
INSIGHT INTO

ADDICTION

WAVERLEY ABBEY INSIGHT SERIES



INSIGHT INTO
ADDICTION

Bill Radmall

Foreword by Steve Motyer



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WAVERLEY ABBEY INSIGHT SERIES

The Waverley Abbey Insight Series has been developed in response to the great need to help people understand and face some key issues that many of us struggle with today. CWR's ministry spans teaching, training and publishing, and this series draws on all of these areas of ministry.

Sourced from material first presented on Insight Days by CWR at their base, Waverley Abbey House, presenters and authors have worked in close co-operation to bring this series together, offering clear insight, teaching and help on a broad range of subjects and issues. Bringing biblical understanding and godly insight, these books are written both for those who help others and those who face these issues themselves.

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FOREWORD

It was with great delight and anticipation that we welcomed Bill Radmall onto the Theology and Counselling team at London School of Theology, in September 2007. Bill works for CWR, but under the partnership arrangement between CWR and London School of Theology (under which our Theology and Counselling course is run), Bill spends most of his time with us in Northwood, training and caring for our students.

Bill's working life as a psychotherapist has led him to specialise in several areas, and one of these is addiction. And as a pastor, Bill has a deep passion to understand how the resources of the gospel can become real for people in the grip of psychological and emotional disorders, like addictions. Here, in this little book, we meet the fruit of Bill's expertise in both areas – both as a psychological therapist of long experience, and as a theologian and minister.

Addictions of many sorts are becoming one of the chief troubles of our age, especially with the easy access to pornography and gambling provided by the internet. For this reason, Bill focuses on these two areas in this Insight book. Many churches and pastors are discovering terrible and growing areas of need among their people.

In fact, many pastors are themselves being pulled into the dreadful abyss of addiction to internet pornography, driven by the stress, loneliness and 'performance anxiety' of their position.

In this most helpful book – full of deeply wise insight between its slim covers – Bill reveals not only the psychological and emotional dynamic of addiction, but also shows how directly the gospel offers hope and a 'new story' for addicts. Let's not treat

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addicts and addiction as ‘out there’, a breed apart, people with problems not felt by ‘real Christians’. We are all implicated, as Bill shows, because addiction reveals to us what the essence of sin really is – and we are all sinners in need of God’s love.

My prayer is that this little book will bring healing and light to many – or at least a step along the road in that direction. Counsellors will be encouraged and stretched by it, pastors enlightened, and people in the grip of addiction will find themselves understood here, and maybe helped along the road to recovery. And my prayer is also that we’ll see further writing of this sort from Bill in the years ahead – we need it!

Steve Motyer
Theology and Counselling Course Leader,
London School of Theology
January 2009

INTRODUCTION

The term 'addiction' is used a lot. A person can become addicted to anything from shopping to sex, from narcotics to gambling online. Our culture provides a vast array of choice in the supermarket of addiction. This is not just a phenomenon that affects a small peripheral group of those who meet in musty church halls to declare their addictive behaviour to each other. Nor is this something that just affects those pop stars and celebrities we see falling over in the street or going into rehab yet again. No, this is also about the parish priest who is up until 4am feeding on the pornographic images on his computer screen. This is about the respectable housewife who has become addicted to online gambling and is terrified her husband will discover that she has spent the family's savings on her compulsive addiction. In other words, addiction is rife in our society.

Of course, there is a continuum of addiction; some dabble at the edges, and some are increasingly controlled and even destroyed by it.

Mark Stibbe¹ has pointed out that our society provides a rich breeding ground for addiction, with its avoidance of pain and suffering. There is a new commandment in Western society: 'Thou shalt not suffer or even feel a bit uncomfortable.' There is an institutional denial and even fear of pain which links with a non-acceptance of ageing, death and suffering. Other factors, such as the media and advertising, reinforce this process with quick-fix solutions to everything from debt to facial wrinkles. I think Jung was right when he said that much neurotic suffering is due to the avoidance of legitimate pain.² Our culture is not good at engaging with pain. The common response is to flood

it with medication, entertainment, drugs, sex or any number of euphoric experiences.

Now, of course, there is nothing new under the sun! I will outline in this book how the issues that drive addiction go all the way back to the start of humanity. However, the availability of mood-altering experiences and substances is now at a level that has never been known before. I will focus particularly on addiction to pornography and gambling. One reason for this is that since the birth of the Internet, both these activities can now be entered into without ever leaving the house. Moreover, I believe the Internet with its almost unlimited boundaries can draw people into addiction at a rate and depth far greater than previously seen. I agree with those who describe Internet pornography as the crack cocaine of sex addiction.

I hope that *Insight into Addiction* will provide a resource for those struggling with an addiction as well as those trying to help them. It is not primarily for the experts, although I hope some of the connections I make in the book will be of interest. I have structured it in four parts, Part 1 exploring the journey into addiction – the journey into slavery. We shall see the pain of physical or emotional deprivation lies at the root. This part will include reference to different approaches to the issues both from a spiritual as well as psychological perspective.

