

ADDICTION

A FAMILY AFFAIR

Pamela Russell

Dedication

To the memory of Joyce Hassler, now with her Lord.
I cannot thank the Lord enough for my “Andrew,”
Joyce, who invited me to “come and see” and took
me to my first Bible study. My life has not been the
same since.

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Addiction: A Family Affair

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Preface

Because you are reading this material, beloved, I assume you have a loved one or a family member who is abusing drugs, alcohol, or both. It could be a husband with an alcohol problem, a parent who has abused alcohol for years, an adult child with a cocaine problem, or a teenage child who abuses prescription pills. The problem is no respecter of persons or station or stage in life.

I understand that you may feel like life is a ship tossed by uncertainties, frustrations, and disappointments with the abuser. You may be struggling to keep the family afloat while your loved one seems to be doing his or her best to shipwreck the family, all the while denying it.

I want to help. I believe that God wants to help you too. He has a track record of restoring families and saving lives. It's His business. I want to share with you a testimony from a married couple for whom He has done such miracles.

I met Angie* when my husband was on active duty with the US Air Force. Her husband, Ron,* was also active duty Air Force. Angie and I met just before Ron abandoned and divorced her to go off into the world of drinking and doing his own thing. Newly saved, as I watched all the drama unfold, I got an education in what God is all about. Angie's Christian friends at the Bible study I was attending began praying for her and Ron, for God to work in their lives and reunite them.

Indeed, God went to work in them both. Angie struggled with little financial support during that time. Ron eventually reaped what he sowed; the Lord even used a motorcycle wreck to get his attention. Finally repentant, Ron began again to woo Angie. Later, my husband and I were at their remarriage ceremony, when they were joyfully reunited in Christ. That was over thirty years ago. Read the story in Angie's own words:

In November 1980 Ron filed for divorce, and our divorce was finalized before Christmas of that year. Ron had an addiction to alcohol. He had given up drinking twice before, for over two years each time. The friction between the two of us was less when he was not drinking. [Even divorced] the relationship difficulties continued [along with all the] unforgiveness and stress. I was attending a Bible study, and part of that fellowship time was praying for each other's needs. Prayer continued for [Ron's and my] relationship to be restored even after the divorce. I celebrated that Christmas with a friend and her husband. She said, "I hope this is your best Christmas ever," meaning she hoped God would reunite Ron and me. At the time I was most surprised at that expectation, but I did start thinking each day about the possibilities of it, not dwelling in the past.

After the divorce, our son and I moved in with a female friend who was in the military. After we lived there a while, friends who were going

to California asked if we would like to stay in their home. God provided for our needs.

[Then] Ron attended a special school out of state. He was enjoying the education but began missing us. He returned after several months and asked if we could remarry. I believe praying for this outcome kept my heart soft so that my response to this request was pure joy. We remarried in March.

I want you to know that marriage relationships are a continual work in progress. Expectations that all will be wonderful all the time are not realistic. Also, giving up an addiction is the beginning of change, not just for the addict, but also for those who have adjusted their behaviors in order to live with the addict. Education and support from others who have experience with addiction and change is very helpful. I learned that it's nothing that I did to cause the addiction and that only God could assist Ron. I learned that throwing tantrums and guilt trips was not helpful. I look to God for wisdom and assistance with my own behavior.

Ron and I will celebrate our 39th wedding anniversary this August. God has blessed us in many ways.

After Angie wrote this, she went Home to be with the Lord after a long bout with cancer.

Here are some Scripture verses to encourage you:

- "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope" (Rom. 15:13).
- "In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).
- "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding" (Prov. 3:5).

I want you to have hope in God right from the beginning. I want to come alongside you and encourage you to trust God in this difficult place.

*The names have been changed.

How to Use This Book

Before each session, study the lesson in this book. You may want to answer the Bible study questions on the worksheet. If you are able, become familiar enough with the content that you can put it into your own words and feel comfortable turning to related Scripture. Then familiarize yourself with the worksheet. Make two copies of the worksheet, one for the counselee and one for you. The worksheets are at the end of each lesson and on the resource CD that came with this book.

