



## Life Issues

Everyone is carrying some kind of load, whether it's addiction, grief or debt. See what the Bible has to say about these things, and get practical direction for moving forward.

### Addiction

How did you get here? When will it end? Addiction is a powerful thing. It's all-consuming and makes you feel like you have no control. It might come in the form of alcohol, drugs, gambling, pornography, an eating disorder or some other unhealthy behavior. It affects you physically, emotionally, socially and spiritually.

Whatever you're bound to, there's help. You don't have to feel ashamed, broken or empty. God promises us in the Bible, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). He longs to set you free and give you new life in His Son, Jesus Christ. When you are weak, He is strong, and offers real, lasting hope.

Christ was also tempted (Hebrews 4:15) and knows what you're going through. When you trust in Him, you can be confident that He will help you break every chain that binds you.

Here are some steps to help you break free from your addiction:

- If you've never thought about what it means to find satisfaction and purpose in a relationship with Jesus Christ, do so now. (See [PeaceWithGod.net](http://PeaceWithGod.net) for more.) If you have already given your life to Christ, make Him top priority.
- Admit responsibility. No matter what your situation, at some point you decided to drink, take drugs, look at pornography, etc. You are accountable for your decisions.
- Cut ties to friends and places connected with your addiction. This will help lessen temptation and make it easier to experience recovery. The Bible says, "Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm" (Proverbs 13:20).
- Ask God for strength to help you overcome your addiction. Everyone struggles with temptation, but as I Corinthians 10:13 says, "God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted

beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.”

— Don’t be surprised if your family or friends doubt a successful recovery. If this addiction has dominated your life, they have likely dealt with broken promises and disappointment. Give them time to see the new you.

— Remember that being a Christian isn’t about perfection. You might fall back into your old ways, but as soon as you do, ask for God’s forgiveness and ask Him to cleanse you of your addiction. I John 1:9 says, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

— Read and study God’s Word, the Bible. Get involved in a Bible-believing church and establish healthy friendships. The Bible says, “If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up” (Ecclesiastes 4:10).

— It’s often necessary to deal with the underlying causes of addiction to overcome it. Seek further counseling from a pastor, Christian counselor, or a local clinic or resource.

No one can promise an easy road to recovery, but Christ will walk with you and offers a firm foundation to stand on. Remember, “with God nothing will be impossible” (Luke 1:37, NKJV).

## **Out of Work**

Losing your job or finding yourself unable to work can affect you not just economically, but emotionally and spiritually. It might make you feel anxious, useless or hopeless. If you have been looking for work for a long time, you might even feel like giving up.

But God has not forgotten you. He knows your needs and wants to help you; the Bible says He "comforts the downcast" (2 Corinthians 7:6).

Maybe you will find work soon, but maybe not; God might have something in store for you that you didn’t expect. Whatever you do, try not to get discouraged. The Bible says, ““For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future’” (Jeremiah 29:11). It also tells us that “the Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit” (Psalm 34:18).

Here are some other tips while you wait for work or decide what to do next:

— Remember that Jesus Christ knows what you’re going through and has compassion on your situation. He knew what it was to be poor and even homeless. When you put your trust in Him, He is with you wherever you go.

— Use this time to grow closer to your family. Spend time with them, mend broken relationships and share what God is doing in your life.

— Look into job retraining programs or volunteer opportunities to keep you active, help others and give you experience you might use later on. The Bible tells us to “make the most of every opportunity” (Colossians 4:5).

— Give your worry to God and ask Him what step He wants you to take next. See this time not as a problem but as an opportunity to strengthen your relationships. If you do, once this time of unemployment is over or you have moved onto something else, you can look back and thank God for being with you, even in the midst of difficult times.

Matthew 6:25, 28-30 tells us, “Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? ... See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?”

Ask God to give you the desire to do whatever you need to do to find another job, but remember that when you trust in Him, you are not taking those next steps alone.

## **Grief and Loss**

There are many things that can cause us grief, such as divorce, job loss, illness or loss of a loved one. Grief often comes in waves of sorrow that taper off only as the cycles of healing occur. Recognizing that process and allowing it to happen will help you endure and even grow during this sad experience. This cycle of healing doesn't always happen in the same order, and some parts might occur more often than others, but all are a natural part of grieving. Remember that this process is normal and that it helps to seek support.

— Initial shock: an intense emotional experience that could leave you feeling emotionally paralyzed.

— Emotional release: a time often characterized by crying, weeping or deeply sad feelings.

— Loneliness and depression: a sense of loss. The depth depends on how dependent you were on the person/people/things involved.

— Guilt: second-guessing yourself—“I could have done more” or “I should have done something differently.”

