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ADDICTION: A DEATH WISH?

Staggering is the first word that comes to mind when thinking about the addiction problem in the United States. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, in 2024 there was 28.2 million people in the United States over the age of twelve who had a drug-use disorder. This did not include alcohol addiction. The scourge visited upon every segment of society is devastating. Apart from the financial toll is the greater cost of the loss of life. Sadly, many engulfed with addiction would embrace death. Noted actress Juliett Lewis made the following statement which expresses her survival of addiction and corresponding life struggles; "The bravest thing I ever did was continuing my life when I wanted to do was die."

For those caught in the clutches of substance abuse there is the ever increasing need for more and stronger "hits" to satisfy. They are willing to dabble with drugs laced with Fentanyl, which is said to be 100 times more potent than morphine (NIDA). Synthetic opioids accounts for a large percentage of death caused by overdose. "Screwtape" the demon in the book "The Screwtape Letters", written by C.S. Lewis sets forth the best way to corrupt someone is to move things in such a way as to bring about an addictive cycle, "ever increasing craving for an ever diminishing pleasure...a way of working any pleasure toward that which is least natural therefore least pleasurable." Addiction and diminishing returns. This applies across the board: drugs, alcohol, sex, gambling, pornography or whatever. Or as stated in the book, "The Screwtape Letters", "get the man's soul and give him nothing in return."

Solomon, in the seventh chapter of Proverbs illustrates the disastrous cycle of temptation. While he focuses in on sex, the temptation is all encompassing. Notice his words as seen in verses twenty-four and twenty-five. "Now then, my sons, listen to me; pay attention to what I say. Do not let your heart turn to her ways or stray into her paths." The application is not limited to those things of sexual nature. Look at what is found in verses

22-23. "Suddenly he follows her, as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as one in fetters to the discipline of a fool, until an arrow pierces through his liver; as a bird hastens to the snare, so he does not know I will cost him his life."

Let's face it, sin can be alluring, or as the author of Hebrews noted with respect to Moses, "...choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin" (11:25) Is it any wonder then why Peter wrote, "Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." (1Peter 5:8) Sin, can be ever so enticing and addictive, but rest assured it always ends in heartbreak. Again the words of Solomon are apropos as found in Proverbs 7:26-27. "For many are the victims she has cast down, and numerous are all her slain. Her house is the way of Sheol. Descending to the chambers of death."

The choice is clearly evident: life or death. Chose life (John 10:10). "Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:16) (wbe)

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