



# crossroads

a step-by-step guide away from addiction

facilitator's guide



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Edward T. Welch



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## FOR FACILITATORS AND FRIENDS

TO WALK WITH AN ADDICT is both a gift and a grief. It is a privilege to bear another's burdens and love someone who is, in most ways, just like you. But it is painful to be lied to, to witness the ups and downs, and to watch while someone you love trashes his or her life and the lives of other people. These challenges are enough to lead you into humility and prayer, which are exactly the basic requirements for the job. Add love and you have the whole package.

A wise old ex-addict, a man who had come alongside hundreds of other addicts over the course of his sobriety, was asked how he could keep doing it when so many seemed to go back to their addictions. "I want to love them well," he said. "Then, when they are ready to change, they will remember that there is at least one person who cares, and they can call me."

That sounds pessimistic, but it actually points to a no-lose proposition. When you love someone who struggles with an addiction, you may end up watching that person disappear back into addiction. If that happens, you pray for another opportunity. Or you may see the Spirit of God work in that person's life. Either way, you were a faithful ambassador for Jesus Christ.

Love, humility, and prayerfulness—wrapped together with a confidence that God speaks with authority and grace to the difficult problem of addictions—are the basic requirements for the job. They all go together. If you have one, the others follow. If you are prayerful about another person, you will grow in humility because prayer says, "I need Jesus." You will also grow in love because you can't help but love someone for whom you consistently pray.

Of the three, love is the best summary of your job description. So, do you love well? Do you love in such a way that the struggling person knows that you love him or her? If you do, you are already going to help more than any manual or study guide. Of

course, the Spirit of God can use all kinds of means to bring change in other people's lives, but, more often than not, the Spirit uses love.

Consider *Crossroads* a supplement to your ministry of wise love.

Here is an overview of what is ahead:

- The steps in *Crossroads* try to mimic the way Jesus speaks to us.
- They speak in a direct, no-nonsense style.
- They ask questions as a way to teach and lead.
- They surprise or, even better, amaze.
- The steps in *Crossroads* provide warnings.
- They point out the path of beauty and lasting satisfaction.
- They bring hope on every page because all of God's words to the addict are summed up in the good news given to us by Jesus Christ. His love cannot be turned away, and his power can release anyone from bondage.

You, too, will adopt these different styles at different times. Love has rich variety.

The title *Crossroads* comes from one of the recurring images in the book. When we read through Proverbs, we notice that we are always standing at a crossroads, with Wisdom pointing us to the Kingdom of Heaven and Folly trying to seduce us away from it. At that decision point, which we encounter all the time, we must be wide awake, all our wits about us, because our natural instinct is to veer onto the path of folly.

When seen from a distance, folly looks like—well, folly. After all, who would tease an asp or walk randomly around an area loaded with traps and snares? But when temptation is breathing down our necks, it can suddenly appear rational, attractive, and satisfying. One goal of the Book of Proverbs is

to prepare us for that crossroads moment by helping us take a step back, get a little distance.

Other images run through the book as well: light, darkness, wilderness journeys, and banquets. Any of them could be the organizing theme, but “crossroads” is flexible enough to incorporate a wide swath of the biblical teaching.

### A WORD ABOUT METHOD

The workbook, of course, is unapologetically God oriented and Christ focused. This might be too much for someone who is committed to discovering his or her own god rather than knowing God-who-has-revealed-himself-as-THE-God. But it should suit most addicts just fine. Those who have a difficult time saying no to temptations know they need help. They know they need God. Usually they prefer that the knowledge of God not be left to their own judgment. They know the real thing when they hear it.

In the table of contents, you will notice that the steps specifically about God don't come until the middle of the book. This gives addicts time to see themselves more accurately before they really consider the character of God. For example, if an addict believes that his or her problem is largely biological, God will be a healer and helper, but he won't be the crucified Redeemer. Start with people and move toward God, or start with God and then talk about people—the knowledge of one is always connected to the other. You could start either place. I have chosen to show addicts their needs first, then move into the specifics of how God in Christ meets those needs.

### A WORD ABOUT LANGUAGE

Use the word *addiction* with caution, or at least with self-awareness. We inject words with particular meanings. Your goal is to supply meaning that will easily draw a person into the story of Scripture. In the pop psychology of our times, the word *addiction* means so many different things that it can easily remain outside of the biblical story. But if you reload the word so that it means temptation, desires run amok, or voluntary slavery, then Scripture comes alive.

Most words are neither good nor bad. But some

words and their meanings are more easily assimilated by Scripture, and some tend to resist biblical oversight. You, of course, want addicts to find themselves on every page of Scripture. To that end, you will be alert to words such as *addictions* and *cravings* that, though they can be easily understood biblically, take some extra work to establish the links. The method you use to bring all things under the oversight of God's Word can be flexible. Some people prefer to define terms up front. Others prefer to let Scripture gradually demonstrate its interpretive power.

### OFFERING HOPE

All the basics should be here: reading Scripture, prayer, confession, and hope through knowing Jesus Christ and responding to him. The means of change for addicts are the same as they are for everyone else. To go in search of a new strategy to deal with addictions would be to say that God has not said enough to us in Scripture. Your job, ultimately, is to help the members of your group see that there is genuine hope and freedom in the gospel of Jesus Christ. A big part of that will be helping them to see where God is *already* at work in their lives. So be alert: watch for evidence of progress, and encourage your group members by telling them what you see.