— Anger, blame, hostility: “Why did they do this to me?” “Why did God do this to me?”

— Depression: an overwhelming sense of apathy and feeling like you can't get on with life.

— Recognition of loss: understanding what you lost. For example, maybe you didn't just lose a job but your income, position and self-esteem.

- Thankfulness: if you lost a loved one, appreciating the good memories and that person's life.
- Return to hope: "Life will go on," "I can cope," or "God will help me get through this."
- Return to normalcy: accepting the loss and adjusting to it.

The Bible says, "Blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted" (Matthew 5:4). God wants to bear our heartaches and losses and give us His comfort, hope and encouragement. When you accept Christ as your Lord and Savior, He will carry you through your grief.

It's also helpful to talk to God and to others about how you feel so you don't bury what's inside. Expect God to bring good out of the situation, too. Romans 8:28 says, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him." Reading your Bible and praying to God will also help you through this tough time.

## Struggling with Debt

You hate living in debt and might even wonder if God is punishing you. Why aren't things getting better?

We live in a fallen, sin-scarred world, and, because of that, life isn't always the way we wish it were. At the same time, God often has lessons to teach us when we face problems and adversity. He can use life's hard experiences to knock the rough edges off our lives and change us into the people He wants us to be. Have you stopped to ask God what He wants to do in your life through this experience? The Bible says, "Show me your ways, Lord, teach me your paths" (Psalm 25:4).

Everything we have, including money, comes from God. Money isn't a bad thing, but can be if it's misused. Sometimes it leads to greed, pride or materialism, and it can be easy to give it top priority in our lives. Sometimes unexpected losses or unplanned expenses can result in money problems, tempting us to worry. But we must remember to keep God first in our hearts and lives.

If you're struggling with debt, here are some helpful tips:

- Seek God's will for you with a humble heart and open mind. The Bible says, "If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you" (James 1:5). Regardless of how you got into debt, maybe He wants to change your attitude or give you new priorities or goals in life. Whatever it is, begin with a renewed focus on your relationship with Christ and give special attention to what the Holy Spirit "speaks" to you through the Scriptures.

- Ask God to help you trust Him and not let this debt crush your spirit or dominate your thinking. The Apostle Paul, who was isolated, imprisoned and lost all possessions, said, "I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances" (Philippians 4:11). Anchor your hope in the promises of God's Word. The Bible says, "'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future'" (Jeremiah 29:11). Assuring your heart of God's unfailing power, goodness and love will make all the difference.

— Consult a wise, trustworthy businessperson (perhaps in your church if you attend one), someone who has been trained in financial planning or a nonprofit financial counseling agency in your community, then act on the advice given. It will likely include making a realistic budget; make one and stick to it. God often answers our prayers by bringing people into our lives who can help us.

— Find ways to weed out any unnecessary spending, such as money spent on entertainment or luxury items. It might not be fun, but it will help you save money and get on track to financial peace. You can also brainstorm ways to have fun for little to no money at all.

Hebrews 13:5 says, “Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have.” Anything we have ultimately comes from God, and He will always provide for us. We are to be good stewards of what He gives us, meaning we should be responsible for the money and possessions that come our way and be careful not to overspend or be greedy. As Jesus warned, “you cannot serve both God and money” (Luke 16:13). Make Him the priority in your life today and ask Him for guidance concerning your finances.

## Love and Lust

Lust is when we intensely desire or crave something, especially in the sexual sense. Lust appeals to our self-centeredness and treats others as objects instead of people. Love, on the other hand, is an intentional devotion toward another no matter what the circumstances. Love puts another’s needs before yours to ensure his or her well-being.

Why does it matter? Confusing the two can be dangerous and could lead to manipulation, a broken marriage, adultery or a similar tragic situation. While physical attraction and emotional feelings between a man and a woman have their place, love between the two is more than that. It is an act of the will—a commitment to seek what is best for the other person. True love doesn't demand; it gives. True love doesn't ask, "What can I get out of this person?" It asks, "What can I do to help this person?" True love isn't self-centered; it is self-giving.

It takes a lifetime to explore the richness and complexities of human love. But consider this: Would you love this person even if he or she lost physical beauty, or if his or her body were ravaged by cancer or disability? The Bible says, "Love is patient, love is kind. ... Love never fails" (1 Corinthians 13:4, 8). This is the kind of love God had for us when He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die for our sins and draw us closer to Him.

If you’re faced with a challenge concerning lust:

— Open your heart to God’s love by inviting Christ to come into your life, then ask Him to help you avoid lustful thoughts and actions. Ask Him to help you understand how to truly love someone.

— Remember that what goes on in our minds eventually influences the way we act. Jesus warned, “I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery

with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:28). Make it your goal to keep your mind pure, as well as your body.

