

**“Addiction’s Death”**  
**Psalm 16**

Dismiss Kids... We are going to turn in the Bible to Psalm 16 this morning (pg 453) of the Bibles we provide for you today. If you need a Bible or want an updated copy, that’s our gift to you.

**Interview with Joe Reddy**

- Introduce Joe... This man has a powerful story. God has done amazing things in your life recently, but it has not always been easy.
- Q: Joe, tell us about your journey & some of the struggles you faced in life.
- Q: You once resisted Jesus... what changed? What brought you to the point of turning your life over to him?
- Q: How has he changed you since you believed in him? Or... what would you say to those struggling with addiction?

Give it up for Joe...

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Wow. Our prayer is to see Joe’s story multiplied 1000s of times in our city. You heard him say: apart from God’s grace he could have been dead or in jail...

And as we consider the solemn reality of addiction, that is the weightiest fact we have to wrestle with: people’s lives are being destroyed and people are dying at mindbending rates. We are in the midst of a national crisis. In 2017, over 72,000 Americans died from drug overdoses, more than the death toll of the wars in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan combined.

**PIC: Number of Opioid Related Overdose Deaths in Massachusetts**

To get a sense of how close this hits to our home, all you need to do is attend one of the vigils that our good friends at Medford Overcoming Addiction hold each year and when you hear the names of loved ones called, do the math from their date of birth to date of death of these precious people: 25, 32, 27, 36, 19, 22...

It’s time for us to wake up.

The prevalence of pain killers and their misuse has led 1000s to spiral down a path that not only leads to heroin, but heroin laced with fentanyl, an opiate 100 times more powerful than morphine. This doesn’t touch the overflow crowds that flock to AA meetings in our city and around our country. More than 15 million Americans struggle with Alcohol Abuse.

But the good news I want to share you with is that God has prescribed a path for addiction to meet it’s death!

Though Psalm 16 was not written specifically to deal with the issue of addiction, it carries potent truth for all of us who struggle with and are affected by addiction.

***Read Psalm 16. (TEXT ON SCREEN)***

**The Point: Addiction meets its death when we find life in God through Jesus.**

As we begin: I want to put three things on the table:

- 1) While I want to focus on substance abuse, we must work to eradicate all forms of addiction: Not just Drug and Alcohol Abuse, but Sex Addictions (including porn). Gambling. Shopping & Compulsive Spending; Or what about some more respectable addictions like . . .
  - a. Food & Caffeine (All of New England is addicted to Dunkin Donuts coffee)
  - b. Sports, even Exercise
  - c. TV, Internet, Gaming, Smartphones!
- 2) So, let's all be responsible listeners. We all face temptation. Sin, struggle, and addiction chase everyone. No one is "better" than anyone else. God is the only perfect person in the room.
- 3) In his love, God wants to set us free from every addiction.

T: This morning, I want to share as though I'm sitting with a friend battling addiction. We read Psalm 16 as a battle plan to see their addiction die a nasty death. It would consist of these five pleas. #1

### **Addiction meets its death when we... (maybe modify...)**

#### **I. Cry out to God for help (1-2).**

- Addiction is a nasty and debilitating reality.
- **Ed Welch says: "Addiction is bondage to the rule of a substance, activity, or state of mind, which then becomes the center of life, defending itself from truth so that even bad consequences don't bring repentance (change), and leading to further estrangement from God (and people)."**
- Because of the bondage, because of the controlling influence, because of the irrationality – defending itself from truth (AA even calls it insanity), because of the estrangement, one of the most difficult steps for someone struggling with addiction is crying out for help.
- Addiction wants us to stay in the dark, isolated from others and even God.
- But the addict, more than anyone, realizes that we all need a power greater than our own. Addiction shows us how powerless we are.
- It's interesting that the word for God in verse 1: "El" refers to his might (Mighty God), but then the next word for God is "Jehovah," which is God's personal name. (powerful and personal!)
- David wrote these words because he needed God's help and deliverance (Perhaps penned when King Saul was seeking to take his life)!
- He cried out: "Preserve me." "Be my refuge!"
- When our lives are shaken and unstable by the chaos around us or the chaos we've created for ourselves, God is the one who can protect us from the storm.

And look at verse 2.