One last thing: all of the material from your group members' guides is the main text here in this facilitator's guide. The leader-specific material in this guide is set off in the margins. You will notice that the sidebars get less frequent as the book progresses. That is intentional: as you get deeper into this study, you as the study leader won't need my guidance as much. Or rather, you need God-given discernment more than you need any additional guidance you could get from a sidebar. Every group is different, and members will progress at different rates. As you moderate the discussion, pray for wisdom and discernment to see how best to offer hope to the members of your group.

*Crossroads* will give you the opportunity to be a blessing to people who need the hope that God offers in Christ. And you can expect to be blessed yourself as you see God's faithfulness at work.

## A FEW PRELIMINARIES

**GROUPS ARE LIKE A SMALL CHURCH.** In the simple act of meeting together, men and women are saying that they need help. Without the help of Scripture and other people, they lose their way and go blind to the mixed motives of their hearts. When men and women attend a group, they are making a step of humility, which is a wonderful and necessary first step when attacking any addiction.

Meeting together is normal—lots of people do such things. But it is also extraordinary. You are meeting in the name of Jesus; you are meeting in order to know Jesus. That alone is dramatic evidence that God is on the move, and you have the opportunity to remind men and women of that spiritual reality. Be sure to let them know: their presence in the group is evidence of God’s power and love for them.

The structure of a group can vary. If you are meeting with only one other person, you will have less structure. You could use this book as a guide for discussion. Read together parts that either of you highlighted. When something doesn’t make sense, pray for wisdom.

If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.  
(James 1:5)

The larger the group, the greater the need for some structure. Senates have their parliamentary procedures, committees their Robert’s Rules of Order, and teachers their lesson plans and classroom rules. For those who struggle with addictions, structure can help because addicts, once they start talking, have a lot to say.

There can be a designated leader or rotating chairpersons, and the order of the meeting can vary, depending on the interests and needs of the group. It can include any of the following:

- A predetermined time to start and stop
- A statement of purpose—this is a nice opportunity for you to consider why you are meeting together and put that into words. Aim to be brief. For example, “We need help, God gives help, and he uses people.”
- Prayer
- A short passage of Scripture that is relevant to the meeting’s topic
- A testimony. Consider ending the testimony by asking the person how the group can pray for him or her, but be careful to keep the time from being a group counseling session. It is hard enough to share something shameful, such as an addiction. An advice free-for-all could be confusing at best and could easily push the person away. If the person has no accountability partner, you could talk after the meeting and suggest someone who could be a mentor.
- A brief summary about the step discussed in the meeting
- Group responses, action plans, or questions about the step. Keep comments brief.
- Prayer for one another. In a large group, you could write requests for prayer on a 3x5 card and distribute them to group members.
- A hymn
- A benediction. One of the shocking things about God is that he desires to bless his people. The blessing from Number 6:24–26 is one example.

“Getting Started” is a step. Have your friend or friends (let’s use “friend” rather than “addict”) read aloud the parts that are particularly relevant. They can insert brief commentary.





# GETTING STARTED

## DO ANY OF THESE STATEMENTS FIT?

- You feel out of control. What began as an escape from the hassles of life has become hazardous. Something—drugs, alcohol, gambling, food, sex—is taking over. You feel like its slave.
- You still love your addiction, but it is no longer friendly. You think it is time for a change.
- You think it is time for change—you want to leave your addiction—but you aren't sure how to change. You have already tried a few strategies, and they didn't work.
- Someone told you that you'd *better* change.
- You are sick and tired of the lies, broken relationships, and nagging conscience that accompany all addictions.
- You are already off and running, already leaving your addiction behind.

Whichever fits, welcome to reality. You are closing in on it. ▼

Reality is not as bad as you think. Yes, the world around you can be miserable at times. It can be miserable *most* of the time, as a matter of fact. You have known that misery. Otherwise, you wouldn't have preferred an altered reality. But there is more to reality than what you see. Usually you are looking through glasses that are smudged, scratched, and out of focus, and things don't look good. But reality—true reality—is better than you think.

Your addiction has taken you to the woodshed for a good whuppin'. At those times it is hard to see hints of beauty, goodness, justice, love, and joy, that are always peeking out of this life, but they are still there.

Let me put it this way: What if you were invited to the greatest feast ever? What if you received a promise of great treasure? Would that be enough to lure you away from an addictive way of life? It, at least, would get your attention. ▼

Think of this book as a treasure map. At times you are reluctant to give up your addiction, in which case a map, even a map to someplace beautiful, isn't powerful enough to guide you. Yet at other times you

## NOTES

▼ Reality = life as God interprets it.

▼ It is never too soon to entice someone with a new vision of wonderful things. Read the first nine chapters of Proverbs, and you will find a series of warnings and inducements, all given by a wise man who is savvy about the human heart. All these inducements find their fullest expression in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

## NOTES

▼ This, of course, is not to tout *Crossroads* as the answer. God's Word, applied by his Spirit, transforms.

▼ This is self-evident: addicts want more. But this is also a radical statement that cuts across the grain of much of the teaching on addiction. Addicts are victimized by addictions, but they also want them. Their hearts are always active.

▼ Voluntary slavery is one of the paradoxes of the human heart that is apparent in addiction. This paragraph, again, emphasizes the *voluntary* nature of the heart.

