observing where we are and intentionally acting on what we see.

**What does it look like when we finally gain enough clear perspective to definitively turn the corner?**

The journey through destructive, compulsive behavior and addiction is long and difficult. Do not let anyone tell you differently. Turning the corner and going towards a life filled with light and hope only comes when YOU are truly ready. For some, that readiness arrives in the form of immovable forces. Our story left Merrily sitting in a jail cell.

(Source: Psychospirituality of Addiction, Kevin P. McClone, M.Div., Psy.D.) One of the great spiritual truths is that awareness in the present moment allows us a glimpse of eternity. We can race through life or seek refuge in all sorts of false comforts, but ultimately some of life's deepest treasures are found in the presence of life, whether a sunset, a friend's support, or the play of a child.

Added to this list is the love of a spouse. There are other wonderful things we can rely on and find life-affirming. Addiction is a race through life looking for refuge, but the only true refuge is in things that are real, that are solid. God, faith, those who love us are the highest things we can learn to lean on.



*How did you finally allow yourself to get help?*

Merrily: Well, it wasn't me that made it happen, and that's the beauty. And maybe that was my saving grace, and I didn't tell my family. So, I was going through all of this struggle and fear. I remember we were at my great



grandmother's house sitting around the table: "Oh, Merrily, how are you doing?" "Oh, good." Inside I was dying. "If you only knew, you wouldn't love me." And that was so far from the truth, but I didn't trust that. I got probation and I had to have drug treatment, so that was the beginning of the light at the end of the tunnel that was not a train.

Rick: So, you were pressed into getting help.

Merrily: Yes, I had to be pressed for so many things.

This is a tremendous admission. She was forced to stop and take stock. Being in that really down position was a bottom from which she could look up. Reaching bottom is often a necessary step. Another point here is to not disallow the love of those around us. She had a hard time in those early days accepting it. If we are the one at the bottom, we need to embrace this love. If we are on the outside looking in, we have to love without condition those who are suffering and going through these things. It is so difficult for them.



**THIRD STEP TOWARDS THIS PIT OF DESPAIR:**

**They gave themselves wholly to new masters who were, in fact, masters of deceit and godlessness:**

Jeremiah 2:10-12: (NASB) <sup>10</sup>For cross to the coastlands of Kittim and see, and send to Kedar and observe closely and see if there has been such a thing as this! <sup>11</sup>Has a nation changed gods when they were not gods? But My people have changed their glory for that which does not profit. <sup>12</sup>Be appalled, O heavens, at this, and shudder, be very desolate, declares the LORD.

Israel left worship of the true God to worship a piece of wood or stone!

*Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.  
Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.*

Israel saw the nations around them were doing this, and it seemed like a great thing to have a physical visible god; it seemed powerful and impressive. This is what addictive behavior brings us to - worshipping something that is not even real or tangible, something that cannot love us back and has no interest in our well-being.



**The result of this step: They COMMITTED themselves to idolatry and became just another godless people who followed the compulsions of sin, and gods of wood and stone.**

This is a sad story that sounds a lot like Merrily's story. She has gone down this path and is now beginning to turn. Israel, however, is NOT turning. Merrily is to the point of getting help.



*Talk about treatment and accountability.*

Merrily: It was like an outpatient treatment, so I would go after work. I was a legal secretary. I would wear a dress or a skirt and then would go to this place. And people had said to me, “You don’t look like you belong here.” You know what? Looks can be very deceiving. I didn’t look like I was addicted to alcohol and drugs, but guess what? Yes, I was. So that program suggested we go to meetings. And actually, there is where I met people that knew how to live without any other substance. I kind of wanted to be like them because they had a freedom in their speaking, and they had a connection with their God. And, I remembered I had a connection to God, and I’ll never forget the first time I went to one of those meetings...I felt like I came home.

It’s not for the faint of heart. It’s something that you have to be all in. There are different ways of figuring out what is your connection with God, and can you trust Him, and can you learn to trust Him? The first part of it is having a trust in something higher than me. There’s got to be something. And thank goodness, there’s things higher than me because left to my own devices this is where I ended up. I had to tell the things I did, and I was happy to do that because I can finally share all those things deep inside me, like how much I yearned and wanted to be loved and what I did to get that. It was sad, but I didn’t know it was sad. It was the only way I knew at that point. I needed to talk to my parents. They didn’t want to hear really all the things, but I needed to tell them the things. They were so thankful that not only was I alive, but that I was clean and sober and doing something about my life. I talked with you. I talked with Dave (Merrily and Rick’s brother), I talked with Joy (Merrily and Rick’s sister) and other people that I harmed that they may have not even known. That’s humbling.

