

2020 **MISSION DRIVEN**
DAY CONFERENCE
CHRIST-LED | ADDICTION | RECOVERY

The Dynamics of
Reaching Addicts from a
Christ-Centered Worldview



- Family
- ATC Memphis Graduate
- Background in ATC and Substance Abuse
- Military Drug and Alcohol Program Advisor

Secular vs Christian Perspective on Addiction and Recovery

The Disease Concept

- **The disease concept** is a theory of addiction that **makes addiction** like all other **chronic diseases**.
- **According to addiction medicine professionals, addiction** is a **chronic brain disease** that's more about the neurology of the **brain** than the outward manifestations of behavioral problems and poor choices.

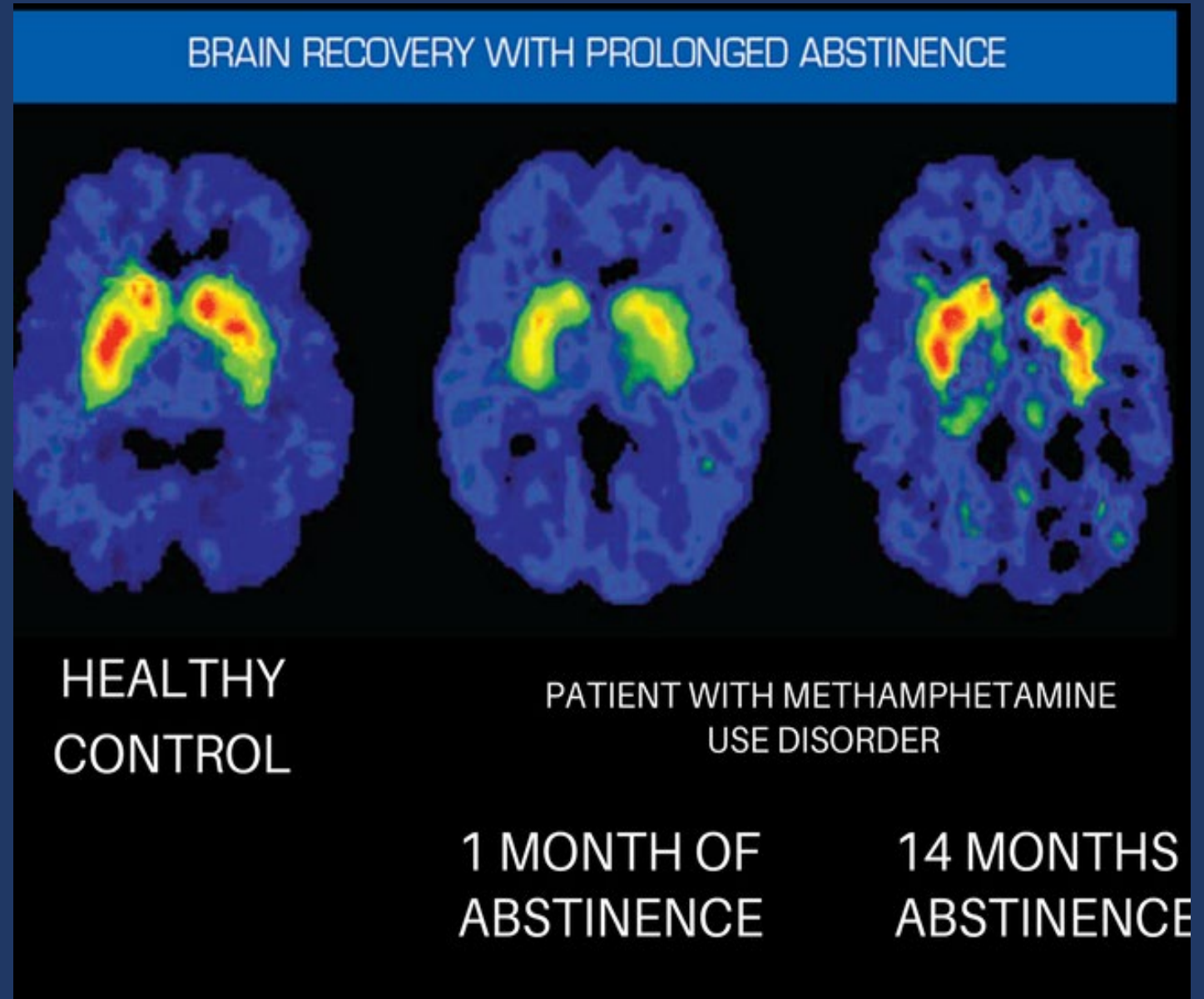
Christ Centered Discipleship

- Christian discipleship is the process by which those who accept Christ in their heart begin to grow in the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and are equipped by the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome the pressures (Includes addiction related issues) and trials of this present life and become more and more Christlike.

BRAIN RECOVERY

There is evidence that the brain does recover; the image to the right shows the healthy brain on the left, and the brain of a patient who misused methamphetamine in the center and the right.

In the center, after one month of abstinence, the brain looks quite different than the healthy brain; however, after 14 months of abstinence, the dopamine transporter levels in the reward region of the brain (an indicator of dopamine system function) return to nearly normal function.



