

Spiritual Care for Alcoholics, Addicts, and Their Families



A CRC webinar presented by
Rev. Thomas A. Kragt
on May 13, 2015

Alcohol/Drug Dependency (alcoholism/addiction)

Alcoholism or alcohol dependence is defined by the American Medical Association (AMA) as "a primary, chronic disease with genetic, psychosocial, and environmental factors influencing its development and manifestations."

An addictive disease in which the sufferer is physically and/or psychologically dependent on alcohol/drugs. Because of the addictive nature of alcohol/drugs, the alcoholic/addict loses control over his or her drinking behavior.

Alcoholism/Addiction is a Disease:

- **Primary**
- **Chronic, Progressive, and Fatal**
- **Marked by: Impaired Control, Spirituality, and Relationships, Preoccupation, Adverse Consequences, and Denial**

Alcohol/Drug Dependency

- **Alcohol/Drugs become a major focus for the person's behavior and thinking.**
- **The person loses the ability to make sober choices over the use of alcoholic beverages.**
- **The loss of control brings harm to the person's physical, emotional, spiritual, and social well-being. With this loss of freedom to choose, alcohol dependency develops into a life-threatening addiction.**

“Alcoholism is an allergy.”

“We believe, and so suggested a few years ago, that the action of alcohol on these chronic alcoholics is a manifestation of an allergy; that the phenomenon of craving is limited to this class and never occurs in the average temperate drinker. These allergic types can never safely use alcohol in any form at all;.....”

Alcoholics Anonymous, page xxvi

What Causes Alcoholism/Addiction?

- **Genetic**
- **Psychological/Social/Spiritual**
- **Exposure**

Strong genetic component:

- **Type 1 - passed on from either mother or father, symptoms occur later in life**
- **Type 2 - passed on only from father to son, symptoms begin in teens**

Warning Signs & Symptoms

- **Drinking for the effect of the chemical itself; purposely using the drug alone to feel better.**
- **Amnesia/Blackouts**
- **Preoccupation with alcohol and drugs**
- **Sneaking drinks; using drugs alone**
- **Gulping first drinks or drugs to get the effects as rapidly as possible**

Warning Signs & Symptoms

- **Loss of control**
- **Increase in tolerance; needing more to get the same effect**
- **Family, employment, and legal problems occur.**
- **Continued use in spite of harmful consequences**

Denial/Self-Deception



- **As the alcoholic/addict loses control over drinking and using, denial begins to fuel the disease of addiction.**
- **The alcoholic/addict rarely sees himself or herself as the source of the problem. They blame other people or circumstances for problems caused by the addiction.**
- **Problems then become the reason using is imperative. Family members are very often in denial of the problem as well.**

The Damage of Alcoholism/Addiction

- Spirituality
- Relationships
- Mental/Physical
- Families
- Employment
- Social and Legal



Toxic Spirituality

Spirituality is the experience of being connected deeply with ourselves, others, and God. The focus of addiction is on experiences and connection with the drug. The drug then mediates our experiences and connectedness with our self, others, and most profoundly God.



The spiritual destruction experienced is a downward spiral where the addicts loses themselves, connection with God, and others. Thus addiction is really a spiritual disease that can only be cured by a spiritual program of recovery.

Essentials for Healing

- (ASAM) (ABAM) certification for physicians
- Therapeutic (*Addiction*)
- 12 Step Communities (*AA, NA, Alanon, GA*)
- God connection (*Warning – no spiritual bypass*)

Factors that contribute to the success of 12 step programs

- They reflect what the church is supposed to be
- Significance of identification- one alcoholic relating to another. Isolation kills, community heals.
- The 12 Steps are essential to repairing the spiritual, psychological, and social damage of addiction.
- No diagnosis or advice giving in the group

- 12 step groups exercise patience in dealing with someone new to the group
- Have seasoned sponsors available for consultation
- See the necessity of total honesty about one's life, use, behavior, attitudes.
- Are capable of speaking truth while demonstrating unconditional acceptance
- Help Christians avoid a spiritual by-pass

Welcome to
ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS



- Acceptance becomes part of the antidote for the stigma and shame the alcoholic feels.
- Group members & sponsors are available for anyone who is in need any time of the day or night.
- Freedom in shaping a spirituality that meets the needs of the person without restrictions or reservations.

The 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

Somehow, being alone with God doesn't seem as embarrassing as facing up to another person. Until we actually sit down and talk aloud about we have so long hidden, our willingness to clean house is largely theoretical. When we are honest with another person, it confirms that we have been honest with God.

*Bill Wilson
Page 17 As Bill Sees It*

Going it alone in spiritual matters is dangerous. How many times have we heard will-intentioned people claim the guidance of God when it was plain that they were mistaken? Lacking both practice and humility, they had deluded themselves and so were able to justify the most arrant nonsense on the ground that this was what God had told them.

*Bill Wilson
Page 274 As Bill Sees It*



- 7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.**
- 8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.**
- 9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.**
- 10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.**
- 11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.**
- 12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.**

The Church and Alcoholism



The Church?

- Many times Alcoholics/Addicts find only judgment or attempts to help them that have failed in church
- Many pastors and counselors lack understanding of addiction to alcohol and other drugs.
- The percentage of America's pastors who are engaged in pastoral counseling and have any training at all in addiction is very small.
- More than two-thirds of the issues pastors and counselors deal with in counseling have roots in addiction.

Pastors and Counselors

- Many pastors and counselors lack understanding of addiction to alcohol and other drugs.
- The percentage of America's pastors who are engaged in pastoral counseling and have any training at all in addiction is very small.
- Many of the issues they deal with in counseling have roots in addiction.

Approaches to Recovery Ministry

- Only Jesus can fix you so pray about it!
- Christian Replacement of AA
- Provide a place for AA, NA, Al-Anon and other 12 Step Groups
- Integration (Reformed)

Attribution for images and illustrations used in this presentation:

Slide #10 - Pixabay

Slide #11 - Pixabay

Slide #13 - Pixabay

Slide #17 - photo courtesy of wikiHow - www.wikihow.com/Get-Through-Your-First-Alcoholics-Anonymous-Meeting

Slide #19 - photo courtesy of Alkies.org - <http://alkies.org/aa-history-in-pictures/original-painting-of-bill-w-and-dr-bob/>

Slide #21 - photo courtesy of Peter – <https://www.flickr.com/photos/12023825@N04/2898021822>

National Association for Christian Recovery

www.nacr.org

- **Resources**
- **Leadership Training**
- **Consulting**

Spiritual Care for Alcoholics, Addicts, and Their Families



Questions and Answers

Contact

Rev. Thomas A. Kragt, BA, M.Div.
Minister of Congregational Life & Recovery
EverGreen Ministries CRC, Hudsonville, MI
tom@egm.org 616-669-7700