

A BETTER WAY

Modern Problems seen through Christian Eyes



The Christadelphians

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All Bible references are from the New King James Version, unless otherwise stated.

INTRODUCTION

This little booklet is designed to help anyone looking for a Christ-centred approach to personal life-style choices that can cause us harm. We realise that many such issues have developed since the Bible was written, but the principles are all set out in that wonderful Book.

Jesus Christ spent quite a lot of time with those who had problems, and with those who were despised by the so-called “religious leaders”. His words, and those of the Old Testament writers who had said that he would come, are still relevant today.

IF WE ARE ALREADY CAUGHT UP IN A PROBLEM

In most cases we are not offering advice as to what you should do if you or your relatives or friends are already deeply involved in some of these problems. That **MUST** be referred to the professionals. Doctors and counsellors are specially trained in the care and rehabilitation of those already affected by such difficulties. Excellent advice is readily available elsewhere, and a list of helpful agencies is given at the end of this booklet.

As you read these chapters look for the light which shines in a dark place. Even in our darkest moments we might be able to see a glimmer of hope. If we feel as though the night is going on for ever, we can be sure the dawn *will* come. Every tunnel eventually comes out of the hillside. But tunnels are very dark places, we know. We must keep on keeping on, and God willing with the right help, and another prayer, the next corner might well bring us daylight. It must be admitted that for those already caught up in the spiral of addiction such hope can only be accessed by referring to trained personnel, and this booklet does not seek to replace that help.

IF IT IS OUR FRIEND

For those of us who are not trained to deal with these problems, we will probably feel terribly inadequate when the truth comes out. First of all a prayer for strength and guidance is a must. Then listen. Let the person talk – perhaps you could be the first one not to judge and condemn.

It's so important that parents, teachers, church youth leaders, and everyone able to influence young or vulnerable people should be willing to discuss these difficult areas BEFORE they become a problem. Our hope is that this booklet will assist. There is a short section in the "Drugs" chapter that gives advice to those starting out on practices which can lead to addiction. These comments can be applied to other problems.

"Come to me," Jesus said, "all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30 NIV). There is a well-known illustration used by Jesus at the end of his first talk to his new followers. A house built on unstable sand will soon collapse when the tide comes in, but a house secured on a firm foundation of rock will be able to withstand the pressure (Matthew 7:24-27). This applies to all of us. If our life is built on the sure foundation of the Lord Jesus, then we too will be able to overcome the modern problems that creep up on us so easily.

FIRST STEPS

1. Stay calm when the truth comes out.
2. Check the facts.
3. Don't jump to conclusions.
4. Take your time to assess the situation.
5. Talk and be responsive however uncomfortable you may feel or difficult the situation.
6. Listen.

Taken from Jonathan Adams, a GP specialising in drug and alcohol addiction



BEING LIKE JESUS

The Bible is God's Book for us. It tells of the lives of good and bad people, so that lessons can be absorbed. The word "holy" (or "separate") occurs a lot in the Bible. To be holy means we have to be different from the average godless person. This is a real challenge – and the purpose of this booklet is to assist us to be more God-like. Of course we will never be perfect. If we were good enough we wouldn't need a saviour. Jesus Christ came to save us from our sins (Matthew 1:21).

The name Jesus means SAVIOUR. If we make an effort, he is there to help and support us. If we fail, he helps us pick ourselves up. There is forgiveness in Jesus.

When seen through Christian eyes, many of these problems can be addressed in ways which will help us get things much more in perspective. God made us with the ability to choose good or evil, which is why He offers reward or punishment. If we were made like robots, reward or punishment would not be fair. Having a choice gives us opportunities to think before we act. The good Lord has not only given us a range of options, but has put signposts to show the right direction all along the road.

Let's keep on keeping on.



ALCOHOLIC DRINK

There is nothing wrong with a little drink of alcohol, unless we are under age or we have addiction tendencies. Alcoholic drink becomes wrong if we drink to excess. Jesus' first miracle was to make water into wine at a wedding feast. Jesus would not have provided something which was not good. In Bible times wine was a very common drink, and probably very low in alcohol.

