



**Methamphetamine, Ice, Glass, Crystal, Chalk,
Speed, Crank, Go-fast**

My brother Jim was born when I was 16. I rocked him and fed him and watched him grow up strong and handsome. He was 12 or 13 when he first used pot and poppers behind the junior high he attended in Missouri. We put him in a residential treatment program when we discovered it. Formerly a bright kid, he almost flunked 8th grade. Eventually he dropped out of school.

His first encounter with crystal meth was at a party when he was 22. He'd used lesser drugs before and thought he could handle this one. The girl that gave it to him was cute, someone he wanted to impress. His first reaction was ecstasy and an overwhelming need to do it again.

He became delusional and paranoid, suspicious and withdrawn. He lost one job after another, lost interest in his friends that did not do drugs. He didn't sleep for days at a time. He lost interest in his music, his motorcycle, and all the things he'd enjoyed before he got hooked. My mother was 68 years old. He moved back in with her because he couldn't support himself.

He had paranoid delusions about the police. He thought he'd be arrested for making crystal meth, be thrown in jail and raped by the other inmates. He thought he'd been framed by the drug dealers. He wanted to run away to Mexico. My mother couldn't handle him, so she brought him to my house to see if I could take care of him.

He lived with me for just over a year. At first he lived with me in my home. We got him outpatient therapy and he was diagnosed schizophrenic. Paranoid schizophrenia is a brutal diagnosis, but it can be managed with medications, and we were prepared to cope

with that for the long term. But the medications didn't work. He had a drug-induced paranoia and nothing helped him.

He could function as long as he stayed clean, but he found some friends here and started drinking and using again. He became so irrational and dangerous I had to move him out of my house. He had paranoid delusions about my children, 5 and 2 at the time, and I was expecting another child. We got him an apartment and a job, and tried to continue therapy.

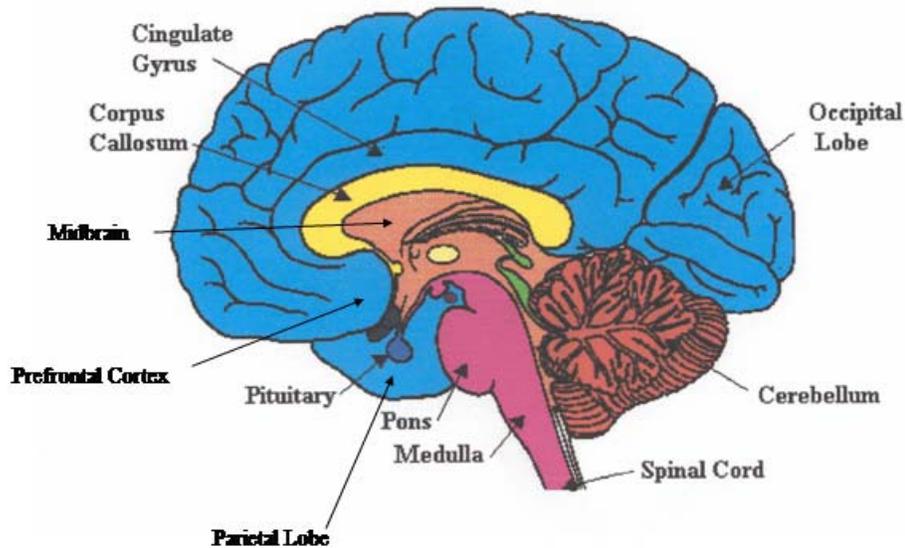
He went through 12 jobs in 12 months and quit treatment. He was arrested twice on public intoxication charges. The day before his court date he skipped town and went back to my mother's place. She checked him into a hospital when he attempted suicide, but they wouldn't keep him past the 72-hour emergency commitment. He was using heavily again, and getting more and more paranoid.

He was convinced the "drug dealers" were out to get him. They were going to torture him and kill him. They knew where all his brothers and sisters lived and they were going to get us too. He thought they could read his mind and knew where he was and what he was thinking. It was like being in a bad dream, but he couldn't wake up. He couldn't tolerate it anymore.

He found a gun at my uncle's house and shot himself in the head on the 4th of July 2000 at age 24. When they closed the casket on my little brother, my older brother had to hold me up. I can't tell you how bad it hurt to lower him into the ground.

This drug kills, some by overdose, some by suicide, some by drug related violence. This drug destroys the lives of those who use it. It destroys the lives of their families, their children, and their parents. My older brother and his wife are foster parents in Missouri. All of the children they keep are victims of crystal meth.