The Brain vs The Mind

- The brain outside of regeneration, surgery or the Holy Spirit healing it, does not change, the mind however can be renewed.
- **Romans 12:2 teaches us, not to be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our mind;**
- To be conformed to the world is to live in a manner that is consistent with activities leading to bondage or enslavement. (Thinking with your head, and not your heart)
- **John 8:36, therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.**
- Freedom is a result of having a renewed mind.
- **So what is the mind?** The mind has everything to do with what's in a person's heart and nothing to do with what's in their head.
- **Proverbs 23:7 says this, for as a man thinks in his heart, so is he.**

Secular Recovery Perspective

Secular treatment programs teach that addiction is a brain disease that is “progressive, chronic, and fatal” for which there is no hope of overcoming (incurable) and requires a lifetime of management and treatment.

But there is no real evidence for this conclusion. There are no blood tests or scans to determine conclusively if a person is addicted to something. Brain scans in my opinion simply show how drugs and alcohol impair the brain (areas of decreased or low activity).

Secular vs Christian Perspective on Addiction and Recovery

- Most secular based treatment programs are short term (30-90 days).
- Learning to manage or cope with the disease involves attending regular meetings (AA, NA, CA etc.), finding a sponsor and working the 12 steps, this is called “recovery.”
- Find a Higher Power. It can be anyone or anything you choose.
- The process is about recovery maintenance and not about change in behavior or lifestyle.
- Most Faith-based discipleship programs are long-term 12 months or more.
- Discipleship is about more than simply working a program, but helping the person or the addicted learn a new way to live through a strong relationship w/God.
- Discipleship is about learning to practice spiritual disciplines.
- The process of learning a new lifestyle requires more time and commitment.

Some addiction professionals believe the primary motive behind labeling addiction as a disease is to remove the guilt and shame associated with the addiction. This is a noble approach, but it also causes unintended consequences to the addict believing they have a disease.

Unintended Consequences:

1. It creates a victim mentality. They are convinced they have a cancer-like disease that simply came upon them without any assistance of their own.
2. The person's self-identity becomes inseparably connected to addiction.
For example, in many twelve step models, participants begin their meetings with a mantra that reinforces their identity with their struggle. They say, "Hi, my name is _____ and I am an alcoholic or addict." The disease or medical model fundamentally robs the person of hope and changes their self-identity.
3. Viewing addiction as a disease can also undermines their self-confidence and will to change because the addicted person believes they cannot overcome, and eventually give up fighting who they have come to believe they really are.

Christian Discipleship of the Drug Addicted and or Alcoholic

In comparison to the secular recovery model, Christian discipleship wants the addicted person to believe just the opposite. In other words, the discipleship approach to recovery has intended consequences.

Intended Consequences:

1. Discipleship is about the renewing of the mind. Christ-led leaders help the addicted in the process of renewing their mind.

Romans 12:2 (NKJV)

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

2. As Christ-led leaders we want the addicted person not only admit they have a problem but to take ownership for the part they played in creating the problem. God has attached a great and precious promise to our willingness to take ownership.

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

3. The goal of discipleship is to help the addicted person establish their identity in Christ.

Corinthians 5:17

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

4. The goal of discipleship is to build or bolster self-confidence (God-fidence) in the recovering addicted person. Discipleship approach emphasizes dependence on Christ not a program for strength and help.

Romans 8:37

Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

Philippians 4:13

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Unique Dynamics Christ-led Leaders Should Consider

Denial

- Addicts often live in a state of denial. This denial involves not only acknowledging to have a problem, but also the severity of their addiction. The desire to continue to use distorts their perception and temporarily blind them to the risks and consequences of using.

Inability to cope with life

- As an addicted person becomes increasingly dependent on drugs and or alcohol to fulfill some unmet need, their capacity to manage life's problems diminishes. To compensate for the deficits in coping skills he or she alleviates stress by using, in other words, they self medicate against painful feelings and social anxieties.

Unique Dynamics Christ-led Leaders Should Consider

Social Problem

- Social networks between users and substances often become a part of their identity and social fabric. In other words, secretly the addict believes they will not have fun, friends or a life apart from using drugs and or alcohol.

Cycles of Abuse

- The substance assumes priority over other values. The addicted person starts to miss days at work, go on drug or alcohol binges, for example, may miss work on Monday following a weekend of alcohol and drug use.
- Irresponsible behavior becomes apparent, mood swings, irritability, health problems. The life of the addicted person constant crisis and instability consist of using to live and living to use.

Accountability in Discipleship Recovery

Accountability is vital to success in recovery. It is impossible for recovering addicts to be successful if they are unwilling to make themselves accountable to Christ-led people with knowledge about addiction dynamics.

How should Christ-center leaders hold those recovering from addiction accountable?

1. Learn about Addiction

- In order to truly help the addict, you need to learn as much as possible about addiction.

2. Avoid Enabling Behaviors

- Strongly encourage recovering addicts to take responsibility for their own life.
- Do not provide them with financial help after they have used their own finances to buy drugs or alcohol and come seeking help to pay bills
- Don't avoid confronting the addict and their behavior in order to avoid conflict (Practice Carefrontation)

3. Establish Healthy Boundaries

- Make sure they know you care, but you will not rescue them from the consequences of their behavior.
- Show empathy but not sympathy

Demonstrating Grace in Discipling Recovering Addicts

In Roman 6:1-2 Paul asked three rhetorical questions:

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? *Certainly not!* How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?

Demonstrating Grace in Disciplining Recovering Addicts

Hebrews 12:4-6 NIV

In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says,

**“My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline,
and do not lose heart when he rebukes you,
because the Lord disciplines the one he loves,
and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.”**

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