

Leader’s Guide

Episode 13

Addiction and The Good News

Summary

Addiction treatment can be one of the most trying aspects of healthcare. The temporary euphoria of a drug-induced high can make one oblivious to the long-term damage that is occurring. Yet, so often it is through weakness that people come to know, or grow in, their relationship with Christ. God can use our efforts to unleash the power of the gospel in the lives of our patients.

Speaker



Timothy Allen, MD, and his wife Nikki Allen, MD, view themselves as missionaries to Cudahy, Wisconsin, an economically depressed suburb of Milwaukee. They run an independent clinic that provides general medical, addiction and psychiatric care focusing on those whom society often ignores. As part of their ministry, they are involved in a church plant that currently meets in their waiting room on Sunday mornings. He and his wife have been involved with CMDA since medical school, have been married since 2000 and have four children and one grandchild. For further information or to contact Dr. Tim, email him at timothyallenmd@gmail.com.

Discussion Questions

1. **What from this video inspired, edified or challenged you?**
2. **Jesus said that our patients will know we are followers of Christ by our love in John 13:34-35. What might that love look like to patients battling drug addiction?**

Showing love is more than words. It is ascribing value to their lives without any shame or blame, not treating them differently than other patients. It includes showing empathy toward them (Romans 12:15) by entering into their successes and their frustrations. Our love for our patients generates from God’s love for us, even if they choose not to deal with their addiction (1 John 4:7-8, 19).

1. **Dr. Allen makes the point that patients who are addicted (and other patients as well) need to feel that they have value as human beings. How could Genesis 1:26 and Ephesians 2:10 be used to help patients know they have value?**

Genesis 1:26 – Patients need to understand that they have been made in God’s image and therefore have great value in God’s eyes and our eyes. Their value is inherent in their personhood and cannot be destroyed or even lessened by their shortcomings.

Ephesians 2:10 – We have value as well because God has created us as a “masterpiece” (literal meaning of the word “workmanship”) and with the purpose of doing good works for others in our world. His use of us to accomplish His purposes is a verification that we are indeed created in His image, no matter how tarnished that image can get at times.

1. **How can we help people with addiction find something better? See Romans 6:21, Ephesians 4:22-24a and Galatians 5:19-22.**
* Romans 6:21 – Recognition of the futility of one’s current actions can be a great first step toward changing the course of one’s life. The gospel turns regret into repentance (2 Corinthians 7:10), enabling us to experience the forgiveness and compassion that can set us free from slavery to sin (John 8:32, 2 Corinthians 5:17).
* Ephesians 4:22-24a – We cannot merely say no to those things that offend God; instead, we must replace them with something better. These verses describe what we “put off” and what we “put on.”
* Galatians 5:19-22 – Paul contrasts the deeds of the flesh with the fruit of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit can empower us to overcome temptations that would otherwise overwhelm our fleshly weakness to sin.
1. **Dr. Allen notes that patients who have a spiritual transformation are those most likely to overcome an addiction (92 percent success rate). How might Romans 8:1-2, Romans 5:1-2 and 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 be useful in talking to patients about their relationship with God?**
* Romans 8:1-2 – In Christ we have no condemnation, shame or blame (common in addicted persons).
* Romans 5:1-2 – We can find grace and peace to deal with our addictions only in Christ.
* 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 – When we accept Christ, He indwells us and we can know His presence with us each day to face struggles in our lives.
1. **Do you have any underlying biases against treating addiction that could interfere with showing God’s love with those who struggle? Drs. Karl Benzio and Val Tramonte speak of the fact that we all struggle in various ways. How can this fact equip us to deal with any underlying biases against caring for our addiction patients?**

We have less empathy for those struggling with sins toward which we are not tempted. If we haven’t had to fight the substance abuse battle, we need the reminder from Drs. Karl Benzio and Val Tramonte that everyone struggles against addictions of various sorts. Only the power of God can overcome sin, both temporally and eternally, and we who walk with Christ are just as in need of Him as are our addiction patients.

1. **When Dr. Allen’s patient asked him, “What the bleep is wrong with you?”, how does this illustrate a principle from 1 Peter 3:15?**

Peter calls us to “set Christ apart as Lord in our hearts” which will create a powerful love that patients will notice. This can cause them to ask “the reason for the hope that is in us,” which seems to be what this patient was asking.

1. **What is one take-home item from today’s session that you hope to implement?**

Additional Resources

1. [www.asam.org](http://www.asam.org)
2. [www.celebraterecovery.com](http://www.celebraterecovery.com)
3. [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)