▼ This sounds blunt, but addicts don't mind your being blunt. They mind hypocrisy, and they mind bluntness without love, as they should.

▼ Addicts have a tendency to be numb. "Surprise" might rouse them. Also, it is a reminder that you don't want to say things that seem worn out and predictable. You will be considering the words of Christ, and they are the words of a cosmic revolution.

are sick and tired of being owned by something that is killing you, and you are ready to leave it behind. The problem at those times is that you simply don't know how to get away. Every trail seems to loop right back to where you began. It is as though the object of your addiction sucks you into its gravitational pull and there is no defense against it. The purpose of the steps ahead is to orient you and direct you to a path of change that has been proven to transform people. ▼

A few points before you get started.

First, *your struggle is a common one*. Don't begin with the idea that your experience is out of the ordinary. It is, of course, unique—no one completely understands your struggle (not even you). Still, we are all cut from the same cloth. All of us, if we are truly honest, would have to acknowledge a familiarity with that tug of addictions. A lot of *wanting* is in the human heart. ▼ The desire for drugs, alcohol, sex, and food are the more dramatic ones, but they aren't fundamentally different from our cravings for comfort, significance, relationship, money, love, and so on. Try to find one person who has successfully and consistently said no to any of those wants. You won't succeed.

If you consider yourself a special case—the worst addict, the most victimized—stop and think about what you are really saying. Right below the surface is the idea, *Whatever worked for other people is not going to work for me*. And right below that idea is the private thought, *I am not going to change*.

You might be saying, "I *can't* change." You are afraid to get your hopes up for what could be another failure. Or you might be saying, "I *won't* change." You virtually dare people and programs to take their best shot at you so you can show them that they are not as good as advertised. Either way, you have already decided that nothing will help. You are certain that you are not normal, so normal treatments (this book, for instance) won't help. You may genuinely hope that *something* will come along and be the answer, but you suspect it never will. ▼

If that's you—if you believe that your case is unique—perhaps you still love your addiction more than you love anything else. That doesn't mean that a guide such as this is a waste of time. It just means that you are starting at a disadvantage. ▼

Second, *the path you will be traveling has much to do with God*. That should come as no surprise. Books about addictions always say something about God. But much more is happening between you and God than you may think.

- You will be surprised to learn how you avoid him.
- You will be surprised to learn how he pursues you.
- You will be surprised that you know him more than you think.
- You will be surprised that you know him less than you think. ▼

If you find yourself shutting down when the conversation turns to God, don't just wait for the conversation to move to something else. When you shut down at the mention of someone's name, the issue is *not* that he is irrelevant to you. The issue is that he is more relevant to you than you are comfortable with. Take a quick look, and you will probably find a history of misunderstandings and fractures in the relationship. Your addictions are linked to your relationship to God more than you realize. You can't ignore that.

Third, if at all possible, *do this work with someone else*. Addictions are private, so doing this in public is a way to take a stand against your addiction. God has always planned for people to live and grow in a community, where we give and receive, pray for others and get prayed for, and learn wisdom and offer it.

This book has its roots in a book called *Addiction—A Banquet in the Grave*. ▼ The image of the banquet comes from the Book of Proverbs. Just insert "Addiction" for "The woman Folly" and it will make sense.

The woman Folly [Addiction] is loud;  
 she is undisciplined and without knowledge.  
 She sits at the door of her house,  
 on a seat at the highest point of the city,  
 calling out to those who pass by,  
 who go straight on their way.  
 "Let all who are simple come in here!"  
 she says to those who lack judgment.  
 "Stolen water is sweet;  
 food eaten in secret is delicious!"  
*But little do they know that the dead are there,  
 that her guests are in the depths of the grave.*

(Proverbs 9:13–18, emphasis added)

Vivid, accurate, and tragic. Addictions lure you. ▼ They look attractive until the lights are turned on and you see the ugliness, horror, and death swirling around you. This is not the banquet you were hoping for.

But Dame Folly's banquet in the grave isn't the only banquet. There is another one. *The God* has invited you to *The Banquet*. This banquet is in his honor, and he has picked up the tab so you can come.

Who would have thought? The treatment for addictions is to want something better than your addictions.

"Come, all you who are thirsty,  
 come to the waters;

▼ This book overlaps with *Crossroads*. It would be worthwhile for you to read.

▼ This emphasizes the slavery side of voluntary slavery.

## NOTES

▼ The gospel is a universal invitation. The simple requirement for this banquet is that you bring nothing. You acknowledge your need for Jesus and believe that he is, indeed, the risen Lord who has paid everything on your behalf. Does anyone think he or she is too bad and unworthy to come? The invitation is especially directed to the marginalized and unworthy, such as murderers (King David), adulterers (King David again), liars (the apostle Peter), and all others who have nothing to bring.

and you who have no money,  
 come, buy and eat!  
 Come, buy wine and milk  
 without money and without cost.

Why spend money on what is not bread,  
 and your labor on what does not satisfy?  
 Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good,  
 and your soul will delight in the richest of fare.”

(Isaiah 55:1–2)

Inviting, isn't it? ▼

**STEP 1:**

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**Listen**

## NOTES

▼ For background reading, consider chapters 1–3 of *Addictions—A Banquet in the Grave*.

▼ Scripture is quite realistic when it comes to addictions [Proverbs 23:29–35]. Addicts can be like dogs that return to their vomit [Proverbs 26:11]. By stating the obvious about addictions, you are creating a culture where men and women can speak openly about their struggles. That alone can be hopeful, and hope is what you are offering.