Alcohol becomes wrong when we over indulge. Consider what actually happens. Alcohol is a chemical called a "depressant." This depresses the working of the brain, which gives a false sense of security. Our nervous system is also affected, which means that our reaction times are slowed down. Messages transmitted from parts of our body are much slower to reach the brain. Longer term, excessive drinking does great damage to our bodies, leading to serious liver disease, amongst other things. "Binge drinking" is when we purposely get drunk (one measure of excessive drinking is more than 8 units for men and more than 6 units for women in a single session).

Let's thank God that for most of us life is very good. When we add chemicals or alcohol the balance of that good life is distorted. That's when problems start. God knew exactly what He was doing when He created man and woman in His own image – so why try to change it?



Sometimes people drink heavily because they have huge problems

- but problems don't drown!
When we are back in sober mode, we have a shocking headache, plus the problem which we set out to obliterate.
So that doesn't work!

SENSIBLE DRINKING

Nobody should drink alcohol and then drive a motor vehicle. Even a small amount of alcohol can distort the way we think, or speak, or behave. Some people talk much more freely after a drink or two. Why? Because the alcohol has affected their brain! They are not in full control of their faculties. The man or woman who is trying to be like Jesus Christ will strictly limit how much they drink. That way they remain in control of their bodies and tongues. Do read what James writes about the trouble the tongue can cause (James 3:3-10; see also Romans 13:13)

– and that’s when sober!

God’s Holy Bible gives guidance and advises the best way to go. In the case of alcoholic drink Solomon illustrates how repulsive drunkenness is: “Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise” (Proverbs 20:1). We should therefore control our drinking, rather than let our drinking control us. Much of what is in chapter 4 about drug abuse also applies to alcohol.

Six centuries before Jesus was born the prophet Isaiah put it like this:

*“They also have erred through wine,
And through intoxicating drink are out
of the way; The priest and the prophet
have erred through intoxicating drink,
They are swallowed up by wine, They
are out of the way through intoxicating
drink; They err in vision, they stumble in
judgment. For all tables are full of vomit
and filth; No place is clean.”*

Isaiah 28:7,8

Isn’t this is a graphic picture of some of our cities on a Friday night, let alone the drunkards of Israel 2,500 years ago?



WHO IS IN CONTROL?

Being aware of the problems alcohol can cause is vital to someone who is trying to view the world through Christian eyes. Jesus came to show us the way. He lived a sinless life, because he was totally in tune with what God wanted. God rewarded Jesus by raising him from death, and giving him a seat at His own right hand. And that is where Jesus is now, watching over us, and taking our prayers to God. So our eating and drinking, and indeed everything we do should revolve around what Jesus would like.

Even so, we cannot devolve responsibility to Jesus. We must pray for guidance, and we can try to copy his example, but decisions must be ours. We have to decide whether we really need that extra drink, or if it would be better to resist. If today we think we handled two pints pretty well, then tomorrow we may reason that we can manage three. Being addicted to alcohol must start somewhere. We really must be able to say “No!”

“Dependency” is when we cannot manage without a drink, and our lives depend on alcohol. But an even worse stage is when we are addicted to alcohol. Then it is our life.

In the New Testament Paul gives us very good advice; “*Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God*” (1 Corinthians 10:31).



Getting drunk, or even light-headed, is not giving glory to God. Solomon, the very wise son of David, wrote, “Like a city whose walls are broken through is a person who lacks self-control” (Proverbs 25:28 NIV). We must remain in control of our tongue, of our mind and of our body. Too much alcohol can deprive us of that control.

BULLYING

Bullying is unpleasant behaviour that is designed to upset or hurt someone. It can be physical, or verbal, and can take place anywhere, at school or college, at home, at work, even on the road. Sometimes it means attacking people for no other reason than they appear to be different.

It can be as simple as calling someone names. Verbal abuse involves belittling, ridiculing, or putting someone down. Often it comes from someone who has low self-esteem, and is a way of making the bully feel more important, and it isn't confined to children.

