

“In order to receive help from Christ, we must realize our need. We must have a true knowledge of ourselves. It is only he who knows himself to be a sinner that Christ can save. Only as we see our utter helplessness and renounce all self-trust, shall we lay hold on divine power.” Ministry of Healing, p. 455.

Maybe you know someone who would like help themselves and minister to others who are held by the chains of addiction. “Intemperance of every kind is taking the world captive, and those who are true educators at this time, those who instruct along the lines of self-denial and self-sacrifice, will have their reward. Now is our time, now is our opportunity, to do a blessed work.” Medical Ministry, p. 25.

To assist in unlocking the chains of unhealthy habits, church leaders, pastors, educators, church members, community friends, counselors, health professionals, educators and students, will be attending a Conference on Addictions Ministry, July 12-15, 2007 at Andrews University, Berrien Spring, Michigan. This event is sponsored by the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists’ Health Ministry and Ministerial Departments and Office of Education. You can be a participant in this opportunity to build your ministry skills as you help those who are struggling with addictions in your church and community.

To register for the Addictions Ministry Conference call Plusline at 800-732-7587 or go to: www.plusline.org and click on ‘Event Registration.’ The Addictions Ministry Conference will be the first event on that list. We hope you will be able to join us for this opportunity to learn more about this very important ministry.

The above article is written by Ray Nelson, MDiv, MSPH, Pastor and Health Educator, Brooklyn and Glen Burnie, Maryland Seventh-day Adventist Churches, Chesapeake Conference Health Ministries Director, Adventist Regeneration Ministries Coordinator for the North American Division

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PATIENT RUNNERS

by Ray Nelson, MDiv, MSPH

The concept of running with patience at first seems like an oxymoron (joining two contradictory words or ideas). However, these two seemingly opposite concepts are linked in Hebrews 12:1, “...let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.” The thought of living this life with patience is one that frightens many of us. We expect children to be impatient. We hope that as adults we have outgrown the lack of patience. Yet, even as adults we still, at times, think and feel as a child and our impatience gets in the way of grasping and understanding the goal of life.

The more abundant life (John 10:10) that Jesus offers is not just the destination – the prize at the end of life. Rather He offers the joy of this life here and now. It is sad that in running the race we often lack patience. Sometimes, we like the person who prayed for patience and then quickly added “and hurry up about it.” The character defects and weaknesses that so often limit the ability to live the abundant life, often lead to impatience with oneself. This may lead us to compare ourselves with others who are apparently living a wonderful, Christian life without all the problems that so often lead to frustration. Negative feelings resulting from not being able to meet the self-imposed goals and expectations of others too often lead addictive behaviors.



The addiction may take the form of a substance (food, coffee, alcohol, cigarettes, drugs, and other mood altering products) which will help us feel better about ourselves or mask the negative feelings we may be experiencing at the moment. Some other addictive behaviors might be related to work, shopping, money, sex, television, gossip, and even religion. Something good when used to excess or to avoid responsibly looking at our true selves can indeed be considered an addiction.



Repetition of any behavior, whether good or bad, leads to a habit. If I always do what I've always done, I'll always get what I always got. Some habits or customs may be good. Other habits may be bad and separate us from God and spiritual growth.

If I keep repeating addictive behaviors to escape from the negative feelings related to my character defects and mental obsessions and the associated guilt, shame, and blame, I will fail to develop the patience I need to successfully run the race set before me. Addictions keep us from examining and laying aside the weight that slows our running. Some of the "weights" that we carry might be anger, intolerance, being judgmental, remorse, low self-image, being irresponsible, and worry.

The biggest problem with addictions is that they become 'higher powers' in our lives. They take the place that rightfully belongs only to God. These idols violate the words of the LORD God in the first of the Ten Commandments – "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3).

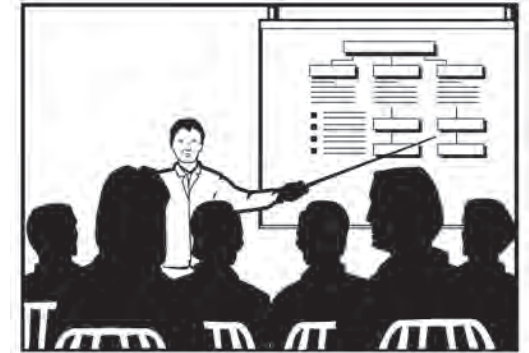
Perhaps you are beginning to consider problems with addictions to be a challenge for you and not just somebody else. In case you are not yet convinced, the following thoughts from Gerald May, M.D. in his book *Addiction & Grace* may persuade you. "The same processes that are responsible for addiction to alcohol and narcotics are also responsible for addiction to ideas, work, relationships, power, moods, fantasies and an endless variety of other things. We are all addicts in every sense of the word."

The chains that bind us may well be the addictions/besetting sins that hold us captive. In Romans 7:7-25, Paul the well-known early Christian missionary, describes his struggle with doing what he does not want to do and not doing what he wants to do. He refers to the conflict as a 'war'. His plea follows, "Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin? Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord. So you see how it is: In my mind I really want to obey God's law, but because of my sinful nature I am a slave to sin." Romans 7:24-25 *New Living Translation*

There is help available for recovering from addictions through professional counseling and rehabilitation programs. However, these are usually quite expensive. In addition, many 12-Step Recovery

Groups (Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Overeaters Anonymous,...) are available to help with almost every addiction known to humanity. As beneficial as these are for so many, we perhaps forget that Jesus Christ, the Highest Power is

ready and willing to do for us what we can not do ourselves. This means He can deliver us from the chains of addictions/sins that so easily beset us.



Freedom to Live
Addictions Conference
July 12-15, 2007
at Andrews University
800-732-7587 • www.plusline.org/events.php