You have exactly one chance to make a choice about this drug. Once you have tried it you no longer have any choices. You become its slave. Crystal meth damages the brain with its first use. The pathway in the brain that controls emotion; fear, anxiety, and anger; is overwhelmed and damaged. Nothing will satisfy the craving, or relieve the anguish of the crash, except more meth. My brother described it as a leaky blood brain barrier. He wondered if there was a medicine to repair it. There is not.



The Brain On Methamphetamine

Let me explain how this drug works and how it affects your brain. I'll start with a little anatomy lesson. Look at the diagram. The brain is organized into discrete areas with specialized functions. The back of the brain is called the occipital lobe; it processes visual information from the eyes and forms the images we see. The back of the brain is your movie screen.

The very front of the brain is called the pre-frontal cortex; it processes emotional information like love, fear, anger, and happiness, what we call moods. Our experience of these emotions is a function of the pre-frontal cortex.

The parietal lobes are on the sides of the brain. They control movement and sensation, the sense of our location in space. They control the muscles of the arms and legs. They are essential for coordinated movement.

The mid-brain structures are the highways that connect the "suburbs", the eyes, and ears, touch, and taste, with the "big city" the brain. They integrate incoming messages about the world outside and communicate them to the brain. They are also the center of the personality, who you are as a person, your self control, your strength of character.

Methamphetamine affects three areas of the brain, the midbrain, prefrontal cortex, and parietal lobes. The high it produces is the result of a surge of a chemical called dopamine

in the midbrain structures. Marijuana, alcohol, and cocaine also produce increases in dopamine in the same parts of the brain, but in a slightly different way.

Marijuana “tickles” the nerves in the pleasure center of the brain, and makes a mild high. It causes swelling in the synapses of the neurons in the midbrain. It creates an appetite for drugs because the “tickle” feels good and you want to do it again, a little harder, a little longer. It sets up a demand for stronger drugs. It also reduces your natural hesitancy to try hard drugs. When you go to a party they get you drunk first, and then get out the hard drugs.

Cocaine and methamphetamine create a huge surge in dopamine and a correspondingly more intense and longer lasting “high”. Dopamine is depleted, and the “crash” after the drug wears off is proportionate to the “high” that preceded it. The crash after meth is intensely painful and lasts a lot longer than the high, 4 to 5 days is average. The only thing that relieves the anguish of the crash is another high.

The crash has been described as the nastiest flu you’ve ever had. You feel tired and depressed, achy all over, nauseated and feverish. You feel grouchy and mean, irritable, restless and confused. You crave more drug, you’ll do anything to get more drug. You don’t care who you hurt, you don’t care who you lie to. You’ll say anything, do anything to get the money for one more hit.

How Does Meth Work?

The connection between two nerve cells is called the synapse. Cell A is the sending cell; cell B is the receiving cell. Cell A releases a chemical called a neurotransmitter into the gap between the cells, and cell B has receptor on it to receive the neurotransmitter. Once the signal is received, cell B sends a feedback message that indicates the message has been received. Cell A then reabsorbs its neurotransmitter and the signal ends. This process is extremely fast, on the order of microseconds. The information is encoded a lot like Morse code. The interval and frequency of signals sends the content of the message.

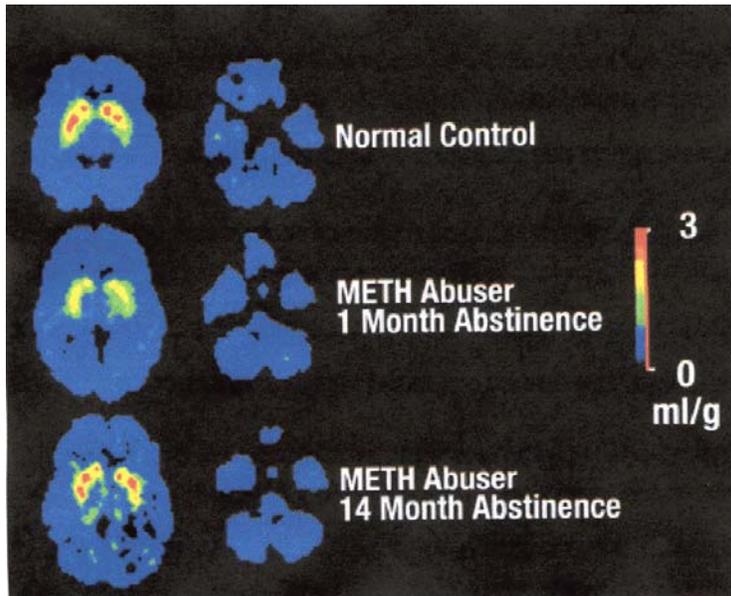
Cell A and cell B have been talking like this for years, using dopamine as a neurotransmitter. Then one day cocaine or meth-amphetamine comes along and disables the transporter molecule so that dopamine is flooded into the synapse at 100 times the concentration these cells have ever seen before. Cell A is stuck in the ‘on’ position. It’s like you took the lid off the fire hydrant and all the water comes gushing out.