- This is a radical statement of humility.
- This is where recovery begins: acknowledging our weakness and wrongs. Then confessing I do not have the power or goodness in me to get through this. I need the goodness of God."
- Crying out for help is a huge step of faith, and it takes faith to surrender our lives over to not just a "higher power," but the highest power, God himself.
- *When we come to God, open handed, truly ready to Surrender the control of our lives to him: we are saying God, you be my strength, my light, my solution, my hope, my power.*

T: If we are to discover God and his best for us, this is where it starts. Everyone needs to take this step. Cry out to God, but it's even better when you find other people who are doing the same.

## II. Seek support through a caring community (3)

- Verse 3. David speaks of not simply the people who were around him, but his true friends, the people who were walking in the same direction because they shared the same values and most of all the same worship of the same God.
- In this fight, we need one another. We were not made to walk alone!
- I went to two AA meetings this week to learn and discover ways I can support people. (Comment on my experience 😊 Introducing myself)
- A huge part of the power of AA is the way they build community. [There are people who have been sober for years, some a few days – everyone knows everyone. Everyone is for everyone else. There’s vulnerability, encouragement, mutual support.]
- As I told people it was my first time, four different people told me: “keep coming.”
- A church community offers that kind of family, + Jesus!
- No matter what the addiction... food, porn, we need people who will love us enough to tell us the truth, hold us accountable and encourage us toward the path of LIFE, not destruction.
- There are seasons in an addict’s life where the best thing is to find a new set of friends.
- **“Bad company corrupts good character.” (1 Corinthians 14:33)**
- Conversely, **“Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise.” (Proverbs 13:20)**
- This is why Community Groups are so important at Redemption Hill (143 – let’s go 170 this week!!)!! Because it provides a context where we can go deeper relationally and grow in our journey with God. And one day, we will start our own recovery group for our community. Just wait.
- But today, let me ask you: who are you surrounding yourself with? Who is giving you wise counsel? Do you need pastoral or professional counseling?
- WE ARE HERE FOR YOU! We will always seek to be a safe, humble, non-judgmental group of fellow strugglers who offer the hope and healing found in Jesus Christ.

T: Now, good friends will be crucial in helping you take the next 3 steps!

## III. **Recognize the cost of empty pursuits (4).**

- Verse 4 speaks of idolatry. Rather than worshiping God, we “run after another god,”
- Ultimately, all sin, including addiction to any wrongdoing, is a worship disorder. Rather than seeking pleasure in God, we seek it in a substance or other object of pleasure, to the point that it becomes that which we cannot live without, to the point where we treasure it as more valuable and irreplaceable than God himself.
- Biblical Counselor, Ed Welch, has a really good book, *Addiction: Banquet in the Grave*. In that work, he shows how **the decent** toward **addiction and Idolatry** works as a worship disorder:
  1. **“I don’t like the way I feel.”** (Oftentimes, it all begins with a simple moment of discontentment.)
  2. **“I want to manage my world my way.”** (We follow our own selfish desires and begin to play the role of God.)
  3. **“I like this. This is what I have been looking for.”** (The next pill, or drink or needle or website looks so alluring, so enticing, and it will bring pleasure for a short time. That’s why we say...)
  4. **“I want to keep doing this!”** (Addiction usually starts small then grows.)
  5. **“This means so much to me. I love it.”** (Our sinful practices to begin to hold a powerful sway on our lives. )

6. **“I want more. I NEED more.”** (We always believe we’re in control, until life is out of control. Our desires spiral into dependence: physiologically, emotionally, and spiritually. The Bible tells us (in Romans 1) that we suppress God’s truth when it interferes with what we want, and perhaps in a shocking way to us, we begin to say . . .)
  7. **“You are my god.”** (These addictions serve as “Functional Saviors.” If you take this away from me, you’ll take my comfort, my security, my joy, my peace. The end is voluntary slavery and it leaves us in a miserable state)
  8. **“This hurts. I’ve been betrayed. I want it, but don’t want it.”** (Here’s addiction’s dirty little secret: it will not ultimately satisfy us. Pleasure outside of pleasure in God will be short lived. Sin always overpromises and underdelivers).
- And look, what does this “running after another god” bring? sorrow upon sorrow upon sorrow. Sorrows multiplies. Pain multiplies. Shame. Loneliness. Emotional bankruptcy. Feelings of worthlessness. Spiraling out of control to the point where you hate yourself, you hate life, you even want to die.
  - This doesn’t include the damage incurred by loved ones. One mother said: “After my daughter died, I saw it clear as day. They’re not only destroying themselves, they’re destroying us.”

