

THE BIBLE

AND

LIFE-CONTROLLING ISSUES



GARY BLACKARD

Created by Our Daily Bread Ministries
in Partnership with Adult & Teen Challenge

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introduction

The Bible and Life-Controlling Issues

What does the Bible have to say about life-controlling issues? Whether it's a substance or behavioral addiction, we've all encountered someone whose struggle with an issue that controlled their life—and maybe that someone was us. In this booklet produced in collaboration with Adult Teen Challenge, Gary Blackard unpacks what the Bible has to say about addiction and what we can, through the power of God's Spirit within us, do about it.

by Gary Blackard

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INTERIOR IMAGES: (p.1) Elena Kalinicheva and elenabsl via Shutterstock; (p.3) elenabsl via Shutterstock; (p.7) elenabsl via Shutterstock; (p.11) Vectorfair via Shutterstock; (p.23) Sylverarts Vectors via Shutterstock; (p.29) Na_Studio via Shutterstock

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Printed in USA



one

Introduction

There are few locations in the world with the awe-inspiring immensity and beauty of Yosemite, located in the Sierra Nevada mountains in California. If you have ever walked its valley, you know what it's like to look up thousands of feet at the faces of Half Dome or El Capitan, granite formations standing as guardians over a valley filled with waterfalls, meadows, and the Merced River.

But even Yosemite doesn't compare to the Garden of Eden, God's original creation for Adam and Eve to thrive in. Imagine: it was perfect, for sin had not entered the world yet. Adam was told to take care of the Garden (GENESIS 2:15), including the animals with

whom he had direct interaction. God walked in the Garden with them. Now keep imagining: step by step, viewing colors and shapes, hearing the songs of birds, all while walking alongside the Creator of everything.

But it did not last. The enemy, seeking to destroy God's plan, tempted Adam and Eve, and sin entered the world. The event is known theologically as the Fall of man. With this, everything changed. Adam's children faced their own temptation. After learning that his younger brother was praised for a gift brought to God, Cain grew envious. That envy quickly turned into a controlling anger, and Cain murdered his brother. Death, disease, painful work, envy, and greed became a part of the human experience, all the result of Adam's original sin. Humanity's fall into sinfulness caused creation to slowly wither, ever groaning for its redemption by Christ.

The apostle Paul tells us that we are not ignorant of Satan's devices (2 CORINTHIANS 2:11). Satan's lies and deception are nothing new. He exploits our fallen nature, using our desires, wants, and ignorance to tempt, manipulate, and destroy our souls. His goal is to distract, discourage, and prevent us from turning to Christ. When we adopt sinful behaviors and addictions, we play into his hands. These sinful actions often develop into life-controlling issues much like Cain's anger. Once these behaviors become habitual, they not only impact the individual engaging in them, but also everyone around them. This can lead to generational consequences. This is not a new tactic of the enemy, but a powerful one, nonetheless.

Kelsey grew up in the perfect middle-class family—or so it seemed. Exposure to physical and emotional abuse from both parents led Kelsey to drink excessively and then “graduate” to heroin and meth. Her father left the family when she was ten. Her alcoholic mother allowed Kelsey to begin drinking at the age of eleven. As men came in and out of the house, Kelsey was raped by five of them. Despite the alcohol and substance use disorder that now had control of her, she graduated high school, married, and had three beautiful daughters. The loss of her grandmother (her one stable family relationship) caused a mental breakdown, leading to multiple stays in psychiatric facilities, involvement in prostitution, and homelessness. She lost her family as well. No hope, endless pain, and suffering.

However, her story did not end there. Kelsey entered a women’s program run by Adult & Teen Challenge (a Christ-centered recovery ministry founded in 1958), where, for the first time, she found purpose, meaning, and a new identity. Despite her decisions and actions, Kelsey learned about Jesus Christ and his deep love for her. This love was so strong that she asked Jesus to be her Lord, and over the coming months, she began to grow in all areas of her life. She dealt with the trauma, learned new life skills, and held on to the hope found in her Lord. As a result, her life is restored, including her marriage and relationships with her three children. She has a fresh beginning. She is a new creation (2 CORINTHIANS 5:17).



two

What are life-controlling issues?