Instead of the click, click, click, cell B is used to, it hears a siren in its ear. The enzyme that normally metabolizes dopamine is also disabled so that the siren lasts for 12 – 20 hours. If you were to scream at the top of your lungs for 12 – 20 hours your voice would get hoarse. The dopamine transporter molecule also gets hoarse, its vocal cords rupture and it can’t talk. The transporter molecule is permanently damaged and it no longer sends appropriate signals, even when the drug has worn off.

Cell B sends a signal back to cell A saying “Enough already, I heard you” But its not cell A doing the screaming. It’s cocaine or meth-amphetamine that’s doing the screaming, and it won’t stop. Cell B might put up with this abuse once or twice, but if it happens too many times cell B will eventually disconnect its telephone. It destroys its own receptor, and now

cell A and cell B do not talk to each other any more. Normal signals that used to pass through that connection are no longer being conducted.

As receptors are destroyed, it takes more and more drug to get high; eventually you don't get high anymore, no matter how much drug you take. All you do is stay out of withdrawal. You now have a \$200-\$300 a day habit just to feel normal.



What Methamphetamine is made out of

Battery acid
Anhydrous ammonia
Kerosene
Red Devil Lye
Antifreeze
Hydrochloric acid
Coleman fuel
Red phosphorus
Iodine
Drain cleaner

Brain Scan Changes

The picture to the side is a PET scan of a brain on meth. The top is a normal brain with red dopamine transmission through the mid brain. In the second brain, there is no red transmission through dopamine pathways in the midbrain. All the phones have been disconnected.

That means the central brain no longer has control over the parts of the brain that used to be connected to it. You no longer have control over mood and emotion. You have personality changes, you are paranoid, you are irritable and grouchy. You have twitches

and tremors and muscle spasms. You can't eat or sleep. You have panic attacks that go on for days. Cravings control your life.

The connections in your brain are eventually restored after about a year off meth. That's how long it takes for cell B to trust cell A not to scream in its ear again, and for cell A to repair its vocal cords. The new connections are not exactly the same as the old connections, but there is transmission along that cell line. You can see that in the picture of the third brain. There is red transmission in the dopamine pathways in the midbrain, but it is distorted.

As connections are reformed in the first year of abstinence, you see significant improvement. The cravings are not so strong. The panic attacks get less frequent and severe. The paranoia and delusions improve. You start thinking clearer and you can control your anger and rage better. You start eating better and sleeping more. The tremors and muscle spasms get a little better each day. But the recovery you see at one year is all the recovery you are going to get. Any residual damage after one year is likely to be permanent.

In the third brain, the cells are reconnected, but the connections are not the same as the old connections. Two major tracts through the midbrain, the fasciculus retroflexus and the mesocorticolimbic tract are permanently damaged. These are the tracts in the brain in charge of self control and perception of reality. Damage to these tracts is permanent, and results in addiction, severe cravings for methamphetamine that you have no control over. You don't care about feeding the kids, you don't care about paying the rent, you want another hit and you want it right now.

What you'll also notice in the picture of the third brain is the little holes in the substance of the brain. These are not just the normal fluid collections of the brain; these are new holes where brain tissue is supposed to be.



The Battery Acid Effect

I call this the Battery Acid effect. You don't have enzymes to metabolize meth-amphetamine. It is not a natural product. Meth-amphetamine is made out of battery acid, anti-freeze, and Red Devil lye. Your body turns it into hydroxy free radicals. These are caustic chemicals and they eat holes in your brain.

A study by scientists at UCLA published in March 2000 demonstrated lower levels of N acetyl aspartate, and higher levels of myoinositol and choline compounds in the brains of methamphetamine users. These chemicals indicate cell death in the midbrain, parietal lobes, and pre-frontal cortex.

Follow up studies were done for 2 years in people who got completely off drugs [mostly an inmate population] They showed minimal [10-15%] recovery of brain function in some patients. People who used the largest amounts of meth had the most damage, and the least recovery with time.