▼ Here is the crossroads we all face.

▼ These warning images come from Proverbs 9. Warnings are not condemnation. Don't be afraid to offer warnings; when you love someone you want to scare them away from death and induce them to life.

**MAIN IDEA:** The path away from addiction begins by waking up and listening, really listening. Such listening also goes by another name: it is called humility. ▼

The rumors are true. There really is a way through the addictive fog. When you consider the number of times you tried to stop and then went back to your addiction, you can easily believe that life is a revolving stage, always returning to the same place. ▼ But there really is a guidebook to life, and, contrary to what you think, it is available to everyone, including you.

Wisdom calls aloud in the street,  
 she raises her voice in the public squares;  
 at the head of the noisy streets she cries out,  
 in the gateways of the city she makes her speech.  
 (Proverbs 1:20–21)

Wisdom means knowing how life is supposed to work—how it works best. To get it, you just have to listen.

## TWO VOICES

But listening to Wisdom is not that easy. As you know, another voice calls out in the street. That voice is Folly. ▼

**Folly.** Folly—also known as Addiction—offers the flash and cash. Consider what she promises, and it's no wonder she is difficult to resist:

- Something secret
- Quick money
- Pleasure
- Rest, relaxation, and ease
- No problems (at least for right now)
- “Friends” who will encourage you in your foolish path

It's what she *doesn't* say that is the killer.

She cries out, “Now! Now! Now! You can have all this now!” Who wouldn't listen to such a promise even if she hasn't delivered? But here is reality. Her speech is a trap that is barely camouflaged. As she invites you to her banquet, she tries to shield your eyes from the death all around you. The stench is masked by cheap perfume. Even while you become contaminated, as the disease spreads and your own flesh begins to rot, she promises that *more* of your addiction is the only tonic that will heal. Death is her trade. Lies are her native tongue. ▼

**Wisdom.** It would be nice if you could simply say, “Oops, I lost my way,” then start following the voice of wisdom. But as you know, the work in front of you will be a battle. Think of the cartoons where a person has two miniature creatures—a “Mini-Me” on each shoulder—whispering in either ear: foolishness in one ear and wisdom in the other. Foolishness usually wins. Foolishness is the hip contrast to wisdom. Who wouldn’t follow it? From a distance, foolishness sounds ridiculous. It makes promises it can’t keep, and it has nothing to give except death anyway. But close up, when it conjures up a mirage that matches our desires, foolishness sounds like life itself. ▼

Wisdom, or at least the stereotype of it, seems boring by comparison. Slow and steady. How many ways can you make “Don’t do it” sound interesting? But wisdom doesn’t just fade away when it loses to the slick appeal of foolishness. Instead, wisdom goes into overdrive. It speaks more beautifully, exposes the ugliness of folly, and makes promises that it will keep. Wisdom woos you. It beckons. It persuades.

Do not forget my teaching,  
but keep my commands in your heart,  
for they will prolong your life many years  
and bring you prosperity. (Proverbs 3:1–2)

“Lay hold of my words with all your heart;  
keep my commands and you will live.  
Get wisdom, get understanding;  
do not forsake my words or swerve from them.  
Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you;  
love her, and she will watch over you.  
Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom.  
Though it cost all you have, get understanding.  
Esteem her, and she will exalt you;  
embrace her, and she will honor you.” (Proverbs 4:4–8)

My son, pay attention to what I say;  
listen closely to my words.  
Do not let them out of your sight,  
keep them within your heart;  
for they are life to those who find them  
and health to a man’s whole body. (Proverbs 4:20–22)

Listen and you might hear hope, which you may not have heard for years. Wisdom actually seeks you. Your job is to hear the voice of wisdom and learn to love it.

▼ From a distance versus up close—that will be an important distinction. Perhaps the addictive object is temporarily out of reach, and your friends have a false sense of power and clarity. They should remember that when the object of their affection comes close, they could easily go temporarily insane. It is time to be afraid and get prepared.



## NOTES

▼ Which one? Let the group respond.

▼ Your friends might never have had *anyone* fight for them. They might not be able to imagine that anyone, including yourself, ever would. If they are awake, this should surprise them.

▼ *Wisdom, folly, kingdoms*—these are not everyday words, but try to stay with them. They are bridges between addiction and the truths of Scripture.

***The Source of Wisdom.*** As you can already tell, wisdom isn't a system of steps to memorize. Wisdom is quite personal. It comes from God; it is his voice. You already knew that, but it still might surprise you. Perhaps you thought God was peeved and waiting for you to finally get it right; *then he might* grace you with his presence. Or maybe *you* were peeved at God and waiting for *him* to finally get it right. Or both. ▼ In any case, you probably aren't accustomed to thinking of God as the One who goes out into the most dangerous streets, in the middle of the night, searching for you and calling out your name. ▼ Perhaps you didn't know that when you veer off into your addiction, he ratchets up his persuasive appeal a few notches.

## TWO KINGDOMS

God is the voice of wisdom. He invites you to his kingdom. Your relationship with him is an uneasy and strained one, so it will take some work. ▼

That other voice? Listen to how familiar it sounds. The cartoons have it partly correct: the voice of your addiction really is your own Mini-Me. That's *your* voice you're hearing. Yes, other voices join in, but it is, at least, your own voice. How else would it know you so well? How else would it know exactly how to entice you?