Rick: So, you were building this pile of shame from earlier in life and what you did is you took that pile of shame and then deconstructed it by being accountable for it.

Merrily: Yes.

What a powerful thought - the accountability part and the willingness to pour out her soul to those she has hurt to say, “I’m sorry, this is where I was; this is what I did. I am fully responsible for this.”

It is too costly to go backwards, which kept her going forward. The fear, anxiety, depression, the yearning - all those things were too much to bear. Finally, she could look up and say, “God is bigger than I am and thank goodness this is true! Let me hold onto something bigger than me instead of plowing through life trying to find something that I cannot ever grasp.”



(Source: Psychospirituality of Addiction, Kevin P. McClone, M.Div., Psy.D.) One of the telltale signs of early recovery from addiction is that the addict begins to speak more from a heart of gratitude than scarcity. Gratitude is a fundamental awareness that one has received a gift, and this radical change in perception is a filter that begins to shape one's experiences in later recovery.

We can hear the gratitude in Merrily's voice when she was talking about seeing the people living without a substance to rely on, and the gratitude that God is there. This is an important scriptural principle.



**When the Apostle Paul stood before King Agrippa, he poured out his personal accountability for the things he had done when he was persecuting Christians:**

*Acts 26:10-13: (NASB) <sup>10</sup>And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them. <sup>11</sup>And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme; and being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities. <sup>12</sup>While so engaged as I was journeying to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, <sup>13</sup>at midday, O King, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all around me and those who were journeying with me.*

Paul was thoroughly accountable to a stranger! He stated the things he did, then he described the vision and how he now saw life differently.

**After sharing his miraculous encounter with Jesus, he remained accountable now for his present actions:**

*Acts 26:19: (NASB) So, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision.*

Paul stopped, changed direction and moved forward, and stayed accountable to his new direction. He was accountable to what he HAD done, and remained accountable for what he was NOW doing. The accountability factor is immense in making things right.



**When did you begin to see daylight?**

Merrily: I have been sober for 33 years, since November 16th, 1987. I had one little slip when I was a year sober. It was my year anniversary of not having a drink or a drug, and I was with my friends, my old friends.

There's this suggestion that is like, don't go to bars. We were at a restaurant that was a place that we used to drink at years ago. And then one of my friends was like, "Oh well, why don't you just have this drink? You know, you used to drink those." And I'm like, "I don't want it," and she put it in my hand. I took a little sip. I didn't drink it, I didn't guzzle it, I didn't want it - and *still* I couldn't just say no. What the heck? I had that taste, but it was gross. Thank goodness because I'll tell you, all it takes sometimes for some people is a sip. You've got to move it out of your way, out of your sight, because it's cunning, baffling and powerful. That's what addiction is. It is cunning, baffling and powerful. I did not make up those words, but they fit perfectly. I needed to

come down off of my high horse, too, because you have to be careful. Ego is something that we all have, but where is it? Am I thinking, “I’m all that and a bag of chips?” I need to be very careful because I knew my behavior would change if I’m coming from that place, and I don’t want to come from that place because that’s not a healthy place for me to be.

She is understanding the power of addiction. Addiction is cunning, baffling and powerful. She realizes she had to move it out of her way, move it out of her sight; get it behind her! She was out with her friends who did not help her. We need capable friends who are a trusted, reliable support system who will not lead us astray. We have to seek help from those who will be helpful.

**What do WE do when we find we have given ourselves wholly over to masters of deceit?**



**With our clearest thinking, ASK FOR HELP!**

**Seek it in Scripture and with those who are capable:**

1 Peter 5:8-9: (NASB) <sup>8</sup>Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. <sup>9</sup>But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.

Be sober (not drunk, be in our right minds), be calm, collected and alert - stay awake because we are targets of darkness. If you have been through addiction, you are a target of darkness! Victory can only come through resisting IN FAITH. Know that you are not alone! Seek help from those that can actually help.

*Recognizing and Facing Addiction:*



As a Christian, I will **RETAKE** my allegiance from the false gods of darkness and bring it back to the only true God of light. This retaking requires honest accountability, determination, patience, prayer and help from those who are righteously capable. I know that I am NOT alone in this battle!

We often think about and talk about doing the work. The reality is things only change when we decide to DO the work.