The holes are permanent. This brain tissue does not grow back. You learn to work around the holes, you compensate by using other parts of the brain, but you do not replace the dead tissue. If you have been using for more than 6 months you probably have holes in your brain that you have been working around for a long time.

What Do Those Holes Do To You?

This is serious damage to a central part of the brain. When midbrain and pre-frontal cortex brain cells are disabled, there is no other structure in the brain that can take over their functions. The areas that process mood and emotion are destroyed, and the result is paranoia [uncontrolled fear], rage [uncontrolled anger], panic [uncontrolled anxiety], delusions, and hallucinations [uncontrolled perception].

The areas that control coordination are damaged and the result is involuntary body movements (uncontrollable twitches of the fingers, facial twitches, lip smacking, tongue protrusion). I met a man in jail that had a constant chatter in his teeth. They chattered day and night, and had been doing that for 2 years. That constant tremor is never going to go away.

Flashbacks of rage and paranoia are common. Jim had a little cat he'd had since he was 10 years old. One day he flew into a rage and started beating his cat. He loved that cat. He almost killed it. He knew he was killing his cat and he couldn't stop himself.

The paranoia is completely irrational. The UPS man comes to your neighbor's house with a package. You think he's a narc with a gun and he's after you. The cops are hiding in the trees outside. They have satellites that can read your mind. You misinterpret innocent gestures and accuse people of ridiculous things.

Panic attacks can go on for days. When Jim first came to live with me he would spend days in a corner of the closet crying, wouldn't eat, couldn't sleep, he was in a catatonic panic attack. Every time the phone rang, he was under the table. If someone came to the front door, he went out the back door. The other kind of panic attack is the manic panic attack. You have to go, go, go, can't hold still. You get behind the wheel of a car and go 200 miles per hour and run everybody off the road.

You lose the ability to feel pleasure. Nothing feels good anymore. Sex doesn't feel good, talking to your friends doesn't feel good, playing your guitar doesn't feel good.

Short term memory and learning ability are lost. You get a new job and they try to train you to run the register. A week goes by and you still don't get it. Two weeks go by, you're not catching on. After three weeks of training, you still can't do your job, they fire you. You can't get past the training sessions in any job.

Early signs of damage include severe depression, insomnia, moodiness and irritability, violent and aggressive behavior, inability to concentrate, memory loss, and anorexia. Other long-term effects include malnutrition, disorganized lifestyle leading to chronic unemployment, inability to learn new things, and complete loss of self-control.

As the brain heals, these functions improve. You learn to work around the holes and regain function. It takes 12 to 18 months to regain your old personality, your attention span, your sense of humor, your sex drive, and your appetite. Cell A and Cell B build new connections and your rage and paranoia fade, flashbacks and nightmares go away, the tremors go away and you get your old self back.

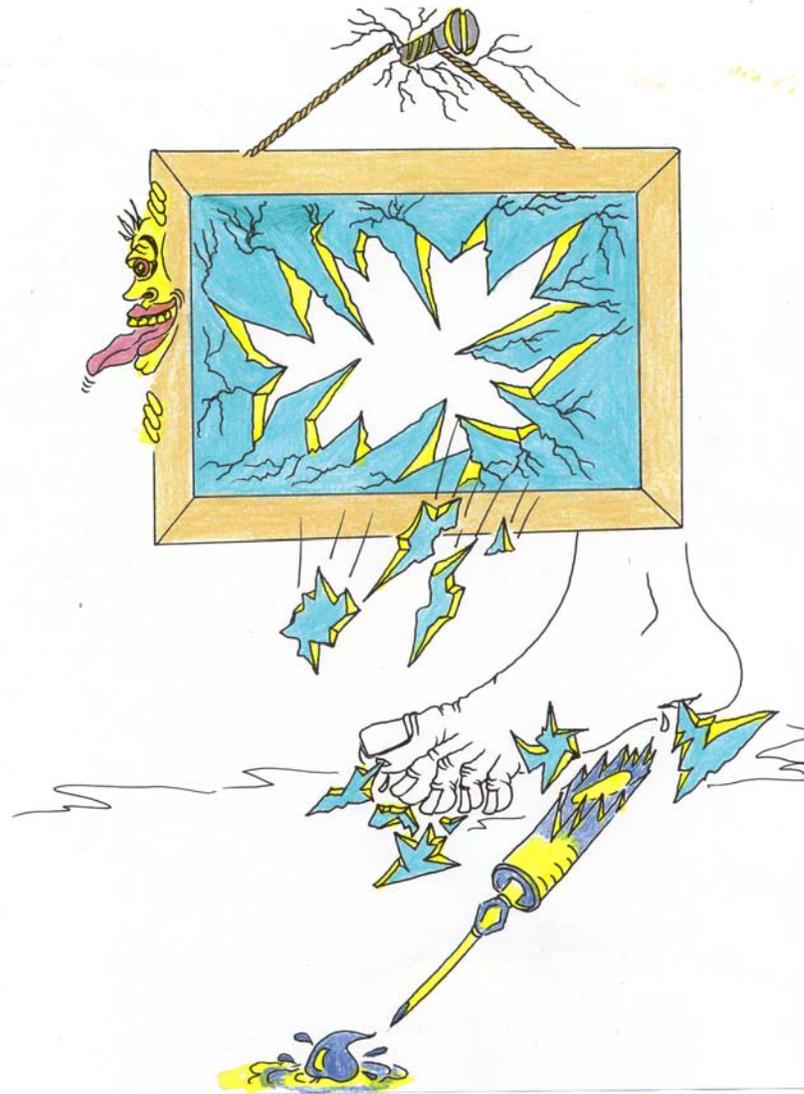
But the wiring is different now, and some of the damage is permanent.