In our modern world it is possible to be bullied via the internet, through social media or texting. Constant harassment can escalate until real harm is done to the recipient, sometimes leading to disastrous results. There are occasions when bullying has led to suicide.

WHAT JESUS SAYS

If we realise that we are bullying someone, it is vital that we stop, right away. We should ask for forgiveness, from both the Lord God and the person we have hurt. There is no doubt that bullying and Christian behaviour do not go together. Jesus said, "*Just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise*" (Luke 6:31).

"*You shall love your neighbour as yourself*" (Matthew 19:19) is a very good

summary of the Master's teaching. We must realise that all varieties of bullying are the very opposite of what we would choose for ourselves, and this should therefore lead us to respect everyone with whom we come into contact. We would not like to feel that people were spreading malicious gossip about us – so therefore we shouldn't do it to others. If every day we try to spread a little happiness, rather than hatred, then the world will be a better place.

If we are suffering abuse, or if we know someone else who is, the bullying will almost certainly get worse if nothing is done about it. Someone must be told, however hard or distasteful this may be, or the bullies will feel that they want to keep up the pressure. Reporting it is the only practical way of getting it to stop, whether it is directed at children or adults. We must of course remember Jesus' advice about how to behave when someone has sinned against us, given in Matthew 15:15-17. Resorting to any sort of violence can only make matters a lot worse, and anyway, hitting someone or starting a fight is against scriptural principles (Proverbs 28:17, Luke 3:14).

DRUG & SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Drugs are chemicals that affect our mind and the way we behave. People usually start to take drugs when they see their friends doing it, or they come into contact with those who exploit a weaker person (e.g. drug pushers).

Very often the use of drugs and other substances can become addictive. The normal way a brain works can be changed by drugs, so that vigorous cravings are developed. These are almost impossible to ignore. Despite wanting to stop using drugs, the brain is changed to such an extent that it is virtually impossible. As drug use becomes a habit so our life becomes centred on repeating that release and comfort, and this cycle then changes the way we think, and behave. This craving can grow to become more important than anything else, and in time our whole life is controlled by the need for drugs. Family, education, our job and even our own health become secondary to the compulsion to get our hands on drugs.

Some people are more vulnerable to addiction than others. Why? Factors such as bad experiences in childhood, family history of drug addiction, depression, and health or mental disorders – all can play a part.

Drugs are very expensive to buy, and so the person who craves them sometimes turns to crime to obtain them. A terrible



downward spiral has therefore started, from which it is extremely difficult to escape.

Let's stop, and listen. Solomon, the wisest king of Israel, wrote "*The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise*" (Proverbs 12:15). It's really not worth turning to substances that do not help, but which will damage us. One of God's men wrote some words of real comfort long before the Lord Jesus was born. He promised Jesus would be exactly what a broken heart, or a troubled mind would need (see Isaiah 61:1-3).

THOSE WE LOVE

What if we see our loved ones starting a drugs habit? Or what can we do if we suspect that someone near to us is abusing substances?

If drugs are filling an empty void, here's our chance to lead that person to the serenity that Jesus Christ offers. When Jesus realised that a large crowd was determined to make him king, he sent his disciples away (to keep them from being tempted); then he dismissed the people; and then he went into a mountain to pray (Mark 6:45, 46, John 6:14,15). He knew what to do: he must isolate himself (and his friends) from the cause of the problem, and then ask God in prayer to help him. A year or so later he was in real agony of mind, knowing that his crucifixion was only hours away. What did he do? He knelt on

the ground and prayed. And immediately his prayer was heard. God sent an angel to strengthen him (Luke 22:43). We must never forget that prayers still work as well today as they did then.

It helps to know that the harmful effects of drugs CAN be overcome, provided the drug user is prepared to listen to others who can see what damage the drugs are doing, and acknowledge that there is a problem. *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me"* (Philippians 4:13). Paul uses the symbol of all parts of the human body working together, to represent the whole Christian church being united, and pulling together (Ephesians 4:16). He would not have used this illustration if the body was being torn apart by drugs.

