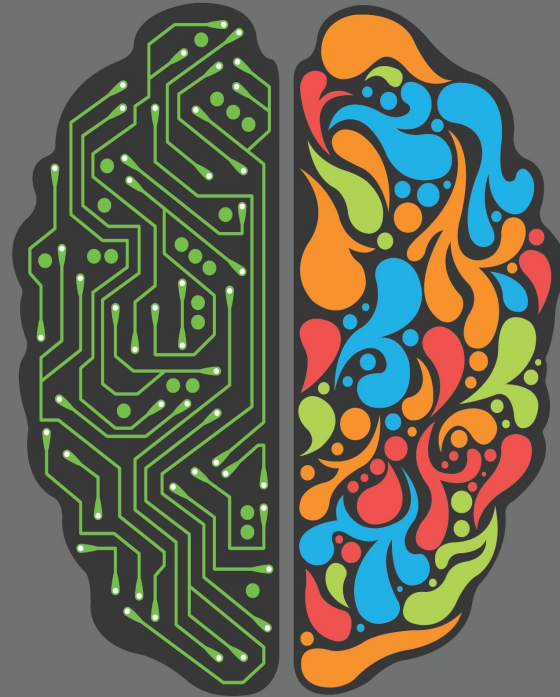




ADDICTION

“For by what a man is overcome,
by this he is enslaved.”

2 PETER 2:19





Addicts experience a flood of dopamine into the nucleus accumbens, also called the brain's "pleasure center."

The hippocampus lays down memories of this rapid sense of satisfaction, thereby creating a connection between the drug and its effects.

The amygdala then processes a conditioned, emotional response to the stimulation. This is the "desire" to keep doing the addictive behavior.

Normally, rewards come only with time and effort. Addictive substances and behaviors provide a dramatic shortcut. The brain is not designed to handle so much dopamine, so fast, which results in the pleasure center becoming overwhelmed. Over time, it produces less and less dopamine or simply eliminates dopamine receptors. This is why addicts must continually use more of the drug to feel the same "high." Eventually, the pleasure subsides and only the imprinted memory (conditioned response) is left, leaving the addict with compulsive, self-destructive behavior.

So does this mean we have no choice in the matter? In a sense, we made choices all along the way toward addiction. The physical consequences are just that: consequences. Addiction does not remove free will, but it certainly makes it harder.



2 PETER 2:20-22

A TALK WE NEED TO HAVE



- We must address this growing problem and stop pretending that addiction isn't all around us. It is a spiritual problem, first and foremost, but one that cannot simply be “prayed away” or shamed into submission.
- So what is really at the core of addiction? Not merely the physiological reasons why it continues, but the initial spiritual problems that introduce it and the attitudes that help perpetuate it.



“He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves abundance with its income” (Ecclesiastes 5:10)

OVERLOADED



- Proverbs 25:16
- Our brains are masterfully created by God. We are constantly learning, growing, adapting, and interpreting messages from all over the body. We know, internally, when “enough is enough.”
- Addiction overloads all of this, causing desensitization. Sadly, this leads us to lose touch with the truly pleasing things of life. Addicts no longer know how to feel good.