Take a moment to honestly examine your life. Has there ever been something or someone (including yourself) that you have focused on more than Jesus? Without a doubt, everyone reading this has had something or someone they have focused on more than Jesus. Every human being deals with one or more areas in their life where the enemy tries to distract or undermine the person from a life centered on Jesus Christ. This is where life-controlling behaviors begin.

A life-controlling issue is something or someone

that creates control over one or more behaviors in your life. When we think of life-controlling issues, we often think about addictions that create dysfunction: alcohol, drugs, lust/pornography, greed/money, and gambling for example. These are terrible issues to be sure. However, there are many other areas of life that can take control and distract from Christ being first in all things: spouses, children, education, work, a healthy lifestyle, food, sports, shopping, hobbies, and even church programs and activities can all be areas the enemy uses to have our hearts idolize them over Christ. These activities are generally fine and can be very positive, but if they become an obsession, these activities can distract us from keeping Christ as the Master of our lives. This opens the door for poor decision making potentially leading to actions that send people to the depths of “idol” worship, addiction and despair.

Another factor that can influence negative behaviors is trauma. As we have read already, when sin entered the world, everything changed for humanity. Human beings began to do things to one another, inflicting trauma in life. Over several millennia, human beings continue to inflict pain and suffering in various ways to family members, friends, and strangers. Sin (Satan) lurks, going about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour as scripture says (1 PETER 5:8). Trauma can arise from other sources as well: the diagnosis of a disease, a car accident, a failed relationship, or an economic collapse, for example. When someone has suffered trauma, their minds are directly impacted, both physically and

mentally. Research shows traumatic stress can be associated with lasting changes in various areas of the brain, including the amygdala, hippocampus, and prefrontal cortex. Trauma increases cortisol and norepinephrine production in the brain, which, over time, can lead to multiple health issues, including depression, anxiety, and high blood pressure. The mental and emotional fallout can be too great to overcome, resulting in decisions to try to mask the pain with alcohol, a substance (legal or illegal), or to get “lost” in a world filled with sin (gambling, pornography, fantasy).



three

What does the Bible say?

Where do we begin? The fantastic news for all of us is the Bible is filled with hope, love and promises that can forever change how we live while here on Earth and for eternity. The Bible holds all the answers to dealing with sin, trauma, depression, anger, fear, and doubt. This doesn't mean we will never feel these things again, but it does mean we can get through anything in life by living according to the principles of the Word of God in a strong relationship with Jesus Christ.

Let's begin with the famous Ten Commandments found in Exodus 20. The first commandment is "You

shall have no other gods before me” (EXODUS 20:3). Our Lord began with a command to keep him first in all areas of life. There are several key lessons from this one line alone. First, it applies to everyone—no one is exempt from this command (or any others for that matter). Second, nothing should come between us and God. There are no “good” reasons such as prioritizing my spouse, my children, or my own life. All these become secondary to the King of kings. Third, by this very statement, the Lord is showing us that we as human beings have the ability to place “gods” as a higher priority in our lives, even over him. Finally, let’s not overlook the fact this is the first commandment. Nothing is coincidental with God. All other commands and all of life hinges on this the first commandment. Failure to follow this law leads to despair, defeat, and ultimately, destruction of the soul.

In his sermon on the mount, Jesus assured his disciples that the Father knows we need basic things, like food and clothing, for this life. He encouraged them not to become overly anxious about these earthly needs but to “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness” (MATTHEW 6:33). When he said to “seek first the kingdom,” Jesus was telling them to prioritize living the way he wants us to live. When we cultivate a relationship with Jesus and live as he instructs, he will take care of us. We may not have everything we want, but we will have what we need. Jesus walks with us every day whether it is filled with joy or trauma, celebration or heartbreak. Jesus guides every step of our journey. King David said

the Lord “leads me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.” However, we must place him first in our lives and allow him to lead us.

So, we know the Lord must be placed first in our life, throughout our lives, in every area—in relationships, decision-making, and behaviors. This is the very foundation of Christ-centered living, which is a strong defense to any potential life-controlling issue. It is not the only defense or protection. Because the Lord is our Savior, he is the one who gives us strength, peace, hope, and endurance to run the race of life (HEBREWS 12:1-2).