MEDICAL DRUGS

We can all benefit from medical substances prescribed for us. One way to look at such things is what James describes as “faith and works” (see James 2:20-26). ‘Say a prayer and take a paracetamol’ may be an over simplification, but it’s no good praying that a pain will go away without doing what is necessary. At the same time we must never ignore what our body is telling us. The headache is telling us something, possibly that we need our eyes testing. It could be warning us of more serious health problems, which must be addressed. It could be that we simply need a rest. In the New Testament Paul advised Timothy not to drink the local water because of his recurring stomach problems. A little wine would suit him better (1 Timothy 5:23). In other words, this young man Timothy is cautioned to take reasonable steps to protect his health. That’s good advice for all of us.

Medical drugs used today are tried and tested long before they reach us, and we should thank the Lord for marvellous advances in modern medicine. But there is always the need for us to be aware of what we take, bearing in mind the problems of dependency and addiction.



GAMBLING

Why do people gamble? Three possible reasons present themselves:

- a) for fun, or excitement;
- b) they really need some extra cash; or
- c) they have become addicted to it and cannot stop themselves.

What is gambling? Most specialists suggest that it is taking a risk with something that we value in the hope of gaining something worth more. It ranges from buying a scratch card in the corner shop, to betting our entire savings. To be pedantic, many forms of investment could be described as a gamble, as we cannot be certain of getting our money back, let alone be sure of it gaining value. However, despite the occasional banking crisis or scam, government regulations keep most savings secure, and interest will regularly be applied. And we obviously have a responsibility to those who depend on us to invest our money wisely.



COMPULSIVE GAMBLING

The experts say that compulsive gambling is an illness, and that the gambler must want to recover. The excellent website www.gamblersanonymous.org contains a useful question-and-answer page, which offers a helpful introduction to the person whose gambling is out of their control. Addiction cannot usually be overcome just by wanting to give it up, but with the proper advice and expert help, great strides towards recovery can be made.

A NEED FOR MORE CASH

If our need is really greed, then as the prophet Haggai says, “*Consider your ways,*” (Haggai 1:4, 5). Many of us feel that we could always benefit from more money, but if we try to cultivate a sincere thankfulness for what we already have, then any supposed need fades into obscurity. Paul put it so well when he wrote, “*The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil*” (1 Timothy 6:10). If we really are in need, then it does not make sense to risk losing what little we have in the slender hope of gaining a fistful of cash. The probability of winning money on a scratch card, or the lottery, is very slim. There are many simple ways to save money, even on essentials such as food and clothes.

DEBT

Most of us have to take out a mortgage if we wish to own our own home, putting ourselves into debt. But putting ourselves into someone else's debt should never be undertaken without careful thought. Sadly, debt is a growing problem in our 21st century, and quite a lot of people get themselves deeper and deeper in debt before realising that they cannot manage the repayments. The New Testament principle is to pay what we owe, whether it is debts, revenue or honour (Romans 13:6-8 NIV). We must always keep a promise to repay, and if we cannot keep that agreement, then we should not borrow in the first place.

CHARITABLE GIVING

It is generally agreed that if a charity needs help, more funds will be forthcoming if some form of gift or prize is offered to "one lucky winner." This too can be categorized as a gamble. For raffles or charitable sweepstakes there is hardly an element of gambling on the part of the giver, as most consider their stakes as donations. But why can't we just simply give, without looking for anything back? Jesus did just that.

The Bible tells us to be generous with what we have - see these passages for example: Luke 3:11 and 12:21, Galatians 6:9,10 and 1 Timothy 6:18,19. Sharing what we have with those who are in need is the perfect expression of loving other people as we love ourselves (Matthew 19:19). The lesson for all of us is to be as generous as we can with what we have been given by God.

We all need to use our "Christian eyes" and to be on the lookout for people in need. It can be terribly difficult for some people to admit they are in poverty, and we may be able to offer help before the other person has plucked up sufficient courage to ask for it.