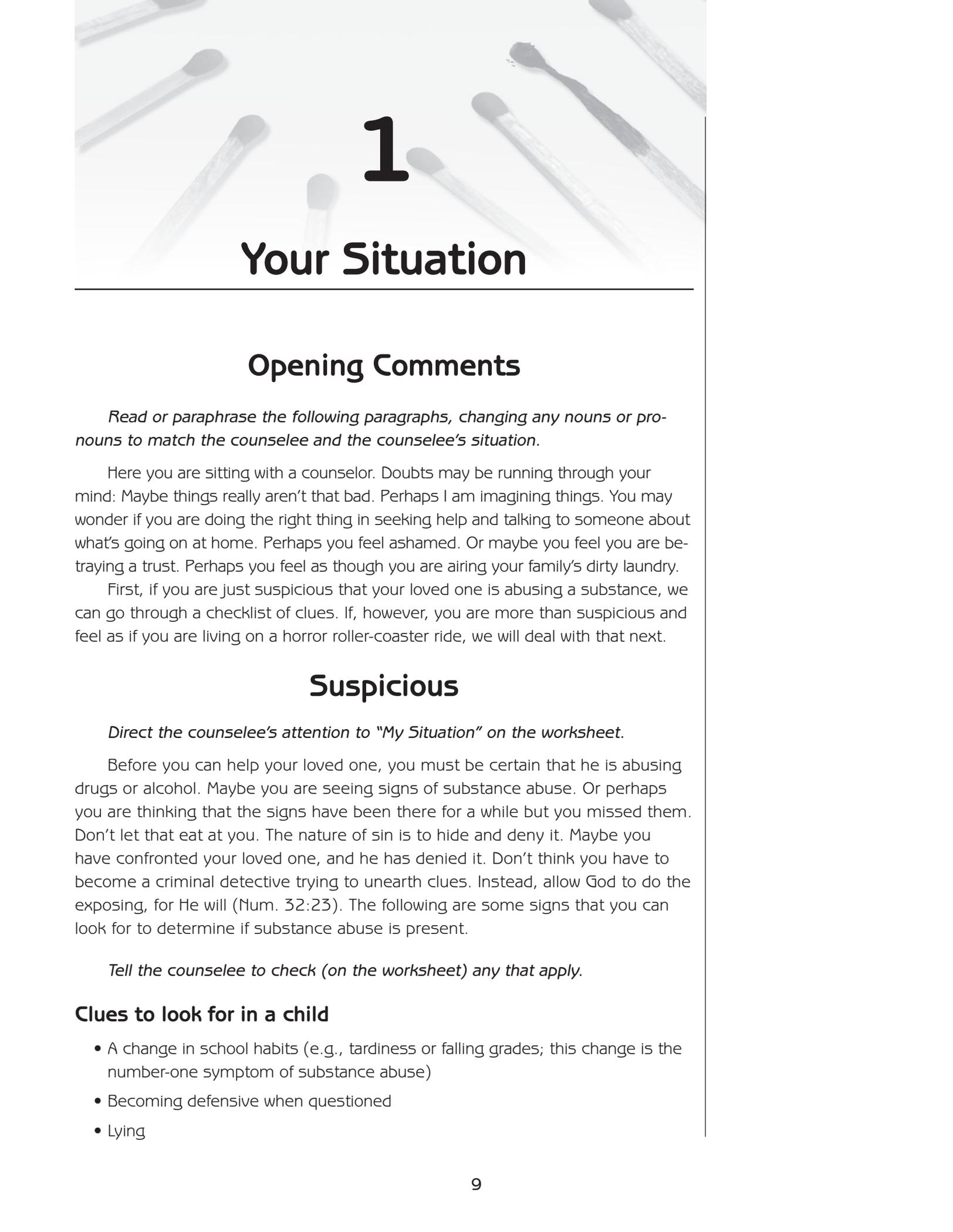
Throughout the book, the generic masculine is used for both males and females. If your counselee is female, you may want to change the masculine to the feminine. In a mixed group, you could use the informal they/their/them, even when you talk about one person.

Each worksheet includes a key memory verse or verses. Memorize the key verses and encourage the counselee to learn them as well. Ask him to quote the key verse at the beginning of the session, or quote it together. The entire course also has foundation verses, 2 Corinthians 12:9 and 10. Learn them and then quote them each session.