When you feel tempted to lust after someone, remember this verse: “God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can endure it” (1 Corinthians 10:13).

## **Bullying**

Being picked on or made fun of can lower your self-esteem and make you feel unworthy. Maybe you feel like no one cares. But Jesus Christ was also ridiculed and understands what you’re going through. He can give you strength to help you overcome this situation. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 12:10 that when we are weak, He makes us strong.

## **Worth in Christ**

God created each person unique, with different talents, personalities and desires. We are not mass produced, but carefully made by the God of the universe. He knows us by name.

Just think of it: You are God’s masterpiece! Your life is not worthless, no matter what others say or how they treat you. Your life is a gift from God. He knew you before you were even born. Psalm 139:13-14 says, “You created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful.”

God values you. And He doesn’t show favoritism (Acts 10:34). He loves you and cares how you feel. 1 Peter 5:7 says, “Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you.” If you have trusted in Jesus Christ as Lord, you are called a child of God. 1 John 3:1 says, “How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!”

## **Why Bullies Bully**

Some people—children, teenagers and adults alike—pick on others because of things going on in their own lives. They might envy you or even resent you for something beyond your control. They might have a difficult situation at home and target you to fulfill a need to be in control. Perhaps they are not treated well, either, or have a negative view of themselves. Maybe they receive little attention from people around them. It could be that the person or people making your life miserable are simply trying to take the focus off of their own problems. Some bullies bully others to gain attention, status or approval from their peers.

While these things might not be the case, keep in mind that you might not be the only one facing a hard situation. While there’s no excuse for bullying, recognizing a motive might help you respond in the best way.

## Response

While the word “bully” does not appear in the Bible, the idea of treating others in a brutish or disrespectful way does. Christians can even be a specific target of bullies since trying to live like Christ is often countercultural.

Matthew 5:39 says, “Do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also.” However, this doesn’t mean you can’t ask for God’s defense or stand up for yourself.

When responding to a bullying situation, remember that the Bible tells us to treat others fairly and with respect. Matthew 22:39 says to love others as yourself. And Romans 12:18 advises, “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.” When faced with someone talking bad about you, making fun of you or putting you down, do not seek revenge but respond in love. Matthew 5:44 says to “love your enemies,” and Matthew 5:9 says peacemakers will be blessed. Luke 6:28 even says, “Bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.”

How you treat others reflects your relationship with God since He created and values everyone. When you respond to bullies in love, they notice and might even change their attitude toward you. Proverbs 15:1 says, “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”

At the same time, if the bullying is negatively affecting you—mentally, emotionally or physically—do not allow yourself to remain in danger, but seek support from a trusted adult or authority figure. Remember that our strength comes not from ourselves, but from God who cares about us and gives us hope. Let that give you confidence to endure. Psalm 34:4-5 says, “I sought the Lord, and He answered me; He delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to Him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame.”

Sometimes, it’s wise to even flee from a bully. Out of jealousy, King Saul in the Bible chased David, and David fled (1 Samuel 19-24). Fleeing from a bully isn’t cowardly; it’s often the best choice when we can’t protect ourselves. Ask God for wisdom in how you should respond, and trust Him to bring justice.

If it is a fellow Christian who is wronging you, Matthew 18:15-17 says to point out the wrongdoing to the person. If that person doesn’t listen, ask one or two others to approach him or her with you. If that doesn’t change anything, bring the issue to your church.

Regardless of the situation, we can find comfort and protection in God. Psalm 46:1 says, “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.” Let His strength encourage you today.

## Protecting Others

Ephesians 5 and 6 calls husbands to defend their families and businesses. And it’s up to parents to try to protect their children from danger.

If your child is being bullied, don't assume it will just go away. It might help to role-play how your child can respond so that he or she feels prepared to face the bully. Keep the line of communication open with your children, and don't hesitate to get another adult or school administrator involved to help resolve the issue.

## Suffering

Why do people suffer? And why do they die? If God is good and loving, how could He allow that?

Tragedies and suffering often leave us confused, angry, horrified or bitter. They are further proof that Satan is at work in our lives and that evil is no stranger to us.

A great book of the Bible to read about suffering and evil is Habakkuk. It's only 3 chapters long, but it's a book about the prophet, Habakkuk, who asked God why He wasn't punishing evil. God answered Habakkuk, saying that He *would* punish evil, but that He was working in His time to do so.

Sometimes we don't understand God's timing, but we should remember that He did not create evil. God is a just, merciful and loving God who gave humans free will when He created them. Because we are all sinful, we all experience evil and unfairness, yet God is always in control and can use even evil to do good. James 1:17 says, "Every good and perfect gift is from above."