One of the most famous passages in the Bible is the Ten Commandments, found in Exodus 20. While many regulations and revelations were given, the Ten Commandments serve as a list of summary laws given by God to Moses, who then presented them to the hundreds of thousands of people gathered at Mount Sinai. The first of these Ten is quite significant. It reads, “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me.” The first command is that he is God and nothing else should take his place. He is the only true God. Following God and his ways is the primary role of humanity. The second command continues by forbidding idols (EXODUS 20:4-6). While this often brings to mind golden statues and ornate images, we learn that it includes anything that takes God’s place in our lives—such as money, success, pleasure, people, or even ourselves. These commandments show that human beings have a tendency to create false “gods” in place of the only

true God. Following such false gods inevitably leads to despair, defeat, and ultimately, destruction of the soul.

My wife and I experienced this powerful peace when our house caught fire many years ago. The fire department let us in to get what belongings were left. You could see across the house internally, as much of the walls had been burned and much of the roof was gone. We stood in our bedroom, and there was a moment we looked at one another and smiled. At that moment, we both felt the wonderful peace of our Lord and we knew everything would be okay. Facing a surge of anxieties about our earthly things, the Lord silenced our fears. His peace protected us from resorting to negative reactions throughout the six months we were displaced due to construction.

In John 16:33, Jesus warned his disciples that they would face tribulation, but he encouraged them by saying, “I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace” because “I have overcome the world.” The key to experiencing peace is found in our identity “in Christ”. There is an authority associated with us being children of the Living God. With this new identity, everything becomes new. As 2 Corinthians 5:17 states, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” This transformation comes with power from God who completely changes our lives and begins the work of making us more like his Son, Jesus Christ. Christ himself completes the work, culminating in eternal life with him and all of humanity who accepted Christ as Savior throughout history. For this reason, our identity is

not found in our decisions, actions, sins, dreams, jobs, relationships, or any other area of life. For the believer in Christ, our identity is rooted in him, alone. This creates a defense against life-controlling issues as well.

This side of eternity, human beings will always struggle. There will be evil, trauma, trials, and storms that we all must face throughout life. One of the ways to cope with these challenges is to understand the depth of God's love. He will always love us. Always. Not just when we are holy before him, but even when we think sinful thoughts. He loves us in spite of ourselves. This love should carry us through when we fail—if we let him. All too often, the enemy of our souls attacks us with lies, telling us we have gone too far or that we are unforgivable. When we believe this lie, we make poor decisions that may lead to further sinful actions. The enemy will also use trauma to spread his falsehoods. He may whisper that if God really cared about you, he would have stopped the violent acts, physical abuse, the mental abuse, or whatever situation you face. This is another lie from the Father of Lies, as Christ called him. We live in a fallen world, and it comes with circumstances and consequences, but this in no way diminishes the love of Christ toward humanity. His love is unwavering, as reflected by his willing death on a cross.

Because of his fathomless love, our hope is in him, not in our own life. We have tremendous hope because we know who we are in Christ and how deeply he loves us. As we grow in Christ, this hope becomes stronger, building on our growing faith.

This life is wonderfully short compared to eternity, where the hope of our salvation will reign and rule in a new heaven and new earth. Words cannot describe how marvelous eternity with Christ will be, but we do get a glimpse of this magnificent hope as described by the apostle John.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son.” (REVELATION 21:1-7)

Let’s try to imagine, just as we did with the Garden of Eden. Picture a place with no sorrow, no tears, no pain, and no death. A place where God dwells with

humanity in unbelievable joy and overwhelming peace. It's hard to fully envision while still living here on Earth, but rest assured, this place called heaven is real and we, as his children, will live for eternity with him in a brand-new place, a new heaven and new earth. The lion and lamb will get along. We will see glorious things we cannot even dream of.

This is why the apostle Paul wrote “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.” (ROMANS 8:18). Instead, these sufferings should inspire our hope even more, knowing that our future includes unprecedented joy for all of eternity in a beauty and creation we can only dream of today. What a glorious hope found in Christ, who is our hope (TITUS 2:13).