Encourage your counselee to complete the homework. Each week, gauge his interest in doing it. After two or three weeks, if the counselee is not engaged in his part, consider ending the sessions. However, if he is working on the assignments, consider asking him to keep a daily journal as well. This is a way for him to check himself to see if he is being ruled and led by the Holy Spirit or by something else.

After you review the homework, go through the worksheet, commenting as appropriate from the chapter, asking questions, and taking notes.

In closing, give the counselee his next homework assignment, pray, and offer words of encouragement.



1

Your Situation

Opening Comments

Read or paraphrase the following paragraphs, changing any nouns or pronouns to match the counselee and the counselee's situation.

Here you are sitting with a counselor. Doubts may be running through your mind: Maybe things really aren't that bad. Perhaps I am imagining things. You may wonder if you are doing the right thing in seeking help and talking to someone about what's going on at home. Perhaps you feel ashamed. Or maybe you feel you are betraying a trust. Perhaps you feel as though you are airing your family's dirty laundry.

First, if you are just suspicious that your loved one is abusing a substance, we can go through a checklist of clues. If, however, you are more than suspicious and feel as if you are living on a horror roller-coaster ride, we will deal with that next.

Suspicious

Direct the counselee's attention to "My Situation" on the worksheet.

Before you can help your loved one, you must be certain that he is abusing drugs or alcohol. Maybe you are seeing signs of substance abuse. Or perhaps you are thinking that the signs have been there for a while but you missed them. Don't let that eat at you. The nature of sin is to hide and deny it. Maybe you have confronted your loved one, and he has denied it. Don't think you have to become a criminal detective trying to unearth clues. Instead, allow God to do the exposing, for He will (Num. 32:23). The following are some signs that you can look for to determine if substance abuse is present.

Tell the counselee to check (on the worksheet) any that apply.

Clues to look for in a child

- A change in school habits (e.g., tardiness or falling grades; this change is the number-one symptom of substance abuse)
- Becoming defensive when questioned
- Lying

- Responding with anger (e.g., “Get off my back.”)
- Excuses
- Change in circle of friends (to smokers and drinkers)
- Staying in his room more
- Being secretive or evasive
- Becoming hardened to truth
- Showing apathy toward spiritual things
- Physical changes (e.g., weight loss, prone to sickness, restlessness, mood swings, illogical thinking, personality changes, depression)
- Presence of paraphernalia

Clues to look for in an adult

- Comes home late often
- Brings home less money
- Makes excuses for where the money and time are spent
- Responds with anger when questioned or confronted
- Has changed his circle of friends
- Has made changes in his spiritual life
- Lies
- Is secretive or evasive
- Is undergoing physical changes (e.g., weight loss, sickness, restless, mood swings, illogical thinking, personality changes, depression)
- Keeps paraphernalia

If this checklist confirmed the counselee’s suspicions, jump to the section titled “Biblical Response.” If, however, the counselee seems to be on a horror roller-coaster ride because of his loved one’s substance abuse, continue by telling the story of “Sandy.”

Sandy’s Story

I would like to tell you about a woman who went for counseling. We’ll call her Sandy. As you listen, be thinking about any similarities between Sandy’s situation and yours.

Sandy went to a counseling office to seek help so she could cope with her alcoholic husband. He was not drunk all the time or every day, but he would go on unpredictable alcoholic binges. The drinking had manifested itself soon after their wedding, seventeen years earlier. “When he’s drunk,” said Sandy, “he becomes a talkative drunk, critical and verbally abusive to our children and me.”

He did get sober for a while, but after being laid off from work, he began to drink again. Sandy’s repeated pleas for him to quit fell on deaf ears.

He continued to downplay her concern, accusing her of overreacting. She tried reasoning with her husband, tried fixing him and organizing him, and even tried to anticipate and prevent bouts of drinking—all without success. To find encouragement, she left the children with him one weekend so she could go on a Christian retreat, but she returned to find him drunk. She was crushed and angry and has been afraid to leave the children in his care ever since.

When he drinks, the children usually make themselves scarce before his verbal assaults begin. However, one of them routinely shouts at him in frustration, and Sandy runs interference.

During her husband's layoff, as his drinking increased and his income decreased, Sandy worked more to support the family. Over time and as things grew worse, Sandy became depressed. Her doctor put her on medication for depression. He also diagnosed her with fibromyalgia. This physical condition led her to quit her job and go on disability. Without her income, the family lost their house. Sandy is tired of being the responsible one. She is always short fused.