T: BUT the heart that is in step with God says with David, “I will not take part in their evil ways. I won’t even flirt with that which enslaves me and destroys me.” I will set God before me in everything!

#### **IV. Seek sobriety by setting God before you. (5-8)**

- Look at what happens when we align our lives with God!
  - God becomes our portion and cup (what truly satisfies us).
  - Our lot is secure. The boundary lines have fallen in pleasant places (God is our Provider. He gives us what we need as we look to him.)
  - The Lord counsels me. (Listen to this: better than anything a person could say to you is what God has already said. It’s right here.)
- And then he says in verse 8 (and this is where I want to focus): “I have set the Lord always before me.”

Our entire lives are to be lived *CORAM DEO*, before the face of God. This is our greatest defense. DEFENDER

- We will win the battle with whatever assails us, when we allow God to transform our thoughts, desires, and affections (How we think, what we want, and what we love).
- You say, “Tanner how does that work.”
  - [[Perceive: We see something as valuable.
  - Prize: Then we treasure it as valuable. Worth our time, worth our attention, worth our allegiance, worth our worship. Which leads us to...
  - Pursue. To go after it. To think about, want, and love it more than anything else in life. ]]
- To conquer our sinful desires, we must replace them with greater desires.
- We have to replace those things we once deemed valuable with that which is truly valuable.
- This is what **Thomas Chalmers** referred to as the expulsive power of a new affection. When we talk about affections, we are primarily speaking of what we love. He said, **“There is not one personal transformation in which the heart is left without an object of ultimate beauty and joy. The heart’s desire for one particular object can be conquered, but it’s desire to have some object is unconquerable. The only way to dispossess the heart of an old affection is by the expulsive power of a new one.”**
- This happens one thought and one decision at a time. And here’s the really amazing part: as we say yes to Christ one decision at a time, we will become addicted to him.

- That's what's going on here today: I'm inviting you to a new addiction. When we see how good he is, we will just want more and more and more of him.

T: Addiction does not have the last word. Relapse is not inevitable. God has given us everything we need. (2 Pet 1:3) by gifting us the opportunity to find life in him. So, here's my final plea . .

## V. Settle for nothing less than joy & life (9-11)

- Verse 9. "Therefore . . ." What he says in vv. 9-11 is predicated on everything he just said. In other words, because God is his refuge, his good, his portion, his counselor and the one he sets before him...
- "Therefore my heart is glad and my whole being rejoices."
  - As we set God before us and forsake the worthless idols in our lives, God gives us *his* gladness and joy.
  - JOY is not designed to be an elusive possession but our daily experience.
  - But not just joy...
- LIFE - *Read vv. 10-11*
  - This is what God wants for us!
  - Jesus said in **John 10:10 . . . "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."**
  - God wants us to experience LIFE in this life. - "My flesh also dwells secure."
  - AND God wants us to experience LIFE in the next life. - There is life after life. "You will not let your Holy One see corruption..." David knows his relationship with God will not end with earthly death.
  - His is confident he will dwell with God where there is joy and eternal pleasure in his presence.
  - That is what makes heaven, heaven. And that is what makes life worth living today!
- The earliest followers of Jesus tell us that these verses point to him.
- Jesus was crucified on a Roman cross to bear all of our wrongs against God and one another, and as he died for our sin, he opened the way for us to experience his life, his love, and his freedom.
- Have you received that gift he offers us?
- But he Jesus did not remain dead, but overcame death, by rising from the grave. He is the Holy One whose body did not see corruption, and it is in HIM, that we can overcome death, live with him forever, and also overcome our greatest struggles and challenges today!

### *Conclusion:*

- It's time for addiction to die. Restoration's road may not be short, but there is life in the journey.

I. Cry out to God for help (1-2).

II. Seek support through a caring community (3)

III. Recognize the cost of our empty pursuits (4).

IV. Seek Sobriety by setting God before you. (5-8)

V. Settle for nothing less than joy & life (9-11)

Invite band and prayer team...

If you're struggling, come and receive prayer. If you're affected, perhaps you just want someone to pray for the person you love. Maybe.. today is the day you surrender to God and launch the beginning of addiction's death. We are here for you.