The Bible is filled with promises, commands, principles, and examples to guide us as we consider behaviors that can lead to life-controlling issues and addiction. You may be wondering: How do I apply these practically in my day-to-day living? How will these promises, commands, and principles help me as I struggle with pain today? How will these overcome the trauma and hurt I have been through? These are good questions, and my prayer is that the following will encourage you and help you grow as Christ does his work—work that only he can do in your life. There are no “silver bullets” or “quick fixes” to overcoming life-controlling issues. It requires real faith, real courage (resilience), real discipline and real relationships (community). We will explore these four areas now.

Our first focus area in addressing these issues is having real faith. This is a faith cultivated over time. There are no shortcuts. The great news is the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives helps to develop this faith over time. He builds strength in us through encouragement, conviction, comfort, and challenge. Why is strong faith so important? Let's overview the sovereignty of God as an example. Genuine faith begins to understand and believe in the sovereignty of God. *Sovereignty* is defined in Merriam-Webster as having supreme power and authority. As we grow in our faith, we come to know God is in full control of everything, having supreme power and authority. This means nothing surprises him. It means he is working even when we don't see or feel it. How does this help us?

When we face uncertainty, doubt, fear, or anxiety, we can remind ourselves daily who God is and that he is in full control. We can engage with the Lord and ask what he wants us to learn. We can fully trust in his power, leading to the perfect peace promised in Isaiah. This takes time. Again, there are no shortcuts to serving Jesus. This leads us to the second focus area to help address life-controlling issues: we need real courage, leading to resilience in life.

Merriam-Webster's dictionary defines *resilience* as an ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change. For the believer in Christ, we are given help by the Holy Spirit to be courageous and resilient. We don't have to rely on our own strength, but we do have to do our part. Matthew Henry, a theologian and pastor in the 1600s, wrote,

“Perseverance in faith is the best evidence of the sincerity of our faith.” There is power in being resilient in our faith. Over time, we will witness the powerful work of God, which builds courage in us.

Resilience is also built through trusted relationships—family members, friends, and counselors. As we struggle with an issue, engaging with someone we trust can help us overcome our doubts and fears. These trusted counselors can come alongside and walk the journey with us, building our courage through their own courage. We need others. The Lord intended for us to help one another. In doing so, resilience is built and strengthened in ways that cannot be accomplished alone. King Solomon, considered the wisest man to have ever lived, wrote this in Ecclesiastes, “Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up!” (ECCLESIASTES 4:9–10). We must have people in our lives that we know will help, challenge, and encourage us. Isolation always leads to some form of destruction. The Reverend Billy Graham had an inner circle of friends he counted on to hold him accountable. If Billy Graham needed this, surely we all do.

Our third focus area is real discipline. This is more than having general discipline in life. Every believer in Christ should be growing in the spiritual disciplines. These disciplines build us up, expose our weaknesses and sin, and give us boldness and strength to remain in the faith. We are told to examine ourselves by the apostle Paul. He writes,

“Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!” (2 CORINTHIANS 13:5). We examine ourselves through the practice of spiritual disciplines. So, what are these disciplines?

There are many spiritual disciplines: the study of God’s Word, prayer (which includes various forms of prayer), fasting, solitude and silence (being alone with the Lord for a short time, being quiet in his presence), simplicity (removing distractions or things that are unnecessary), generosity (practicing giving of your time, talent and treasure), and service (serving in various ways such as volunteer work, church ministries, etc.). Another powerful discipline is hospitality—doing something for others without expecting anything in return. The apostle Paul tells the church in Rome to “Outdo one another in showing honor” and to “contribute” to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality” (ROMANS 12:10, 13). He also tells the church in Galatia to “do good to everyone, . . . especially to those who are of the household of faith” (GALATIANS 6:10).

One powerful way to address your own life-controlling issues is to focus on others instead. While it is important to address your own struggles as we have been discussing, when you shift your focus to others, you begin to see externally versus internally. When you serve others, the Lord has a way of helping you as you help others. This is a biblical principle that may be a mystery in some ways, but his ways are mysterious at times. A great resource to learn more

about spiritual disciplines is Richard Foster's book, *Celebration of Discipline*.