**How do we take the effort and dedication to overcome addiction and make it permanent in our life?**

Anytime we toil in the field of Christian maturity, we want the fruits of that labor to be enduring. To accomplish this, we need absolute steadfastness to the foundational principles of our calling. These principles teach us that our lives, our wills, our minds and bodies all belong to God through Christ! None of that is our own. Therefore, when we go down the road of addictive or compulsive thought and behavior, we have to realize that we are taking God’s individual down that road.

(Source: Psychospirituality of Addiction, Kevin P. McClone, M.Div., Psy.D.) Addiction is a shame-bound disease. It hides and avoids the light of truth. God's action in our lives calls us to face the darkness without fear, to come into the light and experience forgiveness and transformation. At the root of recovery is a courageous journey out of self-centered preoccupation toward genuine care for others.

“At the root of recovery is a courageous journey out of self-centered preoccupation....” This is the journey Merrily remains on.



*How did recovery lead you to discipleship, to truly become a follower of Christ?*

Merrily: I got to learn about looking at my experiences and looking at them, but with the eye of: What did I learn from that experience? Sometimes I have to be hit in the head with a sledgehammer. I know you talk about the “velvet hammer.” Yeah, well, I know I would prefer something a little bit like an air one. But you know, I needed to learn some things the hard way. Getting arrested was a blessing. It brought me to where I couldn't bring myself. The Lord had His hand in my life all through all of this trouble and tumult of hating myself, of not feeling worthy. Just all these different things that I had to walk through, and I could take Him with me wherever I went, and I could ask for help. I could ask for guidance. It was amazing because I got to get through difficult experiences because of God. Sometimes I remember I would always wait for the “big happy.” It's like, *Oh I want this grand thing to happen. I want all of this*, and life is not about the big things, it's actually about the little things. So, then I started recognizing the little “happys” as they happen. Little things, a walk down the street - I will see a flower. It's just a flower, but you know what? I am thankful for that flower and because I'm thankful I could see it. And if it had a nice smell, like if it was a rose, I could smell it. And you know what? That was a little happy. These little things that happen every day, and I still look for the little things in my daily life.



She really does. There are times when we are talking that she talks about the little things, the little “happys.” She makes a habit of growth and a habit of thorough contentment. This is where we want to get to.

**Paul teaches us to seek the “little happy” and see its glory:**

**1 Timothy 6:6-9:** (NASB) *6But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment. 7For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. 8If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. 9But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction.*



When we read *those who want to get rich fall into temptation*, we also realize that those who want satisfaction at any cost also *plunge...into* that same *ruin*. That is where compulsive behavior and addiction can bring us. We lose the contentment and beauty of our life that God's providence can show us. We want to stand above this and watch out for each other as we walk through our Christian experiences.

Merrily has obviously turned the corner in our story, but Israel obviously did not! According to Jeremiah, Israel was arriving at the height of godless discontent.



**They forsook their source of growth and life and replaced it with the empty and destructive promises of godless thinking and behavior:**

Jeremiah 2:13: (NASB) *For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, to hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water.*

They forsook the *fountain of living waters* to dig their own cisterns (wells), and all they ended up with was muddy pits of despair.



**The result of this step:** They created for themselves an environment of lifeless activity, and literally dug holes to preserve life-saving water, only to find themselves with pits of mud and despair instead.

Addiction is always there. We need to be on guard with our choices.



*What do you say to others who are struggling?*

Merrily: There is hope and that there is a way. There are people that are there that will help to support you. We have the ability to create a new way of life, but it has to be a new way. It can't be the old way. I used to think about it like ruts in the road, and I can remember driving, like, in New York or something, and some of the roads they have, like, little ruts, and it's very easy to stay in the rut.

There are organizations and stuff worldwide that are there to help people that struggle with alcohol and drugs. With my husband, he's my second husband, and I was sober before I met him, I worked on myself so I didn't have to repeat past mistakes. I was able to rise above those and actually find out who I was character-wise, like what makes me who I am. And I got to even refine things through the different things that we do in meetings and just with growing. I'm so thankful for that because my life today is amazing. Does it have problems? Of course it does, but my life is amazing. I have a connection with the Lord that is something that I lean on, and I try to aspire to be "more



of Thee and less of me” because if I am too big, that’s a problem. I have to be “right sized.”



I love the story of meeting her husband after she was sober and had done the work so she could avoid repeating past mistakes. I had the distinct privilege of performing their wedding ceremony. It was a highlight for me to see my sister come so far. It is an amazing thing!

What about relapses and weak moments? How do we get past those?

We must look for help. Secondly, we must make a decision - it is a constant thing to choose to move forward. We have to make those choices.