It is the voice of your desires.

The map is now in front of you. The path you are on always comes to a crossroads. One path leads to folly and death, the other to wisdom and life. Study the map, and you will notice that you are actually walking toward a kingdom. You are traveling either toward the kingdom where God is your King and Father, or you are committed to a rival kingdom in which you try to manage life on your own, apart from God. In other words, these decisions are about allegiances. Addiction is the battleground where your loyalties are revealed.

Here is where addicts have an advantage over most people. Addicts know the deeper reality that life is set up according to kingdoms. Addicts know that there isn't one square inch of neutral territory. Everyone is on the way to one kingdom or the other. This may sound like religious gobbledygook to many people, but you know different, even if you aren't sure what you believe about God. You know from your own experience that this is reality. You know all about the crossroads: you have lived with the Mini-Mes battling for your soul on either shoulder. You know that your addiction is a matter of loyalty, of decisions for God or against him. You even know that the central question—not just in addiction but in all of life—is, *Who will I worship? Who will I bow to?* After all, that's what you do with exalted kings.

Some bow to God. If they do, they can't take any credit for it. God pursued them first, in the same way he is pursuing you. Others

worship themselves and their own desires through the pursuit of money, security, comfort, prestige, power, drugs, or sex. What distinguishes you from most other false worshipers is that you have chosen to worship something illegal, something more dangerous, or something that carries a higher possibility of bad consequences.

**?** How do you feel about being identified as a false worshiper? Do you believe it? Do you believe that your life is ultimately about kingdom allegiances? ▼

### TAKE ACTION

The stakes are high. Listen carefully. Two different voices call out to you. It may not feel like it, but you still have the capacity to hear the voice of God who wants to guide you into wisdom and life. You will find that God speaks plainly, not in code. To hear God, you don't need any special skills. You just have to listen to him.

**Do something.** Listening and action go together. If you are ready to listen, you are ready to act. If you are *not* ready to act, you are not ready to listen. ▼

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law [God's words] that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but *doing* it—he will be blessed in what he does. (James 1:22–25)

**?** How would you explain this piece of wisdom?

Are you ready to act? The next step will address more about this. But when it comes to addiction, the strategy is to act NOW. Take a step.

Addictions generate a lot of momentum. To act against them seems like a superhuman task. As a matter of fact, it *is* a superhuman task; and you aren't feeling as if you have any superpowers. You're in a rut. You instinctively follow your desires wherever they lead you. You don't question, don't think, and don't resist. But no matter how dead and powerless you feel, at least you are *not* dead. That's good. Change will not be easy. It won't seem natural at first, and you will be sorely tempted to give up after an hour or two. But that resistance is part of the process of becoming a real human being.

You need to do *something*. Keep a pen handy. Write all over this book—in the margins, in the blank spaces. Go ahead and cover it with

▼ These truths might not resonate with your friend or group members just yet. If not, try to understand why, but remember, there is no reason to debate. At this point, just let them continue to receive more light.

▼ When God listens to his people, he does something. He acts. You might want to point out this truth as a way to establish the connection between the Lord and your friend.

## NOTES

▼ It sounds easy, but we can only pray because the Spirit empowers us. If any of your friends respond with prayer, remind them that they are not acting like mere humans, but they are acting like children of God. One of your jobs is to point out the movement of the Spirit.

▼ Your friends are already speaking with you. So once again you can remind them that there is nothing ordinary about this action step. It is evidence that God is on the move. Tell them that. Of course, they can also talk to another person.

graffiti. Argue, write down questions, state your disagreements, and jot down ideas on how to put up a fight against temptations. You have been lulled to sleep by Folly. It is time to wake up (Ephesians 5:14)!

Are you awake yet?

How can you tell?

Here are some ways you can take action.

**Talk to God.** Start by asking for help. Admit it now to God. Simply say, “I need help.” ▼

Have you said it?

You may have heard that your problems are usually rooted in your selfishness and pride. Wisdom comes when we take steps of humility. Humility acknowledges a need for help.

Being humbled is not the same thing as being shamed or embarrassed. Being humbled means that you are getting the knack of being human the way God intended. The addict’s motto is, “My will, my way.” The more human alternative is, “Your will, God. I need help and I am listening.”

**Talk to another person.** You should talk to another person for two reasons: First, by talking about what you have just heard, you will know if you really heard anything. Second, you may need some practice asking for help. If you ask God for help, it should be easy to ask a mere human like yourself for help.



Who can you talk to?



What will you ask? ▼

**Read.** If you want more background on the two voices and the two kingdoms, read the first nine chapters of the Book of Proverbs, which is found in the Old Testament of the Bible. You could also read its New Testament counterpart, the Book of James. Then tell someone about what you read.



Will you begin to read it? Who will you discuss it with?

You probably have all kinds of true and false ideas about the Bible—everyone comes to the Bible with lots of assumptions. Regardless of what you believe, the Bible will be your map, compass, guide, eyes and ears, comfort, defense, ammunition, and even your food.

One reason people avoid the Bible is that it makes them feel guilty, and most people feel they have enough of that already. It is much more helpful to think of the Bible as a light in the darkness. In the darkness you can do forbidden things and believe that nobody sees. That feels like freedom at first, but eventually darkness comes to feel like an isolated

prison. Light is always good. It might make you squint. It might make you feel exposed. But it is always good.