Sandy knows that her husband can quit drinking, because he quit before. When her husband starts making excuses, she knows that a drinking bout is imminent. However, she is afraid to send him away in case something bad happens to him. He has said, "I'll quit when I'm dead." Sandy feels completely hopeless. Most of her thoughts during the day are consumed with her family's hopeless situation, but she has no more strength to fight or cope.

Ask the counselee, Are you walking in shoes similar to Sandy's? Does your loved one have a similar effect on you and your home?

Direct the counselee's attention to the worksheet and ask him to write down the answers to the following questions:

- What similarities are there between you and Sandy?
- What similarities are there between your home and Sandy's home?
- What similarities are there between your loved one and Sandy's husband?
- What else is going on in your situation?
- What else is going on in your mind and heart?

Biblical Response

Courage

In a future lesson we will discuss ways to confront your loved one, but in the meantime our purpose is to equip you with Biblical coping and response skills that will bring you peace of mind and heart. Let's look at some Scripture passages for encouragement.

Direct the counselee's attention to "Courage" on worksheet 1. Ask him to read the verses. After you have talked about them, ask him to write a summary in his own words next to each reference.

2 Corinthians 12:9, 10

"But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

Here is a wonderful promise. You can read these verses every day, even memorize them, to remind yourself that though you may be at the end of your rope and feel completely powerless to do anything, Jesus Christ is ready, willing, and able to be your strength and power in the midst of it all.

John 8:34–36

"Jesus answered them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.'" Jesus is able to deliver your loved one from his addiction. We invite Jesus into the situation; we take His promise in verse 36 for your loved one.

When we put these two passages together, we know that Jesus Christ is able to deliver your loved one from his addiction if he will turn to Christ in faith. We also know that Christ is able to be your strength day by day, every day, while you endure the situation.

Salvation Check

Ask the counselee, Do you know Christ as your Savior?

Let's do a salvation check. Do you understand that you were born separated from God and are headed for Hell, but that Jesus died to save you?

Read the verses on the worksheet under "Salvation Check" or in a Bible.

- *John 3:16, 17*
- *Romans 3:21–23*
- *Romans 6:23*
- *Romans 10:9–13*
- *1 Corinthians 15:22*
- *Ephesians 2:1, 8, 9*

Everyone is born separated from God because of Adam and Eve's sin (Gen. 3). We die and go to Hell because we are sinners. Only holy beings can enter God's presence. However, because all mankind is doomed, God sent a solution for sin. He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, Who died on a cross, taking the punishment for all our sins upon Him. He died for us as our substitute. Then Jesus rose again from the dead, proving that His payment for our sins was acceptable in God's sight! Now God invites us to receive eternal life on the basis of Christ's finished work simply by placing our trust in Him. Do you believe that Jesus died and rose

again? That He died for your sins? If you were to die today, where would you go: Heaven or Hell? Why?

Was there a day and time that you went to the Lord and confessed that you are a sinner and asked Him to save you? When was that? If you are unsure, would you like to affirm today that He is your Savior? Once you do, you have not only the promise of eternal life in Heaven with Him when you die, but also the promise of the Comforter for this life on earth. It's an amazing gift! Change begins and ends with Jesus. Victory begins and ends with Jesus. It's not a formula; it's a Person.

Those who have received God's gift of eternal life by believing in Jesus are saved from eternal damnation. Those who have not received this gift are yet unsaved. The promise found in 2 Corinthians 12:9 and 10 is for those who have invited Christ into their lives to save them; it is not for the unsaved.

Invitational Prayer

If you are convinced that you are a lost sinner, if you are convinced that Jesus died in your place and that you want Him to save you, are you willing to pray to Him right now, asking Him to forgive you and cleanse you of your sins? If you are ready, then pray now.

Give the counselee time to respond and pray. If the person is not already saved and not ready to receive Jesus as his Savior at this time, press on with the counseling anyway. However, each week, ask him if he has considered the truths of the Scriptures concerning his need to be saved, and spend a moment speaking to that issue, encouraging him to receive Christ.

If you prayed in faith, you have the Lord Jesus Christ for eternity and for today. If you want Jesus to be your strength day by day, let's pray and ask Him for help.