New Connections In The Midbrain

The brain is rewired to want drug. Severe craving is wired into the brain so that anything that reminds you of your drug will set off the pathway that causes drug craving. The sight of the house you used to party at will set you off. The smell of marijuana, the sound of party music, aluminum foil, a rusty spoon, anything you associate with the drug experience can be a trigger to cause unbearable craving for more meth.

I met a man in prison that got out of jail once, and on the way home treated himself to a beer and a joint. He never made it home. He got rearrested and ended up back in jail that very same night because he didn't know about triggers. Never got to sleep in his own bed. Never got to see his children. He thought he was free of methamphetamine. He'd been clean for a year. He didn't think he'd ever have to worry about Ice again. He was wrong.

Let's picture this. Can you imagine having splinters of glass ground into the bottom of your foot? It hurts and you can't walk. You go to the Doctor and he says, "Sorry, it can't be removed. You just have to live with it." But you can't walk! So you go to a specialist and he says the same thing, "Sorry, it can't be removed." So now you go through life with splinters of glass embedded in the bottom of your foot, and nobody can do anything to get them out!



Now What?

OK, so now what? Your brain is damaged. You have splinters of glass ground into your brain, (one of the slang names for meth is glass] and you can't get them out. How do you salvage what's left of your life? How do you quit damaging what's left of your brain?

You have to quit using drugs. Even alcohol is not safe. It stimulates the midbrain areas that the meth has damaged. Unfortunately, the part of the brain that controls compulsive and addictive behaviors is the fasciculus retroflexus which is the first place the meth disabled. Intense drug craving is elicited by the smell of marijuana, the sight of a dirty spoon or a piece of tin foil, the sound of party music, the friends you used to shoot up with.

Every addict eventually stops using. It may be in the morgue, it may be in jail, it may be in the nursing home when the brain damage is so severe you can't feed yourself. How about now?

How about now, while you can still feed yourself. If you are reading this book, it is not too late for you. You are not so far gone that you can't come back and have a normal life, regain your personality, and enjoy life again.

It Takes A Lot of Courage

It takes a lot of courage to quit a drug habit. You have to tolerate withdrawal symptoms, walk away from triggers, reorganize your whole life. You have to break off relationships that hurt you, drag you back into drugs. You have to establish new relationships that help you avoid triggers and learn to have fun without doing drugs. Triggers are everywhere and you can't go through life without running into them. You need help.

Recovered addicts are extremely vulnerable to relapse for the first 2 to 3 years after quitting drugs. There are treatment centers, counselors, and support groups available for rehabilitation, but no counselor can be there for you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. There is only one Guy that can do that for you, and His name is Jesus Christ.

You get to know Jesus the same way you get to know anybody else, by talking to Him. Tell Him everything; tell him how things were when you were a kid. Tell Him who your friends are and how you feel about them. Tell him about your disappointments, your struggles, the things that hurt you. You can talk all night, he'll listen to you. And He talks to you, too. He speaks in the voice of your conscience.

Hang out with His friends, the folks that go to His place on Sundays. Get to know some people that know how to have fun without getting stoned. Get some people around you that know about your struggles and can support you when things get tough.

Read that book He wrote, the Bible. It's a story of temptation and failure, struggle and courage, and it's about the power of Jesus over death and despair.