**Choose gratitude over discontent, faith over fear and God’s peace over momentary escape:**

Philippians 4:4-9: (NASB) <sup>4</sup>Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! <sup>5</sup>Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. <sup>6</sup>Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

Rejoice - live what you say you believe.

Be anxious for nothing - put everything before God with prayer.

<sup>7</sup>And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

We get that peace if we have done the things from the previous verse - being anxious for nothing, rejoicing in the Lord. When we fall, we want to work back up to this peace.

<sup>8</sup>Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. <sup>9</sup>The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

Gratitude can bring peace and contentment.

	 <b>Episodes 1154</b> <b>How Can We Be Thankful After the Year We’ve Had?</b>
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Learning to access the power of God-driven gratitude

When we look back at the past few years with COVID-19, but also with the issue of addiction and ask, “How can I be thankful if I have fallen?” - The answer is that God has got you - if you let Him, if you have faith, if you are following His son, Jesus. We can find forgiveness if we go in the right direction to find it.



**What do WE do when we find that all our running and hiding brings us to a muddy pit of desperation and grief?**



**ASK FOR HELP!**



**Ask in prayer, seek it in Scripture and with those who are capable and know how to help (not just with those with whom you are comfortable):**

1 Peter 5:10-11: (NASB) <sup>10</sup>After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. <sup>11</sup>To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen.

After you have suffered for a little while - God allows us to go through suffering. Merrily, in her experiences, went through suffering for a very long time. This was before she was a dedicated Christian, but she suffered and fought through. God blessed her and carried her, and now look at the kind of life she is able to live. The reason for suffering is so we can learn. Our best learning usually comes from our hardest experiences.

...perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you - how else can we be truly complete, confirmed, strengthened and established unless we go through the actual experiences? Fighting against addiction is suffering - it is hard. But it is so worth it.

Recognizing and Facing Addiction:



As a Christian, I will **SEEK** to recognize destructive compulsiveness and addictions and will **RECOMMIT** to God when I am weak or fallen. I will stand in God's grace with the help of those who are capable, face my weakness and glorify God as a result!



**Remember  
Rethink  
Recommit**

We have to recommit over and over again. Never give up! This is what Merrily taught us with her personal experiences. Watching her go through this - the work and effort, the consistency, and application of all the things she learned-the key is she never let go of the things she learned along the way. To this day, she has not let go of the things she learned.

Addiction is an issue that needs us to be very clear and focused.

A few days after the interview, Merrily texted Rick:



"My overcoming addiction is a daily reprieve with God at my helm to assist me in the things I choose. Over time, it has gotten easier to choose the higher way...I make choices every day. But my addiction is NOT GONE – Satan waits for me to weaken so he can offer me wrong options. I always have to choose not to take them. One day at a time...one moment at a time..."

This is the story of overcoming addiction, and I am honored that Merrily is my sister. Think about the story, the scriptures and the lessons that can come from such deep hurt, pain, trauma, sorrow and trial. It IS possible to



overcome, but you need to rely on the people who can help you. Rely on God and those you can trust within your spiritual family. Addiction can be overcome!

*So, could an addiction block my Christian growth?  
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...  
Think about it...!*



Join us next week for our podcast on October 25, 2021  
Ep. 1201: Can the Dead Communicate With Us?

All quoted scriptures are from the 1995 version of NASB unless otherwise indicated.

### Bonus Material and Study Questions

#### More detail:

Philippians 4:4-7: (KJV) *<sup>4</sup>Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice. <sup>5</sup>Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. <sup>6</sup>Be careful (anxious) for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. <sup>7</sup>And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

Psalms 145:1-2: (ASV) *<sup>1</sup>I will extol thee, my God, O King; And I will bless thy name for ever and ever. <sup>2</sup>Every day will I bless thee; And I will praise thy name for ever and ever.*

1 Thessalonians 5:16: (KJV) *Rejoice evermore.*

**Moderation:** Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #1933 *epieikes* appropriate, i.e. (by implication) mild

King James Version translates this word: gentle, moderation, patient

1 Timothy 3:3: (KJV) *Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but **patient** <1933>, not a brawler, not covetous;*

Titus 3:2: (KJV) *To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but **gentle** <1933>, shewing all meekness unto all men.*

James 3:17: (KJV) *But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, **gentle** <1933>, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.*

1 Peter 2:18: (KJV) *Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and **gentle** <1933>, but also to the froward.*