The last area of focus is real relationships and community. As we have already seen, we are not meant to live alone. The Lord created us as relational beings—first in relation with him, then with others. This is why Eve was created. God said that it was not good for man (Adam) to be alone (GENESIS 2:18). We need others in our lives. Of course, we need to be careful who we engage with. There are many who do not have our best interests in mind, or maybe they don't care about the things of God. While we may love them as human beings, we need deep relationships with those we trust—people who will love us, encourage us, and challenge us, and who believe in God and his ways. You want people in your life who will help you be obedient to the Word of God. In parallel with these key relationships, you also want to be a part of a community of believers, a biblically based church that practices spiritual disciplines together. There is power in community. The writer of Hebrews tells us to not neglect meeting together as believers, and to meet together more as the day of the Lord's return draws closer (HEBREWS 10:25). A lie of the enemy is that we don't need to attend church. He whispers to us that we can live as believers without community. But can we? Are we able to live the fully abundant life God has planned for us without community? No, we are not. The Bible is filled with Scripture on the need to be in community with others. Let's discipline ourselves to be in community, engaging with others in both words and actions.



four

What can we do?

This side of heaven we will always face evil. Sin is increasing everywhere in this world. However, where sin increases, grace abounds more (ROMANS 5:20). I love the word “abounds.” It means to appear in large quantities. While we live in a fallen world, the grace of God is available always, without fail. Still, how do we live in this truth? Based on what we have discussed so far, how do we apply these principles? How do we live abundantly, in perfect peace, despite our circumstances? While there are many ways we can move forward, we will focus on a few examples of how to live a fuller, deeper, more meaningful

life in Christ, one that will help us overcome life-controlling issues and sustain us over time.

We need to cultivate and develop a true fear of God. You may wonder why we start here. The reason is that Scripture is filled with references to the fear of the Lord and the benefits it provides to us as his children. How is this fear of the Lord defined? It is defined as “the burning intense love for, and joy-filled fullness in, the Living God, the Trinity. This awe-inspired love and fullness creates sadness, conviction, and even pain at the very thought of separation (by sin) against such wonder, beauty, mercy, and grace, which flow from the Trinity in personalized love for all who believe. It also creates a lasting joy, found only in the sustained presence of God” (author’s definition).

This type of fear of God gives us deeper access to who he is. The Bible says, “He fulfills the desire of those who fear him; he also hears their cry and saves them” (PSALM 145:19) and “For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him” (PSALM 103:11). Our Lord longs for a deeper relationship with each of us. As we grow in his love, we strive to obey his commands more fully, weakening the pull of idol-making activity. The Bible is clear: Jesus came to give abundant life. This means it’s possible to live abundantly in Christ, which excludes any life-controlling issue. If we really believe this, we know he will make a way where there seems to be no way.

One key way to cultivate the fear of the Lord is through daily worship. When I say worship, I am not

just referring to the songs we sing or the music we play. I am talking about real daily worship as we go about our day. Observing nature is a quick way to see the hand of God. Noticing the colors, trees, animals, birds, cloud formations, mountains, rivers, and other landscapes—and giving God glory for them—is an easy way to worship him. As we see beauty and creativity around us, we know that all good things come from him. Even objects created by human beings provide opportunities to thank God for his gifts of skills, talents, and abilities.

Another way to lessen life's temptations is by practicing the renewal of our minds. Romans 12:1–2 states, “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” We practice this through daily prayer (praise, confession, intercession, thanksgiving), daily reading the Word of God, and daily worship. These habits help to reset our minds allowing the Holy Spirit to bring strength, comfort, and conviction, helping us work out our salvation with fear and trembling (PHILIPPIANS 2:12). Jesus told us to “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness” (MATTHEW 6:33), which calls for active, deliberate focus on God. This is a discipline we must be diligent in every day.

As we grow, we must also cultivate an understanding of the theology of suffering—

what it means to walk with God through pain and hardship. We know trials and suffering are inevitable in life, so how do we respond? Do we run to the controlling issues in our life? Or do we deepen our understanding of suffering, enough to run to Jesus and stay the course, even walking through the valley of the shadow of death as the psalmist says (PSALM 23)? According to Helen Keller, trials are used to develop our character. She writes, "Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, ambition inspired, and success achieved." Pastor Tim Keller (no relation to Helen) writes, "Some suffering is given in order to chastise and correct a person for wrongful patterns of life (as in the case of Jonah imperiled by the storm), some suffering is given not to correct past wrongs but to prevent future ones (as in the case of Joseph sold into slavery), and some suffering has no purpose other than to lead a person to love God more ardently for himself alone and so discover the ultimate peace and freedom."