GODLINESS WITH CONTENTMENT

Paul sums this up so well when he writes to the young man Timothy, "*Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content*" (1 Timothy 6:6,7). This is often a hard lesson to learn, especially when we see others enjoying things we don't have – but would we really want it all? Many years ago the patient man Job recognised that true riches come from God, when he said, "*The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord*" (Job 1:21).

Contentment is a quality which only comes after carefully thinking things through. The first Christian preacher told some of his hearers to be content with their wages (Luke 3:14, see also Hebrews 13:5). Surely if we all adopt this attitude, then not only greed, but gambling itself, would be eradicated.



LEISURE & HOW WE USE IT

Spare time, or leisure, is very dependent on who we are, and where we live. Retired people have a lot more opportunity to choose how they spend their time than working parents; and subsistence farmers in developing countries need to spend most waking moments providing food for their families.

People in Bible times spent their days differently to working people of today, and that is one reason why God decreed in the Old Testament that the last day in the week (the Sabbath) should be a day of rest (Exodus 20:10,11). It was probably the only opportunity that many had to rest, and to talk and think about God. In the New Testament the Sabbath was replaced by the first day of the week, the day that Jesus rose from the grave. There are no laws however in the New Testament about prohibiting work on Sunday, as there were in the Old Testament about the Sabbath. To a Christian, every day should be a “God Day” (Acts 20:7, 1 Corinthians 16:2, Colossians 2:16, 17).

IDLE HANDS

There’s an old saying (not in the Bible) that “Satan finds mischief for idle hands to do”. This is very true, and is borne out by several Bible stories. One is about King David who was used to going to war at a certain time in the year, and on one occasion he did not go, but stayed at home. One evening he couldn’t sleep, and walked about on the flat roof of the palace. From there he saw a woman,

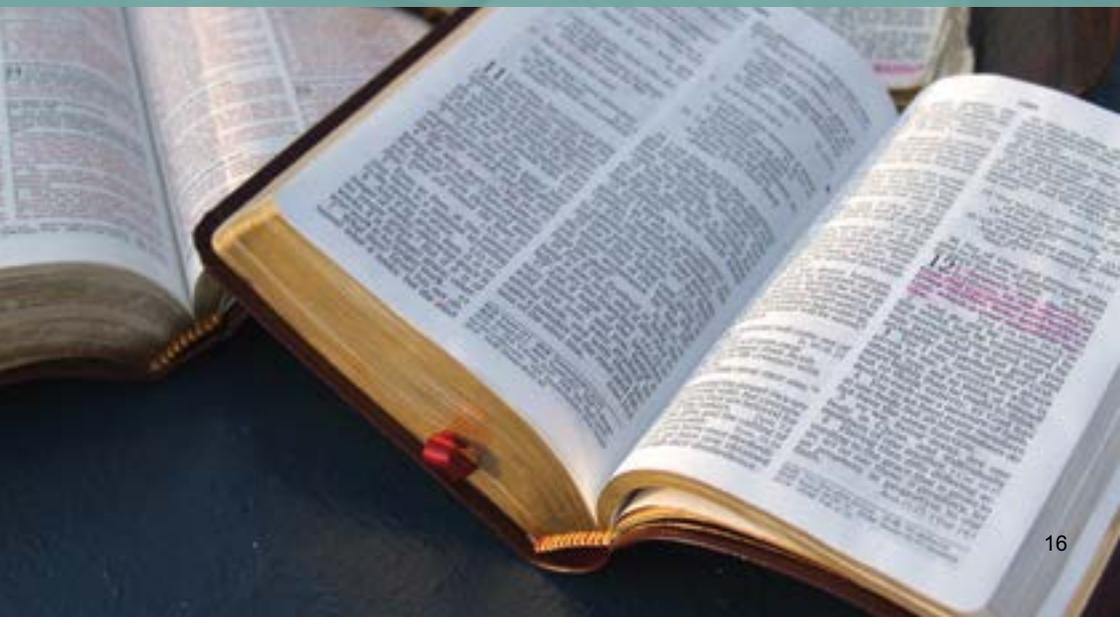
probably naked, washing herself, and he was tempted. He slept with her, and later murdered her husband (2 Samuel 11:1-21). A very terrible thing to do, and God rightly punished him for it. By reading this account we are surely invited to see that this is a tremendous lesson for us. David was not used to having so much time to spare, and completely misused it, with disastrous results.