**Philippians 4:6:** (KJV) *Be careful (anxious) for nothing...*

**Matthew 6:25-34:** (ASV) <sup>25</sup>Therefore I say unto you, be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than the food, and the body than the raiment? <sup>26</sup>Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value then they? <sup>27</sup>And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit unto the measure of his life? <sup>28</sup>And why are ye anxious concerning raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: <sup>29</sup>yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. <sup>30</sup>But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? <sup>31</sup>Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? <sup>32</sup>For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. <sup>33</sup>But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. <sup>34</sup>Be not therefore anxious for the morrow: for the morrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

**Luke 18:1-7:** (NRSV) <sup>1</sup>Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart. <sup>2</sup>He said, In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. <sup>3</sup>In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, Grant me justice against my opponent. <sup>4</sup>For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, <sup>5</sup>yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming. <sup>6</sup>And the Lord said, Listen to what the unjust judge says. <sup>7</sup>And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them?

**Ephesians 6:18:** (KJV) *Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;*

**Colossians 4:2:** (KJV) *Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;*

**1 Thessalonians 5:17-18:** (KJV) <sup>17</sup>Pray without ceasing. <sup>18</sup>In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

**Proverbs 3:1-2:** (NASB) <sup>1</sup>My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments; <sup>2</sup>For length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you.

**Isaiah 26:3-4:** (NASB) <sup>3</sup>The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace, because he trusts in You. <sup>4</sup>Trust in the LORD forever, for in GOD the LORD, we have an everlasting Rock.

### **Even in the spirit world, we see evidence of those fallen being drawn to a dark existence:**

**Matthew 12:43-45:** (NRSV) <sup>43</sup>When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it wanders through waterless regions looking for a resting place, but it finds none. <sup>44</sup>Then it says, I will return to my house from which I came. When it comes, it finds it empty, swept, and put in order. <sup>45</sup>Then it goes and brings along seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and live there; and the last state of that person is worse than the first. So will it be also with this evil generation.

### **Jesus reminds us that we do have choices as to what power we serve:**

**John 8:34-36:** (ASV) <sup>34</sup>Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, every one that committeth sin is the bondservant of sin. <sup>35</sup>And the bondservant abideth not in the house for ever: the son abideth for ever. <sup>36</sup>If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

### **Finally, let's focus on just getting back to basics:**

**Micah 6:8:** (KJV): *He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*

# Study QUESTIONS

## Ep. 1200: Could an Addiction Block My Christian Growth?

<https://christianquestions.com/program/1200-addiction/>

See:  CQRewind  
SHOW NOTES

1. What is *addiction*? What is being *compulsive*? What arenas in our lives could be affected by addiction or compulsive behavior? Do you see any of these behaviors in your life? If so, what is feeding these destructive behaviors?
2. What was the first step the Israelites took towards following, “a new master of darkness and deception”? Have you ever taken this step? What do we do if we are tempted to ignore righteousness when hiding behind our compulsions? Whom should we turn to? (See Jeremiah 2:4-6, 1 Peter 5:5)
3. What was the second step the Israelites took in replacing God in their lives? Why did they do this? How did Solomon pollute his relationship with God? What are some of the compulsive behaviors that can become addictions in your life? What should we do when we are tempted to replace God with these things in our lives? (See Jeremiah 2:7-9, 1 Kings 1:18, 11:3-9, 1 Peter 5:6-7)
4. What was the third step the Israelites took towards this “pit of despair”? Were these new masters anything of substance? Who were the Israelites worshipping? How did what they were worshipping differ from God? (See Jeremiah 2:10-12)
5. How did Merrily’s path differ at this point from Israel’s? What was an early sign of recovery in Merrily’s behavior? How did the Apostle Paul show accountability both towards his past and his present? How should we react when we find ourselves wholly given over to compulsion and addiction? (See Acts 26:10-13,19, 1 Peter 5:8-9)
6. How do we continue on the “courageous journey out of self-centered preoccupation toward genuine care for others?” What incredible gift do we gain when we return to God? What are “little happys”? Why are they important? (See 1 Timothy 6:6-9)
7. What was the fourth step the Israelites took when they forsook their source of growth and life? How do we fight through the despair of relapses and weak moments? What **MUST** we do when we have fallen again? (See Jeremiah 2:13, Philippians 4:4-9)
8. What do we do when we find that all our running and hiding from God brings us to a muddy pit of desperation and grief? What are the three “R’s” we must keep in mind? What addictive behaviors or tendencies do you have and what have you done to correct them? What help is there through God and through professional guidance? (See 1 Peter 5:10-11)