In Part 2, we will explore the nature of addiction, beginning with links between the nature of slavery in a foreign land and the imprisoning effects of addiction. Here I have particularly focused on the growing issues of addiction to gambling and sex addiction, in particular porn on the Internet. I have chosen to focus on these areas as they are becoming increasingly prevalent in contemporary society. In looking at these forms of addiction

INTRODUCTION

we will also encounter the key components of all addictions.

Part 3 uses the language of exodus to begin exploring the difficult journey out of addiction towards freedom and the occupying of one's own 'homeland'. Here there is some discussion about how important it is to recover healthy relationships, as well as the neurology of freedom and reviewing the cycle of red flags, reflex, ritual and release and consequence. I have included in this part issues of accountability as well as looking at the importance of a church community that is hospitable rather than fearful in its dealings with addiction.

Part 4 continues this theme of recovery using the motif of 'occupying the land'. Here I will pick up on the theme of telling new stories of truth as opposed to the thoughts and beliefs that can become strongholds of fear and negativity. A person struggling with addiction can make the journey from their old narrative about themselves to a new lived story, and I will use Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well in the Gospel of John to explore how new narratives that enable freedom from addiction can be used.

I am informed in my writing by an interest in a narrative approach to recovery and healing. Put simply, this refers to an understanding of how we can often be controlled, even imprisoned, by oppressive stories of failure and hopelessness; to come out of this and into freedom we need stories of hope, possibility and change. I write this on the day that a new president is elected in the United States of America. On a day like today, it certainly feels like the story of hope has opened up the possibility for real change.

I take a Christian approach to the fundamental change needed so that the story of addiction in an individual's life can become the

story of freedom. In dying on the cross, Jesus opened up a way for humanity to come to the Father and be reconciled to Him. This is the most fundamental exodus, a journey from death and sin to hope and freedom. Moreover, as Alcoholics Anonymous has long known, this kind of recovery is not based on humankind's solutions. In fact, coming up with purely human-based solutions is often part of the problem in addiction! One of the keys to freedom is a recognition that *we can't save ourselves*. We have always stood in need of a Saviour!

NOTE: At the end of each chapter, there are some ideas for reflective thought, and a prayer. These have been designed for the reader who wants to work through issues of addiction in their own life, but could be adapted to be used when helping someone else, either in a professional capacity or as a friend or accountability partner.

Bill Radmall
December 2008

NOTES

- 1 Mark Stibbe, *O Brave New Church: Rescuing the Addictive Culture* (London: DLT, 1995).
- 2 C. Jung, *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).



PART 1:
**THE JOURNEY
INTO SLAVERY**

CHAPTER 1

AT THE ROOT

Before we begin to look at the descent into addiction, let us look at the roots of the whole issue – worth a chapter of its own, however short. What are the roots of addiction? The answer can be found in one word: *deprivation*.

These roots can best be understood by looking at them from a biblical, Christian and psychological perspective. Indeed, I do not think we can properly begin to understand the complexity of addiction without taking the integrated approach.

SLAVERY

In the book of Genesis in the Old Testament, we see that the Israelites went to a place that was not their own land because they were starving in the land of their parents.

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When Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt, he said ... 'Go down there and buy some for us, so that we may live and not die.'
(Gen. 42:1-2)

The Israelites were filled with fear, faced with the real prospect of being annihilated. There must have been a moment when people realised that they had run out of options, and terror really struck them. They were going to be deprived of the most basic of human needs, the need for food. And there, I believe, is the key word: *deprived*.

For the Israelites, this deprivation was the physical drying up of their food supply but deprivation is so much more than physical deprivation. It would have seemed that the source of life had left them naked and exposed to imminent death, so the Israelites sought out help from neighbouring Egypt.

They eventually moved off their own land and into Egypt, but although under Joseph this was a land of provision, it became a place of slavery.

I believe that at the root of addiction is this same profound sense of abandonment and deprivation. This undermines the three fundamental needs of any human being: security, self-esteem and significance. All these become threatened by the famine in the land. The response of the Israelites is probably the same one we would have in similar circumstances – to start looking around for alternative sources of food, of life. Surely anything is better than nothing! This impulse often lies at the heart of a person's descent into addiction; whatever seems to provide that sense of security, self-esteem and significance can become the drug of choice for the individual addict.

ACTIVITY

Think about a time when you have witnessed real deprivation, even if this is through the media. Write down three words that express, for you, the feelings you experienced.

REFLECTION

- In this first, short, chapter we have discovered that the roots of addiction are to be found in deprivation. The *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* describes the word ‘deprivation’ as ‘the damaging lack of basic material benefits’ and ‘the lack or denial of something considered essential’.¹ What are the images in your own mind when you think about this whole issue – Third World famine, poverty, want, or something closer to home?
- Why do you think deprivation can result in sheer terror?
- ‘Anything is better than nothing’. Is it? Why/why not?

PRAYER

Lord God, as I start this journey into learning about addiction and freedom, please guide, comfort and be with me. In Jesus’ precious name I pray. Amen.

NOTE

- 1 *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).