Another story in Genesis 34, even further back in history, tells of Jacob's daughter Dinah, who went out to see what the local girls were doing. This was not wrong, until we read the whole account, and realise that probably she didn't know how to behave, or what the limits of acceptable conduct were. She was the only girl among eleven brothers, and possibly did not know about flirting with young men. She got into terrible trouble, and was raped by a prince of that country.

So the Bible has got some extremely useful material for us today! Idle hands can all too easily be filled with mischief. Surely, we are invited to consider David's gross sins of adultery and murder, and Dinah's naivety and subsequent downfall, and learn the lessons. We must know how to be in control of ourselves at all times.

ENJOYING OURSELVES

No one is saying that we should not enjoy our leisure, or that having spare time is wrong. What the Bible is saying is that we must recognise the difference between right and wrong, and make the necessary adjustments to our behaviour. The wise man Solomon wrote about us enjoying ourselves (Ecclesiastes 11:9). He gave the illustration of young people pleasing themselves, and doing what they wanted to do, but warned that there would be a judgement. If we want to play football, go shopping, watch television or play computer games - we must always remember that God is watching us, and so we must not do anything which will displease Him.



RELATIONSHIPS

Our human bodies have been designed in a most wonderful way. When our bodies work well, we hardly ever notice that they are actually working at all. What a wonderful Designer made us!

From about the age of ten right up to extreme old age we find the opposite sex attractive, and hormones or urges kick in which we have to learn to control. There is an acceptable level of conduct which we must acknowledge and abide by, whenever we are dealing with other people. Jesus Christ put it very well when he said, *“I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart”* (Matthew 5:28). He knew how weak the human mind can be, and so advised us not to put ourselves in situations where we might be tempted. This can be particularly perilous when we fantasise about someone or surf the internet for sexual stimulation.

FROM THE BEGINNING

The Bible gives the account of the origins of the human race. Man and woman were made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). They reflect different aspects of the Lord God within their relationship and towards others. It is explained that Adam’s wife Eve was made as a suitable companion for him, and the two of them were to live happily together, fulfilling each other’s needs, and being helpers and mates for one another. It was designed to be a life-long partnership.

THE IDEAL MARRIAGE

God, the Creator, decided that people should be far superior to the animal creation. Men and women have been given a conscience and a spiritual dimension which animals do not have. God has also given us free will. This means that although He points out the best way for us to live our lives, He does not make us do anything. A few animals mate for life, but most do not. It might sound strange to some people, but human marriage is intended to be life-long. Sexual activity within a marriage was designed by God (Hebrews 13:4), and can be one of life’s purest pleasures.



In marriage one man and one woman are physically (and spiritually) joined together, and therefore any thought of sexual activity outside of marriage is a deviation. Animals are not joined in “holy matrimony”. People are.

The Bible speaks of the sin of adultery, and roundly condemns it (Exodus 20:14, Matthew 5:27, 28). The coming together of a man and a woman, for sex, is designed by God, and is not intended for sleeping around, or for one-night stands.

The New Testament shows how sacred and special a married relationship is when marriage is likened to the union of Jesus Christ with his believers: *“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church”* (Ephesians 5:31,32 NIV).

THOUGHTFUL BEHAVIOUR

All of us must be very aware that other people look at us. If we have purposely dressed in a way which will look sexy, or provocative, then we should not be surprised if this leads to unwelcome attentions. There’s a difference between looking well-dressed and flaunting our bodies. Clothes were first introduced in the Garden of Eden, and were to hide nakedness (Genesis 3:7, 21). There have been a tremendous number of fashion changes since then, but let us remember that we have a choice in what we wear, and how we wear it.

Equally, we need to be so very careful when we look at other people. Being in control of our bodies and our urges will avoid the inevitable pain and guilt when things go wrong. It is important to remember that alcohol and drugs affect our self-control, and persuade us to take risks we would avoid when sober. Thoughtful behaviour is at the heart of Christ-like relationships.