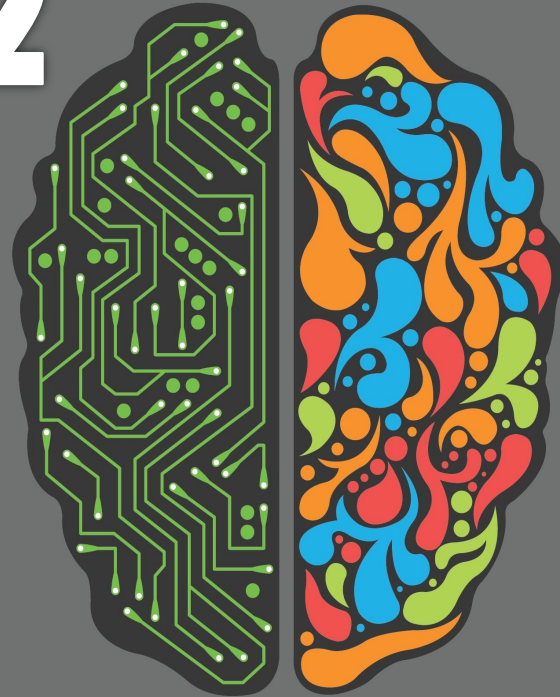
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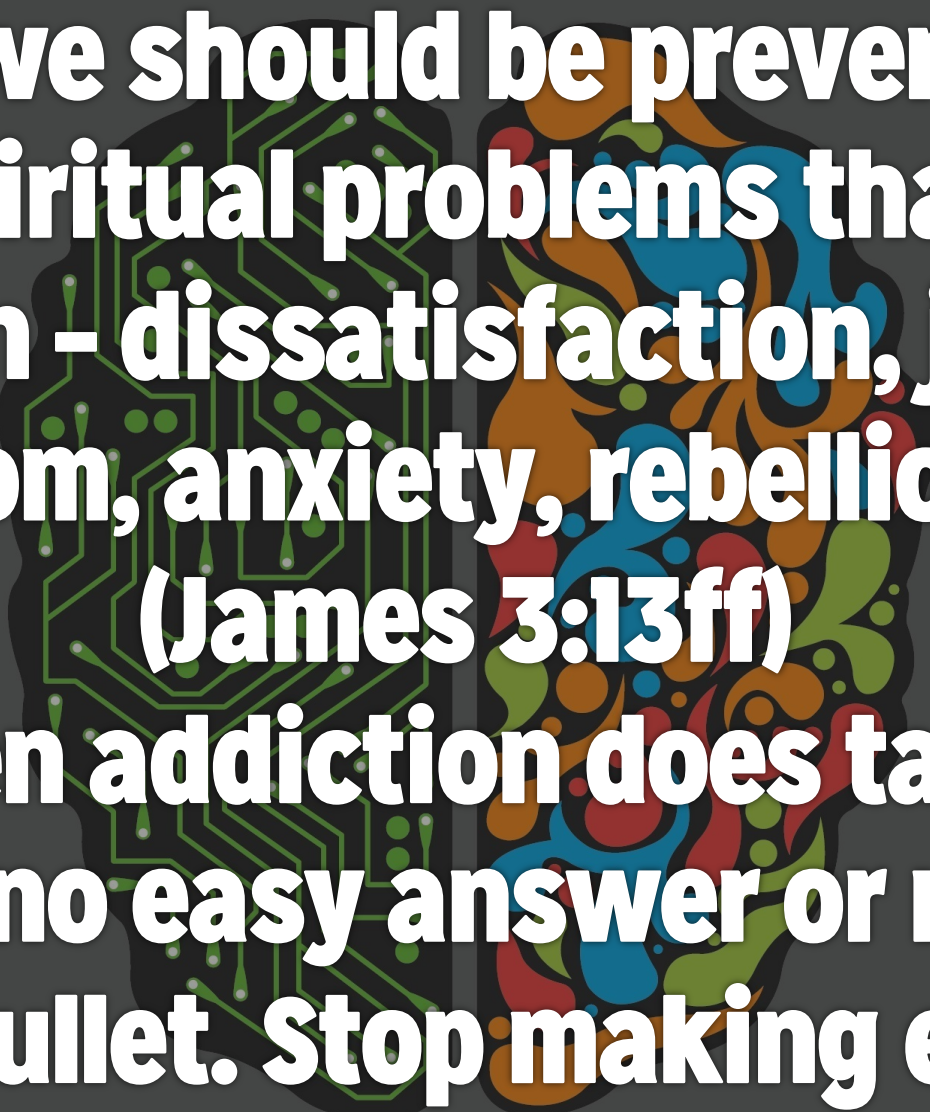


- How did Solomon end up with 700 wives and 300 concubines? Ecclesiastes 2:8 gives us a hint of embarrassment at his excess.
- The Bible has a lot to say about the effects of self-indulgence. It confirms what modern science only just discovered:
 - Ephesians 2:3, 4:19
 - Romans 16:18
 - Titus 3:3
 - Jeremiah 6:15

“Come,’ they say, ‘let us get wine, and let us drink heavily of strong drink; and tomorrow will be like today, only more so.’”

ISAIAH 56:11-12





Ideally, we should be preventing the initial spiritual problems that lead to addiction – dissatisfaction, jealousy, boredom, anxiety, rebellion, etc.

(James 3:13ff)

But when addiction does take hold, there is no easy answer or religious silver bullet. Stop making excuses and seek help!

We will address this next week...