Spiritual Rehabilitation

12 step programs all start with an appeal to a Higher Power for strength to overcome. They know that spiritual rehabilitation is key to successful drug rehabilitation. They help put God back in the center of a person's life.

Every person on this planet worships something. The thing you plan for, the thing you long for, the thing you think about, meditate on, organize your life around, that is the god you have chosen to worship. It's a choice you make.

When we realize the living God spoke this universe into existence with the words, "Let there be light," the only intelligent response to that is obedience. We organize our lives around Him. We live the way our creator designed us to live. He has given us an eternal spirit. We're playing for keeps here.

God Gets a Lot of Bad Press

We need to take a good look at who God really is. He gets a lot of bad press. People think He's a big mean bully ready to punish us for the slightest infraction. It is almost universal for us to think God is just like our dad.

It's natural to think like that. When you're two years old, your dad is god. What dad says goes. If he says you are bad, you are bad. If he says you are good, you are good. You define yourself based on what your dad told you about yourself, for better or worse.

You tend to become what your dad called you. If you hear, "You are stupid. You'll never amount to anything." every day for 20 years, after a while you believe it's true, and you act like it's true.

If you spend any time reading the Bible, you will find that God is not like your dad. Dad was more interested in the television than he was in you. He abandoned you every day to go to work. Even the kindest human father could not love you the way you needed to be loved. It's impossible.

Some of us had fathers that abused us, beat us, humiliated us, and condemned us. Some of us had fathers that abandoned us, rejected us. Some had fathers that manipulated us with their temper, threatened us with bodily harm, ruled with their rage.

It is very hard to believe in a loving God if your father was abusive and cruel. You're afraid of God. You're pretty sure He's going to slap you up the side of the head like your dad did.

You have to get that image of God out of your head. Look at God in the Bible, the doting Father that led his children out of Egypt and fed them, disciplined them, and gave them a new home. Look at the Psalms and see the Father that comforts his children, listens to them pray all night long if need be. Look at the gospels and see the Father that loved so much He ran to meet the prodigal son and embraced him and took him home.

Look at His record of forgiveness, compassion, provision, and care. You say, "How could God possibly love me? I'm a drug addict and a criminal." His love has nothing to do with who you are. It has everything to do with who He is. He loves because it is His nature to love. You can't earn it, you can't deserve it, you can only accept His love.

We Get Addicted to Drugs to Numb the Pain

All of us have been wounded, some of us have been brutalized. Getting high is a way to cope with the pain and anger we feel when you have been abused. Even if it was years ago and everybody else has forgotten about it, you are hurt and angry.

When your daily reality is torment and teasing, you are hurt and you are angry. When you have been abandoned by your father or mother you feel worthless, like there must be something wrong with you. When you have been beaten and molested by someone who was supposed to love and protect you, you feel betrayed and humiliated. Some of us don't even remember what it was that hurt us so bad. We're just angry. We're mad at the whole world and everybody in it, and we don't even know why.

We take out our anger on ourselves, with self destructive behaviors. We take it out on other people that had nothing to do with our abuse. We get depressed, we feel worthless.

We ask, "Where was God?" Where was God when your mother was beating you senseless? Where was God when your brother humiliated you every chance he got? Where was God when your 'friends' betrayed you, or your wife left you for another man? Where was God when the kids in school were tormenting you, slamming you up against the locker, flushing your head down the toilet? Where was God when your father was

molesting you every night for years and years and nobody cared? Where was God when a bunch of church people told you that you weren't good enough for Jesus? Where was He? Did He not care? Was He not paying attention? Did He not notice?

He was hanging on a tree, stripped naked, beaten, bloody, spikes in his hands and feet, publicly humiliated, and abandoned by all his 'friends'. You are angry. You were hurt and you are angry. You're not the only one that is angry about what happened to you. God is angry. God is furious about the things that were done to you. He vented His wrath upon Himself in the person of Jesus Christ hanging on a tree. It's called 'the atonement'. The cross is ugly and obscene. What happened to you was ugly and obscene.

You don't have to live the rest of your life with pain and anger. It's not really living, it's a kind of death that goes on and on, every day. You can take your pain and your anger and take them to the cross of Jesus Christ and give them to Him. Justice is satisfied in Him. You know He didn't survive the wrath of God. He died on that cross in absolute agony. The penalty was death, and death is what He got.

