



# Substance Abuse Prevention

SUNDAY

“Brothers and sisters, if someone is overtaken in any wrongdoing, you who are spiritual, restore such a person with a gentle spirit, watching out for yourselves so that you also won’t be tempted. Carry one another’s burdens; in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”

GALATIANS 6:1-2, CSB



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# 4 Ways My Pastor Counseled Me Through Drug Addiction

BY MATTHEW RICHARDSON

I was addicted to drugs at 18 years old. I started developing an addiction at 14 and had a daily habit by 15. When I was 18, God opened my eyes to his saving grace.

Soon after this, while still battling drug dependence, I hit a neighbor's car. The next day he came to ask me about it. What could have been the start of a bumpy relationship became the beginning of a great friendship. He became my pastor and the one I sought for help during my addiction. He counseled me in four important ways:

## 1. A GOSPEL HOPE

My pastor was gripped by the truth of Romans 1:16. He knew that faith in Christ brings the new power of salvation and with it the power of eventual recovery. While I knew Christ, I still needed to "lay aside the old self." My pastor taught what it meant to be a new man in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17), reminding me that because Christ went to the cross for me, I can come to him at the cross for relief and freedom (Col. 1:13-14).

## 2. A GOSPEL RESPONSE

How do we respond when we fall? This was important for me. I knew how to fall

back into sin, but my pastor taught me how to fall into the gracious, restorative arms of a loving Father. I learned to not be surprised or feel the need to seclude myself when I sinned. Once I recognized that I am "more sinful and flawed" than I ever dared believe, this brought a readiness for repentance.

## 3. AVOID TRIGGERS

Before I became a believer, I had built my life around drugs. My pastor started asking me what tempted or triggered me, and would help me strategically think through ways to avoid them. This meant an entire lifestyle change for me: new friends, new job, new place to live, etc.

## 4. A GOSPEL COMMUNITY

My pastor taught me the value of humility, honesty, and the necessity to confess my sins to fellow believers (James 5:16). There were many times I felt particularly allured to drugs but had fellow Christian brothers I could run to instead.

Though we may not experience full recovery or victory in this life, Christ's resurrection and coming return promise that we will one day be made new and morally pure.

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