

**Jesus Wept: The Bible and Human Emotions**  
**Freedom from Addictions**

Lesson #11 for March 12, 2011

Scriptures: Proverbs 23:29-35; 1 Corinthians 7:2-5; Matthew 25:15-30; Mark 10:17-27; 1 Peter 3:3,4.

1. What is an addiction? Are there good addictions? What drives addictive behavior? Do all of us have an addiction of some kind? Did God design us to have some kind of addiction? Or, have we been corrupted by sin?
2. Seventh-day Adventism has held a very strong and powerful witness against the popular addictions: alcoholism, smoking tobacco, and drug dependence. Although we recognize that these addictions have enslaved millions in our world, for the most part our membership has stayed away from them or recovered from them. In addition to this, we have helped thousands, if not millions, of others to stop smoking. Through various health programs, we have helped thousands more to recover from other types of addictions.
3. But, there are other kinds of addictions at which we may not be doing so well. We will discuss those later. Addictions create dependence and tolerance. By *dependence* we mean that one feels that he cannot survive or prosper without that particular "satisfaction." By *tolerance* we mean that for most addictions there is a gradual—or sometimes not so gradual—need for an increased amount of the addictive substance or action.
4. Overcoming an addiction is not easy. For many addictions—if not virtually all of them—when someone apparently recovers and then slips back, he goes almost immediately back to the same level of addiction which he had reached before recovering. Recovering addicts need friends, family, maybe the church—if the church is truly understanding—and God in order to successfully recover and remain that way. Jesus told the Sanhedrin, "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." (John 8:36, *NIV*) Were they addicts? Absolutely! They were addicted to power, to money, and probably to other things we do not know about. Are we addicted to those things? You must first recognize your addiction before you can do anything about it!
5. Let us take a look at one major addictive substance, alcohol. First of all, we need to recognize that alcohols are a chemical class that are found almost everywhere. There are many so-called alcohols in our bodies. But the alcohol which is addictive is ethanol or ethyl alcohol. Methyl alcohol or methanol is its closest relative. Methanol is a deadly poison, while ethanol is less toxic but is a more sinister poison.
6. How is the alcohol that people drink produced? People around the world take perfectly good, high-carbohydrate food substances and ferment them using various kinds of yeast. During this process the yeast—which are living organisms—consume the carbohydrate which they live in and produce a waste product which is the alcohol. Eventually, if no one puts a stop to the process, the yeast will produce so much alcohol that they cannot survive in it anymore, and they die. Or alternatively, they consume all the carbohydrate that is available. Then, we as humans remove the yeast with all of the food value that the yeast has been able to extract from the food, and that extract is sometimes sold as brewer's yeast. Finally, we drink the waste product produced by the yeast, ethyl alcohol.
7. Why is this substance addictive? That is a very complicated question. In its simplest form, it is probably because when alcohol begins to circulate in our systems, it very quickly

reaches the frontal part of our brains and puts that part of our brains to sleep. Thus are removed many of our inhibitions and much of our good judgment. If we continue to drink alcohol, even larger portions of the brain go to sleep. And, if we drink enough alcohol, we will simply die of acute alcohol intoxication or poisoning. But most people become so drunk before they reach that point that they cannot consume any more alcohol. Those people are described as “dead drunk.” When people lose their inhibitions, they feel “free”; and they may end up saying some very embarrassing things or doing stupid things.

8. Read Proverbs 23:29-35. Solomon must surely have had plenty of experience—more likely direct experience than by observation—with alcohol to write such an incisive piece.
9. These days, we hear considerable discussion in health circles and in the national media about how a small amount of alcohol is good for the heart. While this may possibly be true—and it has not yet been definitively determined—it is very interesting to note that no one is suggesting that alcohol is good for your brain or your liver or any other part of your body except possibly your heart, and we know it is bad for several organs!
10. One-half of the traffic accidents and a very high percentage of the crimes committed in our country are alcohol-related. Huge sums of money are expended or lost to treat alcoholism or because of the loss of work and productivity due to alcohol consumption. Many families are destroyed, and spouses and children are permanently damaged by a drinking adult.
11. It is a well-documented fact that approximately one in seven human beings has a particular addictive potential for alcoholism. No one knows exactly who those individuals are, but that fact should be convincing evidence that none of us should try alcohol even once.
12. Unfortunately, it is very common for those who are caught in the alcohol trap to believe that escape is impossible. They feel so bad when they are not drinking that it is easy to believe that they are worthless and hopeless and that the condition is impossible to repair.
13. Tobacco is one of the most addictive substances known to man. It's pervasive nature in the body is still being discovered by medical science. There are probably thousands of different poisonous substances found in cigarette smoke. Children who grow up in homes where smoking is practiced are twice as likely to develop lung cancer even if they themselves never smoke. Almost every cancer that you can name has been linked in one way or another to smoking.
14. Heroin, cocaine, and amphetamine addictions are well-known and devastating to whole groups of people. Recently, we have observed that the border between Texas and Mexico has become a war zone over drugs and over who controls their entrance into the United States. Many famous people have died of overdoses. Marilyn Monroe and Elvis Presley are well-known cases, and many others could be named. Not all of the addictive substances are illegal. Many people have died of misuse or overuse of prescription medications.
15. Why do we sin? Why do we yield to temptation? The Scriptures call it a kind of slavery, and the evil effects are very widely-known and well-known. How do we explain addictions to necessary things such as food, sex, and money? These things are not inherently bad. But, why is it that some of us can use these things responsibly while others apparently cannot?
16. Is it possible to make virtually anything into an addiction? Could Bible study and/or prayer become an addiction? What if it took time away from other “necessary” things? Would it be good or bad for us? What about addictions to work, power, even good looks? Certainly,

there is nothing wrong with these things. But, why do some people apparently become addicted to them? Would it be fair to say that something has become an addiction when it is obsessive, uncontrollable, and destructive? God has promised us freedom if we will turn to Him. Does that include freedom from all of these addictions?

