

Relapse Prevention

Mark Shaw

Introduction: Esau, a Picture of a Relapse in Gen. 25:29-34

I. Relapse Defined

A. Relapse in the clinical world: Someone who has attained/achieved a significant period of sobriety and returns back to the addictive pleasure has relapsed

1. World's idea is _____
2. Bible is _____

Hebrews 11:6 *And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.*

B. Biblically, a relapse is a _____ to return to enslavement. 2 Peter 2:22 *What the true proverb says has happened to them: "The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire."*

1. A relapse...
 - never happens by accident
 - always displeases God
 - often hurts others, too. Does NOT occur in isolation
 - is prompted by failing to flee from the devil

C. Worldly terms associated with relapse

1. Warning signs and Triggers
2. Relapse prevention strategies

D. Biblical terms better used with counselees

1. _____ to sin
2. _____ your heart (Prov. 4:20-23)

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E. Homework Examples

1. List temptations: people, places, things. Make a list of put-on alternatives
2. Prayer of Ephesians in 1:15-23 asks for 3 things:
 - v.17 spirit of wisdom & revelation to know Him better
 - v.18 hope through His enlightenment
 - v.19 know His power in us is stronger than hurricanes and blizzards

F. Counseling Questions

1. What is it about your drug of choice that you enjoy?
2. What is your weak point in a temptation?

G. Gospel Emphasis Point

1. Knowing God to learn to trust Him (Prov. 3:5-8)
2. The nature of our hearts and the nature of Christ
3. Teach difference between conviction and condemnation

II. Relationships

A. Relapses always demonstrate...

- 1....a break in intimate fellowship. (Gal. 5:16-17)
2. ...a lack of love for God in that moment of sin. (John 14:15)
3. ...a reliance upon self rather than Christ. (Prov. 3:5-8)
4. ...a relational disconnection. (Prov. 18:1)

B. _____ God

1. We don't trust who we don't know
2. Special _____ of Him from the Word

C. Homework: Thankful lists, Proverb of the Day

D. Counseling Question: Can you see His redemptive power in your life despite some bad decisions you have made?

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E. Gospel Point of Emphasis: Emmanuel God with us

1. Knowing others intimately
2. Some people mistakenly think that once you become a Christian sin is no longer a problem but we need community to help us fight sin. (1 Thess. 5:7-11)
3. Accountability is good. _____ to spiritual authority is better. (Eph. 5:21)
4. Transparency. No hiding, deceit, or half-truths

F. Homework Examples

1. Listen online to Faith Lafayette's sermon 1/13/14 entitled *Why Should I Care About Building Friendships?* www.faithlafayette.org
2. Read Cross Talking: A Daily Gospel with a friend and discuss it twice weekly.

G. Counseling Questions: What is eternal in your life? Who speaks the truth in love to you? When was the last time you heard the truth in love? When was the last time you spoke the truth in love to someone else?

III. Identifying Enemies

A. Three _____: Satan, the world's system, and our own flesh. Your most difficult opponent is your flesh (self)

B. Examples of _____

1. "I can do it just one time."
2. "I won't have any consequences."
3. "I have to do this. It's the way I am."
4. "I'll hide it...cover it."
5. "This will make me happy."
6. We want to root out the self-deception of the sin of trusting in oneself more than trusting in Christ and His Word.

C. Trusting God is the key issue. (Prov. 3:5-8)

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IV. How to Fight Temptations or “Triggers”

- A. _____ remind us that we are finite, limited, and dependent upon God for our sustenance
- B. _____ appetites cause us to desire to worship something or someone
- C. _____ are legitimate, diagnostic, and physical phenomena that come from the excessive fulfilling of natural appetites
- D. _____ component of addiction

1. Addicts DO need detox
2. But once they are detoxed the flesh and its lusts are the problems the biblical counselor CAN and SHOULD address
3. God’s grace empowers us to overcome the addictive tendencies of our hearts

E. Passages Addressing the Heart of Idolatry

1. Prov. 23:29-35; Eph. 5:18-21; Eph. 4:17-24
2. Isaiah 44:9-20
 - Tools crafted by idolater, designed to please self
 - Addictions are not the root issue, just tools
3. Ezekiel 14:1-11
 - Blinded by idolatry
 - God is relational and wants to be reconciled to His people
4. Gal. 5:16-17
 - Cannot walk by the Spirit and gratify the flesh
 - War inside; make a list of competing desires in your heart

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V. Practical Applications

A. More Homework

1. Build walls of protection to practice self-control. Proverbs 25:28
2. Read Lot's progression into sin from Gen. 12-19 (looked, set up tent, and in the gate of the city)
3. Complete *Relapse: Biblical Prevention Strategies* workbook
4. Bible study on Rom. 6:6-8 to understand new identity
5. The "D" List¹ (B. Aucoin and H. Starkweather) Genesis 3 applied to one's own struggles
 - a. "Deceit" in v. 1. What ideas tricked you? What lies did you believe?
 - b. "Doubt" in v. 1. What doubt did you have when you took those pills?
 - c. "Distortion" of God's Word in vv. 2-3. How did you twist God's Word?
 - d. "Denial of God's Word" in v. 4. In what ways did you suppress the truth?
 - e. "Denunciation of God" in v. 5. How did you think you were equal to God?
 - f. "Dwelling on the Lie" in v. 6. How did you 'romance' it?
 - g. "Disobedience" in v. 9. What did you do wrong?
 - h. "Disguise" in v. 10. How did you try to hide your sin?
 - i. "Disgrace" in vv. 8-19. What consequences resulted?

¹ Pastor Brent Aucoin at Faith Church in Lafayette, IN, developed this list and it has been adapted for use at VOH. Truth in Love Ministries www.histruthinlove.org (205) 910-0085
The Addiction Connection www.theaddictionconnection.org

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B. Counseling Interactions

1. Confront un-biblical language that points counselee away from Christ
2. Listen for passive voice and confront it— “We fell out of love.” OR Exodus 32:24— Aaron said to Moses: “So I said to them, ‘Let any who have gold take it off.’ So they gave it to me, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf.” Restated: “We made an idol.”
3. Use biblical terms with counselees like “pride” rather than “ego” and “drunkenness” rather than “alcoholism”
4. Teach the power of habits as God’s gift
 - a. Habits can be in thoughts, words, and actions
 - b. Habits are not broken but replaced
5. Listen for 5 Christ-like marks of a transforming addict
 - a. Be Humble (not entitled or prideful)
 - b. Be Giving (not a consumer or selfish)
 - c. Be Responsible/Obedient (not a victim, blame shifting)
 - d. Be Grateful (not perishing or despairing)
 - e. Be Submissive (not rebellious)
6. Repentance. Heb. 12:15-17; Rom. 2:4

Recommended Resources

Shaw, Mark. *Addiction-Proof Parenting: Biblical Prevention Strategies*. Bemidji, MN: Focus Publishing, 2010.
Shaw, Mark. *Divine Intervention: Hope and Help for Families of Addicts*. Bemidji, MN: Focus Publishing, 2008.
Shaw, Mark. *The Heart of Addiction: A Biblical Perspective*. Bemidji, MN: Focus Publishing, 2008. With *The Heart of Addiction Workbook* and *The Heart of Addiction Leader’s Guide*. 2013.
Shaw, Mark. *Relapse: Biblical Prevention Strategies*. Bemidji, MN: Focus Publishing, 2011.
Shaw, Mark. *Cross Talking: A Daily Gospel for Transforming Addicts*. Bemidji, MN: Focus Publishing, 2008.

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