Your interest in the Bible will be a gauge. It will measure your desire for change. ▼

**Run.** Since the crossroads you face is about life and death, here is some sound advice: RUN. Run like a maniac. Run away. Run from death and everything that it touches. ▼

**?** What would it mean to run from your addiction?

**?** What people or places are contaminated by your addiction?

**?** How will you run from those people and those places? Don't forget, if you get near them, they pull you toward death.

Change your phone number.

Have all the computer sites you hit sent to someone else.

Throw out your secret stash.

**?** Who will you tell of your plan?

Even if you aren't yet sure what you are running toward—even if you don't know where the safe haven is—you still have to run.

**Be afraid.** It is best to go into this with a little bit of fear. After all, life and death are being set before you. But don't just fear your addiction. Have a bigger fear. Be afraid of YOU.

You are tuned to folly's frequency. You are programmed to hear the lies and believe them.

Though you can see the disaster of addiction when you are away from it, as soon as you get close, it starts to look good again.

You think you can manage life on your own.

Though independence is impossible, you prefer the myth of independence to living under the God who created you.

**?** What are some reasons why you should be afraid of YOU?

Welcome to the path of wisdom and hope. It is honest and clear. You have good reasons to look forward to traveling on it. ▼

## NOTES

▼Another reason people avoid Scripture is that it seems ancient and hard to understand. The passages mentioned here are immensely practical, which make them easier to engage. But you are taking small steps toward reading the most important sections of Scripture—the stories of Jesus in the New Testament. Scripture is very personal. It is not a series of self-help steps; it is God's autobiography.

▼The farther we are from the addictive object, the better we are able to hear truth. Addictions are loud. Get close to them, and you can't hear anything else. If you are leading a larger group, suggest that some members might still be deaf to the truth because the object of their addiction is so close and available. You could also ask how many are still walking randomly in the vicinity of their addictive object. Anyone who acknowledges that has just made a step away from his or her addiction.

▼Do you love your friends? Have you decided together on how you can pray for them? In other words, have they been able to ask for prayer, and have you been able to take those requests and anchor them to particular promises of God?

Are those who need extra help getting paired with someone who has practiced running from addiction?



**STEP 2:**

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Confess  
That You Are  
Double-Minded

## NOTES

**MAIN IDEA:** Observe your actions. They might reveal that you don't always *want* to change. You do your addiction because you like it. Maybe you want to change, but at the same time, you don't want to change. You are caught between wanting to *trust* God and wanting to *be* God. Acknowledge this, and you are walking in the right direction.

You are probably familiar with Twelve-Step programs. They begin with an acknowledgment of defeat: "We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable."<sup>1</sup>

Yet things are more complicated than that. A weird tension is in your heart. On one side, you feel powerless. Your world feels out of control, and you are sick of it. On the other side, you think that your addiction helps you manage your life so you have *more* control. That's why you hate it *and* you love it. You hate it and you *need* it. Your addiction is not the friend it once was because it has messed up your life. But think about it: you started it because you liked it. It did something for you. Who wants to give up something that works for them? ▼

Do you ever feel like you are in a tug-of-war?

Now add your fear that working through this book is only another opportunity to fail. Why make the effort when there is a risk that you will end up feeling even more like a failure? Better to give up now before you make the investment.

What a mess. No, it's more than that. What you have is a full-blown war! The crossroads at which you stand is not on a quaint country road. It is in a combat zone. One side wants everything to stay the same; the other wants change. One side wants death; the other wants life. One side wants to play God; the other wants to follow God. Your complicated heart can want it both ways, and it is tough to win any battles when you are playing both sides. Then the stalemate becomes an excuse to be hopeless and quit the fight altogether.

Quit the fight, and the addiction wins.

Ever been there?

Here is a question to ask yourself: Do you want to change? It is a tougher question than you think.

How can you tell if you *don't* want to change? First, if you are being honest with yourself, you already know it. Second, pay more attention to what you *do* than what you say. Even watch your imaginations—if you say you want to change but notice that you keep going back to your addiction, savoring it in your imagination or hiding and lying, your actions will show what you really love.

If a man says he loves his wife but pursues other women, he doesn't love his wife. His behavior tells the real story. A woman says she loves

▼ Addicts feel as though they are controlled by something else, and they are. Here again they are being gently introduced to the idea that addictions are not passive or inanimate (or abstract), but they actively pursue the addict. Without this, the freedom offered by the gospel will sound shallow and secondary.


1. *Alcoholics Anonymous* (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 1976).

her husband but indulges in fantasies of being married to other men. Her imaginations tell the real story.

Do you see the deeper reality here? When you want to change and don't want to change, the truth is you don't want to change. When you want both your spouse and someone else, you are rejecting your spouse.

You are very familiar with cravings. These cravings are more than physical desires; they also reveal what you desperately want. Who wants to give up something he or she craves? Your cravings have more of *you* in them than you realize. ▼

So start by taking a look at your resistance to change. Honesty and openness are the way of hope.

 Do you want to change? (Circle all that apply to you. Then add your own.) ▼

No, end of story. Does *anybody* really want to change?

No, because that means that somebody else wins. I can already hear the *I-told-you-so's*.

Yes, but I know myself well enough to realize that when someone gives me a law—"Don't use; don't indulge"—I suddenly have a strong urge to break that law.