17. Sexual intercourse was intended by God to be shared between one man and one woman. It is a part of the cement that is supposed to hold a marriage together. Read Proverbs 5:18,19 and 1 Corinthians 7:2-5. The sexual relationship in marriage is one of only two gifts that God has given us that have survived from the Garden of Eden. The Sabbath is the other. Is it any wonder that Satan has gone to such incredible efforts to destroy those two gifts of God? What is implied by 1 Corinthians 6:18,19? In what sense can you sin against your own body?
18. Unfortunately, the entertainment industry understands the power of addictions. First through books, then plays, movies, and finally, television, they have honed temptation to a fine skill. Now, through the Internet, they have put almost every kind of temptation you can name right on your desk. These things are not new. Prostitution has been called the oldest profession. But the Devil in these final days of Earth's history has found new and "exciting" ways of making it available even through electronic means. Pornography, even "cybersex," is available to almost everyone. How are we supposed to develop the spiritual strength and resources to do as Joseph did? (Genesis 39:7-12)
19. Sex is such a private matter that it is difficult even to help people who are involved because they are embarrassed to talk about it. How do we convince them—and perhaps ourselves—that God can provide freedom from any kind of addiction?
20. Read 1 Timothy 6:10. What do you think Paul had in mind when he made that statement? Do you agree with him? Clearly, God intends for us to use our money wisely. (Matthew 25:15-30) Gambling is for losers! However, some people regard the stock market as not much different from a gambling adventure. But, we know that the financial wizards of Wall Street control almost everything that happens in our world.
21. Why is the love of money such a compulsion? Is it the feeling of power one gets from having money to use as one sees fit? Why do so many people love to spend money lavishly? None of us would suggest that money should be eliminated! We have to have it; we have to use it; we have to earn it. But, it is very easy to become addicted to the desire for more. Once again, God has promised that He will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able to bear. (1 Corinthians 10:13) Is it an important Christian experience to fight against temptation? Does fighting against temptation develop spiritual muscle? If so, for what else do we use that spiritual muscle?
22. It is important to notice that Paul said it is "the love of money" that is the root of all evil. You may have it, or you may not have it; but you can still love it.
23. One of the saddest stories in the Gospels is the story of the young man who watched while Jesus welcomed the mothers and the children and blessed them. (Mark 10:13-16) He sincerely wanted that blessing for himself. But, when he approached Jesus, Jesus turned to him and said: "You need only one thing. Go and sell all you have and give the money to the poor, and you will have riches in heaven; then come and follow me." (Mark 10:17-27, *GNB*) Unfortunately, that man made the decision to turn away and leave Jesus. Many stories could be told about people who have died trying to get more money or trying to hang on to what they have. Is money worth dying for?

24. Read 1 Peter 3:3,4 and 1 Timothy 2:9. In our world today, literally billions of dollars are spent on trying to look good—even cheat the aging process. Cosmetics, bodybuilding, facelifts, hair transplants, plastic surgery, special diets, etc. are all touted to make us look and feel better and younger.
25. Certainly, God would agree that we should care for our bodies in the best possible way. We should get enough exercise, avoid obesity, and avoid other addictive and damaging behaviors that make us look prematurely old. But, spending endless amounts of money to try to recover our youth when that money could better be spent in promoting the kingdom of God—where we will be eternally “young”—is certainly not in God's order. God has given us marvelous bodies which tend to repair themselves, to recover from illness, and to generally serve us very well. But, so long as we live in this world of sin, the death rate will always be the same—one per person.
26. What kind of message are we sending to our young people if we spend large amounts of money trying to keep up with the latest fashions or to reverse the aging process or even trying to look like something that we are not?
27. How can we ourselves turn away from so many worldly attractions and focus on the things that really matter and get our children to do the same? In his old age, Solomon declared in Ecclesiastes 10:16,17:
- <sup>16</sup> A country is in trouble when its king is a youth and its leaders feast all night long. <sup>17</sup>But a country is fortunate to have a king who makes his own decisions and leaders who eat at the proper time, who control themselves and don't get drunk.
28. Wouldn't those words apply to all of us? Wouldn't they apply to any form of addiction?
29. Could “pie in the sky, bye and bye” become an addiction? Are Adventists too consumed with their longing for a better land? Or, do we just see that that future land is so much superior to what is happening in the world around us that we long for the companionship of angels and God and escape from this sinful environment?
30. When we get to heaven, how many of our current friends and neighbors will not be there because of addictions? Do we clearly understand how the power of God can work in our own lives and how we could, in turn, help others to overcome whatever their addictions are?

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Last Modified: February 12, 2011

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