But He didn't stay dead. Jesus Christ is pure and holy and He did not stay dead. He is risen from the dead, and so are you. You're not dead anymore either. You can leave your pain and your anger there at the cross, and you can live again by believing in Him. The church people call it rebirth. You are born into the most incredible joy when you really understand what Jesus did. It is an amazing and powerful thing that He did.

I can tell you what Jesus has done for you. I can tell you that you are precious to Him. I can tell you that His heart throbs for love of you. But I can't realize it for you. That's where the Holy Spirit comes in. Pray and ask him to help you realize that you don't have to be angry any more, you don't have to be dead anymore. You have been reborn by believing in Jesus Christ.

What About The Things You've Done

When you are angry, you lash out at people. When you are addicted to drugs, you lie and cheat and steal. Who have you hurt? Who have you abandoned? Who have you tormented and teased? Who have you lied to, ripped off? Who have you taken advantage of sexually? Who have you beaten, slapped, humiliated, killed?

The same cross that atoned for the sins committed against you atones for the sins you have committed. You can take your shame and your guilt to that very same cross of Jesus Christ, and give it to Him. He bore the wrath of God against you, too. He died for you, too. He bore it in His body on the tree. The wrath is gone, the guilt is gone.

Can you see the depth of His love in the cross? He suffered the agony and death that you deserve. He hung there naked and bleeding, in humiliation and agony because that was the penalty for your rebellion. If anyone else had hung on that cross it wouldn't have done you any good. They just would have suffered the wrath of God for their own sins. Jesus could suffer in your place because He was pure and holy in His life. When He took the wrath of God, He took it for you.

So you tell Him the truth about what happened. He's not stupid. He's been around awhile. He's seen a lot, and you can't shock Him. When you come to Him and confess with an honest heart, He forgives you. That's what that cross was all about. He died for the right to forgive you.

He excuses that part that can be excused; He explains the part that can be explained. The part that was somebody else's fault is somebody else's fault, and you are not responsible for it. It's the part that's left over, the part that says "I did it, and there's no excuse for it." That's the part He forgives. But He can't forgive it if you won't admit you did it. You have to come clean with Jesus.

Once He has forgiven you, the guilt is gone, the shame is gone. The huge weight is lifted off of you. You will love Him so much, you won't want to do anything that might offend Him or disappoint Him. You will long for Him and spend time with Him. You will study Him and organize your life around Him.

Rowing Against The Wind

Jesus was a happy friendly guy. Everybody wanted to be close to Him. One day a couple of His friends got in a boat to go across the lake, it should have been about a 2 or 3 hour trip. But they were rowing against a strong headwind and they weren't getting very far. These were big strong fishermen. They knew how to run a boat. But they couldn't row against that wind.

It was getting dark and they still weren't there. It was getting late, and they still weren't there. It was 3 o'clock in the morning, and they were just about exhausted. They were helpless against that wind. Then they saw Jesus coming towards them walking on the water. They called out to Him. He got in the boat with them, and the wind died down, and the sea was calm.

Does that sound familiar? You are battling a drug addiction. You are doing the best you can. You're not getting anywhere against the powerful cravings. You might be a big strong fisherman with a lot of willpower, but you're no match for that craving.

Jesus knows what you are up against. He knows what happened to your brain. He knows how powerful that craving is when you see a trigger. He is willing and able to give you the courage and the strength to fight that craving. He is willing and able to make the wind die down for you and help you avoid the triggers, change the way you live, change the way you think. He strengthens your personality and gives you courage.

You have to call out to Him. He didn't force His way into His friend's boat. "He was about to pass them by." He makes Himself available to you, but He doesn't force His way into your life. You have to invite Him in. You have to yield to His way of doing things.

You say something like this:

"Lord Jesus, I believe You died for me, and I believe you live again. I believe you have forgiven me, and I believe you can help me defeat my addiction. Come into my life and fill me with Your Spirit. Help me organize my life around You. Give me the courage, wisdom, and strength I need, one day at a time."

OK so now you're a Christian, and you're an addict. The brain damage doesn't go away when you accept Christ. He doesn't take a magic wand and make it all go away. That's just not how He does things. You have to know your weaknesses and move on.

Jesus knows what it is to resist temptation. He faced the most intense temptation anyone has ever faced in the Garden of Gethsemane. He faced the temptation to use His divine power to spare himself the suffering and humiliation of the cross. He said, "Don't you know I could call down 12 legions of angels and get out of this jam? But then how could I bear the wrath of God for mankind?"

He resisted that temptation by the power of intense anguished prayer. He resisted by sheer force of will to obey. When He comes into your heart He brings His courage and strength with Him and makes it yours.