Yes, but only when I don't have strong cravings.

Yes, but I don't know what I am going to do with the bad feelings.


Yes, but only because I am *supposed* to want to change.

Yes, but not if I really have to say good-bye to something that has become the center of my life. I want the right to visit occasionally.

Yes, but tomorrow, after I can say a fitting good-bye.

Yes, but only because I am embarrassed that I got caught; subtract the embarrassment and I don't see the need.

What other reasons do you have?

 *Why* don't you want to change?

I don't like to be told what I can and can't do.

I hate what I do, but I also love it.

I don't want to try and fail again.

I don't need to change.

My addiction has become like home for me—a comfortable routine.

No one likes to change.

What other reasons do you have?

▼ Do you see the repackaging of *cravings*? In the common language of addictions, cravings are strictly biological. Scripture allows you to see even more. Cravings are both biological *and* spiritual.

▼ You are still trying to create a culture where honesty is prized. These lists give permission to say difficult things.



## NOTES



Now consider the opposite question: *Why do* you want to change?

For my kids

For my wife

For myself

To restore my relationship with God

Because I am tired of the bad consequences

I don't know

That last question might seem out of place. Why worry about your reasons for changing? When you are desperate, any reason will do.

That's true, but here is why it's worth considering. While some of these reasons might work for a short time, they tend to fade away when cravings are strong. At those times you simply aren't thinking about your family or friends. You just feel like you need your addiction. That's why you need a more powerful motivation to change.

The more powerful reason, of course, is God. He is the King who tells us how to live. But forget about "ought" and "should" for a minute. You have plenty of practice avoiding what God says you ought to do and should do. The real reason God can deliver you is because he is the only one who is more beautiful than your addiction. So not only does he give you power and a reason to say no to your addiction; he also gives you a reason to say yes to something better, something more beautiful and life-giving.

Addictions complicate everything, including your relationship with God. If you are unsure about change, then you are double-minded about God. You know you need him, but you don't necessarily want him—at least not on his terms, which is total surrender. You might feel like he abandoned you in the past, so why would you suddenly switch to his side? To put it crassly, what has he done for you lately? ▼



How are you double-minded?

Walk carefully through this one. When you avoid God—and you have—you should be suspicious of your reasons for it. For example, you might notice a hint of anger toward him. Anger often feels absolutely sure of itself. Your attitude can look a little like finger-pointing. Pointing fingers at others and shifting blame is an old trick. Addicts can feel utterly miserable and ashamed but still point the finger at others. Other people aren't usually the real problem. ▼

So at least consider the possibility that God isn't the problem.

You might already think that this is too much God-talk. That's fine. Are you a skeptic? A doubter? That is not a problem. Just walk with humility, and be open at this point. ▼


▼ Again, this section is encouraging honesty while also helping your friends find words for their ambivalence.

▼ This paragraph is action-packed. You might want to pause and see how it speaks on behalf of your friends. If they respond that, yes, they are angry with God, you have taken an important step: you have identified critical matters of the heart. Other steps will address these issues later. You don't have to say everything at once.

▼ Since your group members know that you are "religious," they might feel less free to talk about their spiritual doubts. These questions help them voice their concerns about your method or the style of this book.

Remember, you believe all kinds of myths about God. You have stereotyped him; and when you stereotype someone, you don't really know that person. You *think* you do, but only when you actually meet the person and have an actual conversation do you begin to know him accurately.

Since you have been running from God, there is a good chance that you don't really know him.

 Start with a word association test. What words or images come to mind when you think about God? ▼

Where did you get these ideas?

Here is what God says about himself. This is a favorite way he sets himself apart from all other gods.

The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God,  
slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining  
love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.  
(Exodus 34:6–7)

Is this what came to your mind when you thought about God?

Here is another way he introduces himself.

“I live in a high and holy place,  
but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit,  
to revive the spirit of the lowly  
and to revive the heart of the contrite.” (Isaiah 57:15)

What god would ever pursue lowly outcasts? Only *The* God.

Did you notice the words *lowly* and *contrite*? If God really does come close to the humble and hurting, he must understand what life is like for you. This is especially important because only someone who really understands can help you. ▼

Lest you feel alone in your internal battle, consider what the apostle Paul had to say about his struggles:

I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being

▼ Can your group members state how their addiction is about God yet? If they can't, this exercise will seem like busy work. Just move on, and let this book come at the problem from other angles.

▼ There can be arrogance in addiction, but there is also shame and feeling laid low. If your friends are awake, they should hear God speaking directly to them in their “lowliness”—and they should be surprised.

## NOTES

I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.

(Romans 7:18–23)

Who would have thought that you find this in the Bible? You might not always delight in God's law, as Paul wrote, but you certainly can relate to the powerlessness: "What I do is not the good I want to do." God understands how and why you are stuck. That is why you need him.

While we're on the topic of God, it's time to attack the myth that you are too bad to be loved by God or to be forgiven for what you have done. God knows you in detail. Nothing you have done or thought is new to him. Here is the apostle Paul again:

Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

(1 Timothy 1:15–17) ▼

If anyone is too bad for God's grace, Paul says, he is the one. But God's patience is not like that of an ordinary person. His patience is such that all Paul can do in response is break out into a prayer of thanks and praise.

