



ADDICTION

and the Church

RECOGNITION OF AN ADDICT
COMING TO CHURCH

MARK 2:17

Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

“The church is a refuge of healing for the broken and hurting, not a trophy case for saints.”
-Joshua Mayfield



Observe their Appearance and Behavior

- Notice how they are dressed and their body language.
- Look for unnatural or erratic behavior.
- Observe their mental/emotional condition.



Listen to their Story

- Position yourself to engage them in conversation.
- Help them feel comfortable with opening up to you.



Assess Their Need for Help

In Scripture we find that almost everyone who came to Jesus had a need, and when an addict comes to church, whether they realize it or not, God has led them there to meet their need.



Assess Their Need for Help

- Are they looking for a way out or looking for a handout to continue in their addiction?
- Listen for the determining factors that indicate whether or not they are willing to change.



Assess Their Need for Help

- Only provide specific help for those who show no desire or desperation for change.
- Safe ways to engage in trying to help someone in addiction are:
 - A meal together.
 - Counseling.
 - Meet practical needs such as clothing or cosmetics.
 - Never give them money.



Assess Their Need for Help

- Many times, addicts will come and tell you what kind of help they think they need.
- Rely on others who are familiar with addictive behavior to help determine what kind of help is going to be beneficial for them.
 - If you are not qualified to provide the help they need, be prepared to refer them to someone who can.
 - Mental health professionals.
 - Physical health professionals.
 - Etc.



RIGHT RESPONSE for a PASTOR

MATTHEW 25:45

“Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for Me.”



Show Compassion and Acceptance

- Greet them and make sure they know that you care so they will open up to you.
- Be intentional about seeing them through God's eyes.
- Do not judge or condemn them for their physical appearance or their potential condition.
(legal situation, substance abuse or actively under the influence)



Show Compassion and Acceptance

- Let them know they are not alone.
- Bear one another's burdens by meeting a physical need.
- Make yourself vulnerable enough that they realize you love them – let them into your heart without making yourself too vulnerable.
- Helping addicts will cost you something.
 - Personal involvement is essential, not incidental, and it usually involves adapting our ways and schedules to fit their needs.



Provide a Safe and Supportive Environment

- Let them know that the church is a safe place to come for the help they are looking for.
- Trust is a major issue with addicts and is often a determining factor as to whether or not they will let you in.
- Encourage the congregation to get involved by welcoming and showing compassion toward addicts when they come to church.
 - *Have these conversations with congregation on the front side.*



Be a Resource for Spiritual Guidance

- Offer opportunity to meet outside of the church setting for counseling and prayer.
- Seek to educate yourself about addiction and the main issues.



Follow Up

- Check in with them after their initial visit to see how they're doing and if they need further care.
- Continue to offer support and keep the lines of communication open by intentionally staying in contact.
- Intercede for them as long as the Spirit leads.
- **Don't give up on them!**