None of us want to suffer, but we all do. We face struggles throughout our lives, as suffering is part of human experience. Sometimes it builds our character, other times it just is. Suffering will always come, but we can manage our response to trials and suffering. While we may not escape them, we can respond in ways that teach us, grow us, and even bring glory to God.

Unfortunately, human nature often drives us to seek relief in things or people we believe will ease

our pain or alleviate feelings of loss, vulnerability, and hurt. When faced with a trial, we might run to alcohol, drugs, pornography, shopping, exercise, eating, or an individual who will help us cope. For those battling addiction, this is often where relapse occurs. An unforeseen trial comes, and weakness takes over, fueled by the lies of the enemy. Our first response, however, should be to run to Jesus. He will be there. He always is. He promises to give peace that surpasses all understanding, even our understanding of suffering.

I remember a phone call late one night when my sister told me that our parents had been in a bad car accident. I had to fly home quickly. While at the airport and on the planes, I could sense the Lord with me. I kept praying, asking Jesus to teach me how to respond when I arrived. I asked him to guide me with his Word and to fill me with his love during this time. He answered those prayers. Yes, it was painful, difficult, and at times I felt weak. My dad passed away two days later; my mom survived. Through it all, Jesus was there. In fact, after my father's funeral, family and friends came to my parents' house and we had a time of worship, and my sister and I prayed for my mom to be used of God going forward. Again, Jesus answered those prayers.

The apostle Peter provides key principles in his first letter. We should not be surprised when trials come—they are part of life. Second, we should be grateful (rejoice) when we suffer as Christ himself also suffered. Through these trials, his glory is revealed and we grow through the experience. God

will see us through. Third, we are called to glorify God while in the suffering because the Lord is present with us. Lastly, we should trust our faithful Creator and continue to live righteously (1 PETER 4:12–19). This is where our faith in the sovereignty and providence of God can help. Absolute faith in the providence of God strengthens our resilience in times of suffering and gives us a proper perspective. When we firmly believe that God controls everything, even our suffering has a purpose, even if just to draw us near to him. As we practice this, our behaviors, decisions, and actions remain grounded in Christ.



five

Wrapping up

The grip of something or someone that controls one or more areas of our life can be terrifying, even when it holds short-term pleasures. Over the years, I have heard countless stories from people who have experienced the devastating effects of addiction and other life-controlling issues—physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. But I have also seen what Jesus can do in the transformation of these lives. Former heroin addicts, some who used for over twenty years, are now married, with children, working good jobs and serving the Lord. Former alcoholics, who once nearly drank themselves to death, are now living fruitful lives, transformed by God.

No matter what life-controlling issue you—or perhaps a loved one—may be facing, the Bible is filled with answers for overcoming them. First, it begins by believing that Jesus Christ is Lord and loves you (or your loved one) deeply. Second, we must address any trauma that has occurred. Jesus can and will heal, and the healing can take place through many channels including sessions with a licensed Christian counselor who can help with understanding the patterns of the brain and why you believe what you believe post-trauma. Third, we must live with intentionality, daily seeking the Lord through spiritual disciplines and growing in our knowledge of his worldview (the Bible) regarding his sovereignty, our identity, our trials and suffering, and his sanctification work in our lives. This growth leads to the renewal of our minds, which enables us to discern God’s will in all things. As we grow stronger in our faith, the temptations from the enemy, and from our own fallen nature, become weaker over time. God is faithful. He will transform. He has already overcome the world, including the issues that you or your loved one struggle with. Praise God for hope.

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What does the Bible have to say about life-controlling issues?

Whether it's a substance or behavioral addiction, we've all encountered someone who's struggled with an issue that controlled their life. In this booklet discover what the Bible says about addiction and how God's Spirit can bring about change in our lives.

Gary Blackard is President and CEO of Adult & Teen Challenge (ATC). Gary also serves as an Adjunct Professor at the University of Southern California. Gary and his wife Debra have two married children and four grandchildren.

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