We can also use our time of suffering to look inward. We live in a fallen world where we are all in need of a Savior, and that's just what God provided. God loved us so much that He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die for our sins so we can live forever in heaven. Christ was perfect—holy—yet He suffered beyond imagination to pay the price for our sins and give us eternal life. Yes, we experience bad things here on earth, but we can rejoice in the fact that God has provided a place of eternal peace in heaven.

Also remember that because Christ suffered, He understands what we're going through and has compassion on us. Christ not only gives us hope when we trust in Him, but helps us through hard times by comforting us in our grief, surrounding us with supportive people and allowing us to feel His presence in our lives.

## Why Do Godly People Suffer?

Having a relationship with God doesn't mean we won't suffer. Sin affects everyone, and because of that, we all experience pain and hardship. The difference is that God promises to be with those who trust in Him. Psalm 34:19 says, "A righteous man may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all." That doesn't mean life will be easy, but that we will have help overcoming difficult times.

God is with us through all the obstacles we face so we don't have to face them alone. We can lean on Him in tough times because we know He cares for us and will help us through any sorrow, grief or frustration we are dealing with. That gives us hope because even when we don't understand why things are happening, we know that in God's infinite wisdom, He can bring good out of bad situations. He can strengthen our faith or work things out behind the scenes that we don't see or understand. Suffering also allows us to help others in similar situations and pass on the hope that we have in Christ.

If you have accepted Christ as your Savior, be assured that He is always with you. The Bible says in Deuteronomy 31:6 that the Lord "will never leave you nor forsake you." He understands our struggles and wants to help us if we will trust in Him. As 1 Peter 5:7 says, "Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you."

## Why Do People Die?

When God created the world, He created it perfect. There was no death. But when the first two people on earth, Adam and Eve, disobeyed God, sin entered the world, and we have all continued to sin since then. The Bible says that the price of sin is death (Romans 6:23). Unless Christ returns before we die, we will all die a physical death.

But it doesn't end there. Although our bodies will die, our souls will live forever. They will live in one of two places—heaven or hell. Heaven is a glorious place in God's presence where there is no suffering, pain or death. We will also have new bodies free of any ills or pains. Hell, on the other hand, is a place of torment and punishment where "the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:48). Both places are eternal; we will live there forever.

If we have accepted Christ into our lives, we have no reason to fear death. Although our bodies may succumb to illness or deformity, nothing can separate Christ's followers from Him. Matthew 10:28 says, "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul." Physical death is only a transition from life on earth with Christ to life in heaven with Christ. As John 11:25 says, "He who believes in me, though he may die, he shall live." We can also look forward to the day we will see in heaven our loved ones who also accepted Christ.

## Helpful Scripture

God speaks to you through His Word, the Bible. The Bible helps us know God and guides us in godly living. It's a source of wisdom, strength and comfort. Psalm 119:105 says, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path" (NKJV).

Allow God to speak to you through the following verses.

When needing COURAGE: Psalm 138:3; Ephesians 6:10-13

When facing DANGER: Psalm 91:1-16; Psalm 121:1-8

When you have DOUBTS about your salvation: John 3:16; 1 John 5:11-13

When in doubt of God's power to keep you FAITHFUL: Philippians 1:6; 1 Peter 1:5

When in FINANCIAL need: Psalm 34:10; Philippians 4:19

When needing FORGIVENESS: Hebrews 4:15-16; 1 John 1:9

When seeking GUIDANCE: Proverbs 3:5-6; James 1:5

When LONELY and DEPRESSED: Psalm 23:1-6; Hebrews 13:5

When facing PAIN: Matthew 11:28

When your PATIENCE is being tried: Romans 8:28-29; James 1:2-4

When seeking PEACE in a stressful time: John 14:27, 16:33; Philippians 4:6-7

When filled with sinful PRIDE: 1 Corinthians 4:7; Philippians 2:3-8

When burdened with many PROBLEMS: Psalm 55:22; 1 Peter 5:7

When needing REST: Matthew 11:28-30; Galatians 6:9

When driven by SELFISH DESIRE: Philippians 4:8; 1 John 2:15-17

When facing SORROW: Romans 8:26-28; 2 Corinthians 1:3-5

When seeking God's STANDARD: Matthew 5:48; Matthew 22:36-40

When SUFFERING: Psalm 34:19; 2 Corinthians 4:17

When facing TEMPTATION: 1 Corinthians 10:13; James 1:2-4, 12-15

When being treated UNFAIRLY: 1 Peter 2:19-23; 1 Peter 4:12-15

When feeling WEAK and INADEQUATE: 2 Corinthians 12:9-10; Philippians 4:13