SEXUAL ABUSE

This can be defined as one person making sexual advances, threats or actions, to someone who does not want them. It is not something terrible that only happened in children’s homes a few years ago. It can take place anytime, anywhere and at any age. Abuse can also take place at work, perhaps not physically, but psychologically. Sometimes the abuser demands that it must not be reported or else the chances of promotion will be reduced, but that is blackmail, and should not be tolerated.

Sexual abuse must be reported. Help is vital for both the abused and the abuser. Sometimes abuse takes place within families, with the victim being threatened not to tell. The person might even think it to be their own fault, and may feel guilt. The websites listed at the end of this booklet have helpful advice, and explain what to do if abuse is suspected.

PORNOGRAPHY

“Flee from sexual immorality”

1 Corinthians 6:18 NIV

It is very easy to become addicted to pornography on the internet. This is a path that will take us away from Jesus Christ. God’s warning about temptation is clear and wise – leave it alone and walk away. The apostle Paul says *“Flee from sexual immorality”* (1 Corinthians 6:18 NIV). Instead, we should concentrate on filling our minds with Christ-like thoughts. Jesus said, *“For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of”* (Matthew 12:34 NIV). Put simply, this means that what we have allowed to go into our minds will come out in our conversations. And if that means filth has been allowed in, filth will come out.

Pornography can be described as “sexual descriptions and pictures designed to

arouse erotic emotions.” This sort of material is quite the opposite to that which Jesus would have us read, and we should therefore make every effort to avoid it.

It’s said that it takes twenty one days to form a habit. But have you noticed how much easier it is to slip into bad habits? Pornography is a prime example. It is part of everyday life, from school playgrounds to TV channels, and is all over the internet. For some people it is much harder to avoid than find. Rather than run the risk of this becoming a habit, let us make sure than we ignore it, and forget it, as soon as we realise how godless and unchristian it is. It is a path that leads to no good. God’s warning about these paths is clear and wise – step off and walk away.

SELF-HARM

This is something that, by definition, people do to themselves. It can incorporate a wide range of things that people do deliberately, which will damage their bodies.

Some people bite, burn or cut their bodies, while others use more serious methods to inflict pain and suffering. This can be the result of emotional distress, or because of a serious problem for which the self-harmer feels there is no remedy. The rationale may be that by causing physical pain one will help overcome emotional pain.

Most people look after themselves and protect themselves from pain or harm. But when problems seem to have become insurmountable, a few people try to push things out of sight by inflicting pain on themselves. For a short while their troubles are obscured by the pain they now have to cope with. In the course of time they may even come to hate themselves.

The intention to hurt oneself can often be traced to a huge build-up of pressure for young people from either home or school life. Often they will go to great lengths to hide what they are doing, and usually will feel loaded with guilt. Help is available from qualified practitioners.

CAN CHRISTIANITY HELP?

For those of us blessed with sound bodies and few major problems, we should take notice that the New Testament speaks of our bodies as being equivalent to the Temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16,17), a place where God can dwell. This wonderful truth should therefore motivate us to protect and respect our bodies. May we suggest therefore that in the light of this Bible teaching (see also 2 Corinthians 6:16, Leviticus 19:28) it is not advisable to make tattoos or many piercings in our bodies?

If we have already been involved in self-harming, or we meet someone who has, then possibly Bible quotations such as this are not very appropriate. We need practical help. And we want it now. If we cannot cope with life's problems we must seek professional help.

SMOKING

The days are long gone when television adverts told us that the way to get a partner was to smoke a cigarette. The adverse effects of inhaling smoke (tiny particles of soot combined with chemical substances) into our lungs have for many years been recognised as a very serious health threat.

Smoking tobacco originated in America, and in 1492 Christopher Columbus brought a few tobacco leaves and seeds to Europe, but it was in the 16th century that men like Jean Nicot of France (whose name gives us the word nicotine) introduced the habit of smoking in Europe. This greatly increased during the two world wars, but it was only in the 1950's that the UK woke up to the fact that tobacco smoke produces such gross harm to our bodies, and often causes cancer. Nicotine damages the body by increasing blood pressure and restricting our blood vessels, which can result in severe heart problems.