### TAKE ACTION

A wise person does something with all this. Here is what you can do. ▼

***Be surprised.*** If you respond to God with a ho-hum shrug, that's an indication that you might not be getting it. God's grace is astonishing! Shocking! Earth-shattering! In the Bible, those who caught a glimpse of him fell down on their knees and worshiped (Isaiah 6). Even though they knew him, they were still overwhelmed by his greatness, holiness, and beauty. So review the passages mentioned above. Think about them. Let yourself be amazed.

You can learn amazement. You just have to realize that every time you learn about God, you learn about someone who is not ordinary. ▼



Are you bored with this talk about God?

▼ Take your time. Let your friends establish the pace. This step could easily last more than one meeting.

▼ In the following action steps there is no specific encouragement to threaten dealers, pull computer plugs, or put all your money into a custodial account so you can't spend it. Those may be useful steps, but they won't last if they miss the step that is most important: all change goes through the knowledge of God.

▼ You are especially targeting the beauty and goodness of God here. He doesn't treat us as we deserve, and he runs after wayward children. Behind addictions is the conviction that God isn't good—or not as good as the addictive object. You are always on the lookout for opportunities to correct that lie.

What could keep you from being surprised and amazed?

**Be afraid.** You have more warrior potential than you think. If real war came to your town and bloodthirsty enemies were at your door, you might be surprised at how fierce you could become. If you had some lead time, you would be looking online to get your hands on an Uzi, grenade launcher, and bazooka. You can get tough if you have to: you need only the proper incentive.


“From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it.” (Matthew 11:12)

No mercy. The Kingdom of God is not for wimps but for the forceful. But don't be cocky or self-confident. Courage and fear can and should go together. Ask soldiers if they are ever afraid in the face of the enemy. Only a fool is unafraid in the midst of guerilla warfare. Your addiction is in cahoots with the formidable triumvirate of the world, your desires, and the devil. These are not to be trifled with. They should provoke fear.

Fear can control and paralyze. That is not the fear that you aspire to. Your fear is simply an acknowledgment that there is great danger.

When I am afraid,  
I will trust in you. (Psalm 56:3)

The problem is not that we can be afraid. The problem is where we turn when we are afraid.

 Are you afraid? ▼

How can you grow in a good kind of fear?

Hope is in all of this. If you were a zombie or a slave, there would be no point in telling you to fear an enemy and get ruthless. If you are hearing this, you are more alive than you think. You are stronger than you think. Only people with life and vigor are willing to go into battle.

**Run.** When the fight is lopsided against you—when you are in enemy territory and have strayed from your troop—it is wise to run for safety. That's not weakness; that's just good common sense.

 Where is the danger in your life?

How are you running away from it? ▼

**Hope.** One goal of this step is to acknowledge that you are double-minded. You prefer to linger with old enemies rather than run from

▼ It takes time to be afraid of sin. At this point, your friends may not have the gift of fear yet—but they can get it.

▼ Yes, this is a question that you read before. There is not a magical key that unlocks the mysteries of addiction. God's path is available to all and clear even to children. The challenge is to REMEMBER. So expect repetition.

## NOTES

them. So if, indeed, you are double-minded, admit the truth. It is only a small step, but it is an important one. In fact, it is a very hopeful one.



Can you see why acknowledging unattractive things about yourself is hopeful?

Can you identify other reasons to have hope?

**Learn more about the Lord.** There is no better time than now to know God better. The Scripture, of course, is where you will learn about him and hear his voice. Consider passages like Jeremiah 29:11–14 or Isaiah 40:9–31. As a way to keep focused, write what you find hopeful and helpful in Scripture.

If you are reading other parts of Scripture, look especially for how the passage tells you about God. ▼

**Pray.** The God of the universe has invited you into a conversation. He speaks first and last, but in the middle he asks you to speak to him. Yes, it can seem hard to speak to God, but that doesn't mean you are on the wrong path—even the disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray. Don't let the challenge stop you.

Prayer is many things—thanks, praise, worship, and requests. In its most basic form, it is simply saying, “Help.”

You will find that prayer—communication—is essential to God's way of bringing change in your life. Without it, you might be able to stay away from an addiction, but you won't be transformed. It's like tuning up a broken engine when the real way to fix the car is to give it a total overhaul. New engine. The works.

So don't settle for talking *about* God. Granted, you are feeling a little ashamed because he knows you inside and out. But he knows *everyone* inside and out, and no human life is pretty.

Don't think that he is like a human being. Human beings do not quickly forgive. They don't get overjoyed about taking runaways back; they don't like talking to people who have hated them in the past. But God is not like his creatures. He is holy, and part of what that means is that he genuinely enjoys those who turn humbly to him.

You can speak to God in your own words. If you need help, here is a start:

Father, I want to talk with you not because I am worthy, but because you are forgiving. Please forgive me for the mess I've made. My heart is divided, and I don't want it to be. I admit that I need help—lots of help. I can't live a wise life—the life I was intended to live as your child—on my own. I need you. ▼

Are you feeling more awake? ▼

▼ It is natural to bring questions to Scripture. The most important one is, “Lord, who are you?”

▼ In a group, prayer will take an increasingly important place. It will encourage humility because you are asking for help. It will produce hope because you are going to the One who promises to hear and act.

▼ Be sure to ask yourself this question. Isn't it true that we can all fall asleep? How many sermons have you heard? Of those sermons, how many did you really hear? The addict is no different than anyone else. We all need to be roused from our spiritual slumber.