Pray first and encourage the counselee to pray too, but don't force the issue.

If you want the Lord to save and deliver your loved one, let's pray in faith and ask God to save your loved one from sin and deliver him from substance abuse.

Closing

Homework

Direct the counselee's attention to the "Homework" section of worksheet 1.

Homework is important. It's a vital part of the process, so don't neglect it. Rather, begin immediately to read the Scripture verses and take notes. Also, act on what you read. You, too, should be making changes.

Prayer

End the session with prayer and encouragement.

Your Situation

Date _____

Do you suspect that your loved one is abusing drugs or alcohol? Sin has a way of being found out. Numbers 32:23 says, "But if you will not do so, behold, you have sinned against the LORD, and be sure your sin will find you out."

My Situation

Clues You Have Observed

The following are some signs that you can look for to determine if substance abuse is present. Check any that apply.

Clues to look for in a child

- A change in school habits (e.g., tardiness or falling grades; this change is the number-one symptom of substance abuse)
- Becoming defensive when questioned
- Lying
- Responding with anger (e.g., "Get off my back.")
- Excuses
- Change in his or her circle of friends (to smokers and drinkers)
- Staying in his or her room more
- Being secretive or evasive
- Becoming hardened to truth
- Showing apathy toward spiritual things
- Physical changes (e.g., weight loss, prone to sickness, restlessness, mood swings, illogical thinking, personality changes, depression)
- Presence of paraphernalia

Clues to look for in an adult

- Comes home late often
- Brings home less money
- Makes excuses for where the money and time are spent
- Responds with anger when questioned or confronted
- Has changed his or her circle of friends
- Has made changes in his or her spiritual life

- Lies
- Is secretive or evasive
- Is undergoing physical changes (e.g., weight loss, sickness, restless, mood swings, illogical thinking, personality changes, depression)
- Keeps paraphernalia

Sandy's Story

Skip this part if you did not hear Sandy's story.

1. What similarities are there between you and Sandy?
2. What similarities are there between your home and Sandy's home?
3. What similarities are there between your loved one and Sandy's husband?
4. What else is going on in your situation?
5. What else is going on in your mind and heart?

Biblical Response

Courage

2 Corinthians 12:9, 10
John 8:34–36

Salvation Check

1. Do you know Christ as your Savior?
2. Do you understand that you were born separated from God and are headed for Hell, but that Jesus died to save you?

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him" (John 3:16, 17).

"But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:21–23).

"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

"If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the Scripture says, 'Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.' For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all,

FOUNDATION VERSES

"But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:9, 10).

KEY THOUGHT

While your loved one needs to change, you need to make changes too. Your relationship with God is foundational. If you do not have a personal relationship with Him, you need to believe on Jesus Christ as your Savior. If you do have a personal relationship with Him, you need to confess and forsake any known sins or ask Him to reveal any unknown ones.

KEY TRUTH

Everyone is born separated from God because of Adam and Eve's sin (Genesis 3) and their own sin (Romans 3). But all who believe in Jesus and humbly ask Him for salvation will be forgiven of their sins and granted eternal life (Romans 6).

bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For 'everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved'" (Romans 10:9–13).

"For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22).

"And you were dead in the trespasses and sins. . . . For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Ephesians 2:1, 8, 9).

The promise found in 2 Corinthians 12:9 and 10 is for those who have invited Christ into their lives to save them; it is not for the unsaved.

Homework

Homework is important. It's a vital part of the process, so don't neglect it. Rather, begin immediately to read the Scripture verses and take notes. Also, act on what you read, for you, too, are to be making changes.

Questions to Answer

1. Read Matthew 5—7, the Sermon on the Mount. Which of the topics addressed by Jesus relate to your life?
 - (a) What does Jesus say about how to respond to each of these things?
 - (b) How might you do what Jesus said to do?
2. What verses in Matthew 5—7 mean something to you in light of your situation?
 - (a) What do Colossians 1—3 and 2 Peter 1:3 say Jesus has done for you?
 - (b) What do you have "in Him"?

Things to Do

1. Review the verses in Matthew 5—7 that were meaningful to you in light of your situation.
2. During the week, write down specific ways you chose to respond to your loved one as Jesus would have you respond.
3. Memorize 2 Corinthians 12:9 and 10.