The habit of smoking can be described in the same way as the addictive habit of drugs and alcohol we talked about in an earlier section. Once started, it can be extremely difficult to stop.

When we look at the smoking habit through Christian eyes we must be sympathetic to those who have already started and now find it very hard to give up. However, there's nothing that prayer cannot help. The Lord God has designed our bodies, and knows that we are weak creatures, especially when once we have formed an addiction. But that does not excuse us

from trying to stop smoking. The apostle Paul says, "*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me*" (Philippians 4:13). Therefore we can at least try to stop doing what we have previously done. We can also help and assist those who are making an effort.

IMPROVING OUR IMAGE

The problems attached to self-worth have been mentioned previously in this booklet, and we must recognise that sometimes we all feel a need to improve our image. Smoking is not a way to do this. It might also help to realise that most people accept us for what we are. Starting to smoke gives out a very bad signal and by us doing it, we may encourage others to do so too.

The apostle Paul had spent three whole years in Ephesus, on the west coast of what today we call Turkey. His parting message to the elders of the church he had started there, was, "*You know In what manner I always lived among you, serving the Lord with all humility*" (Acts 20:18-21). He knew that folk accepted him as he was – and surely the same can apply to us, providing we are "serving the Lord with all humility."

THE BIBLE SAYS

A final message from the Bible



In the Old Testament period, God's presence on earth was centred in the Temple (Exodus 25:8). God dwells in heaven, but the Temple was the place where people could feel nearest to Him. Things changed in the Christian era, and the New Testament says to the believers, "*You are the temple of the living God*" (1 Corinthians 3:16). This is a wonderful privilege. Rather than having a separate temple or a holy building, true Christians are told that God dwells in them.

This means that our bodies, which were designed by God in the first place, are now very special to Him. The implication is not that we should worship our bodies, but that we should recognise them as equivalent to the Temple of the Old Testament. Paul wrote, "*What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: 'I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people'*" (2 Corinthians 6:16).

If our bodies represent the **temple of God**,
let us keep them pure and holy for Him.

USEFUL ADDRESSES

ALCOHOLIC DRINK

Alcoholics Anonymous

www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk
0845 769 7555

BULLYING

BullyingUK

www.bullying.co.uk
0808 800 2222

National Bullying Prevention Center

(An American site for children with disabilities)

www.pacer.org/bullying

Stop Bullying *(an American website)*

www.stopbullying.gov

DRUGS & SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Talk to Frank

www.talktofrank.com
0300 123 6600

GAMBLING

Gamblers Anonymous

www.gamblersanonymous.org.uk
07909 813070

MONEY

Citizens Advice

www.citizensadvice.org.uk
England: 08444 111 444
Wales: 08444 77 20 20

National Debtline

www.nationaldebtline.co.uk
0808 808 4000

PORNOGRAPHY

www.nakedtruthprayer.com

www.cycresource.com

SELF-HARM

Mind (a mental health charity)

www.mind.org.uk
020 8519 2122

NHS

www.nhs.uk/conditions/Self-injury

NHS Direct

0845 4647

SEXUAL ABUSE

NSPCC

www.nspcc.org.uk

0808 800 5000

SMOKING

NHS - Smoke Free

www.smokefree.nhs.uk

0800 022 4 332

www.patient.co.uk/health/tips-to-help-you-stop-smoking



The Christadelphian Support Network UK is very willing to offer help as far as we are able with any of the above problems. Please see our web site at www.chsn.org.uk and the Resources tab. Our Help line is 0845 11 300 72.

Those seeking our help are normally from our church community and their families. For your local support groups see your library or GP surgery or the front of Yellow Pages.

David Simpson

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Tel: 0845 22 55 789

website: www.thechristadelphians.org.uk

NKJV acknowledgement

New King James Version

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NIV acknowledgement

New International Version

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