Are you going to have struggles? Sure. Are you going to fail sometimes? Most likely, yes. Falling back into a drug habit is not any better or any worse than falling back into any other sin. But when Jesus is in your boat, He still loves you, He still forgives you, and He pulls you back into the boat. Say you screw up and get high once. That doesn't mean you have to spend the next 6 weeks tweaking. Come back to Him and He will give you a new start.

Sometimes you don't really fall out of the boat. Sometimes you jump out of the boat. You knew what would happen if you went to see your old friends, and you went anyway. Will He forgive you for jumping out of the boat? He will if you admit to Him what you really did. Don't try to pass it off as a simple mistake. He knows better. You can't play games with Jesus.

I met a man that said, "This is my third time through rehab. He can't possibly forgive me again." Oh yes He can. He's not surprised when you mess up. He knows you're human. He knows you're going to fail sometimes. He loves you. He's not going to throw you away, not anymore than I throw away my 2 year old when she wets her pants.

I've been a Christian for many years. Do I screw up from time to time? You bet I do. Do I still love Jesus? With all my heart. Does He forgive me? Absolutely.

You might get discouraged, but you don't despair. You raise your hand, admit what you did, and He pulls you back in the boat. You never lose hope because He never stops loving you. He doesn't care how wet He gets. As long as you really love Him, He will always pull you back in the boat. But He can't forgive you if you won't admit you did it.

This Is Not A Boy-Scout We're Up Against

Drug addiction is a powerful mind controlling influence that damages your brain, destroys your relationships, and separates you from God. We all know that there is an intelligent force of evil in this world. The Bible calls it Satan.

Satan wanted to destroy you. Satan wanted to destroy your capacity to relate to God. He wanted to destroy your brain and reduce you to an animal instead of a person. He wanted to get you to worship drugs instead of God. He wanted to fill you so full of guilt and anger that you would be afraid of God. Drug addiction does all of these things.

Jesus came to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives, and release from darkness for the prisoners. He holds the keys to hell and death. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

It takes courage to quit a drug habit. No one has more courage than the Man that carried the cross to Calvary. It takes self discipline and strength of character to resist temptation. No one has more strength of character than Jesus. It takes wisdom to stay out of trouble. No one has more wisdom than the God that said "Let there be light," and built the universe.

There is power in His love. There is power to resist temptation, power to avoid triggers, and power to change the way you live. As you grow closer to Jesus, as you spend more time with Him, you become more like Him. Don't we all come to act like the people we hang around with? When you are with Him, you are not leaning on anything. He is a pillar of strength within you. You can stand tall like a man.

Satan has been defeated by Jesus Christ. He can torment us but he cannot destroy us. He can lie to us but we don't have to believe his lies. He tells you that you are hopeless, worthless, and useless. Jesus Christ tells you that you are precious, a priceless treasure. Who are you going to believe?

The Armor of God

The most important passage in the Bible for any addict is in Ephesians 6, the armor of God. Our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against the powers and principalities of the spiritual realm. Temptation, despair, depression, apathy, cravings, lying voices that tell you that you are hopeless, these are our enemies. [Remember that when you read the Psalms] Put on the armor of God, so that you can stand against the evil in the world.

Put on the belt of truth which is honesty. Be honest with yourself, be honest with God. You can play games with your counselor, you can play games with your mother, but you can't play games with Jesus. He's not stupid. He can see right through you. He will help you face the truth about yourself.

Put on the breastplate of righteousness. The breastplate of righteousness is obedience. He speaks to you in the voice of your conscience. You know what to do. You know what situations to avoid. You know when you've made a wrong turn. There's nothing mysterious about obedience. You have to turn around and DO what you know is right.

The preparation of the gospel of peace is experiencing the peace that fills your heart and mind when you receive His Spirit into yours. Christ becomes your source of peace. He is your sense of well-being, calmness, quietness, confidence, and euphoria. When you communicate with Jesus, you experience the joy of being complete in Him. Where you are empty of love He fills you. Where you are confused He understands you and directs you. He gives you a genuine sense of joy.

The shield of faith is trust in His power. Trust in the power of His cross to heal you of your anger and take away your guilt. Don't meditate on your failures, instead focus on His forgiveness. Don't agonize over the pain and humiliation of your childhood, let your anger die on His cross. Allow yourself to feel joy. Believe that He can do what He said He will do, give you courage to take it one day at a time.

The helmet of salvation is knowing in your heart that you are deeply loved by the God that created you, died for you, and searched you out to save you. Allow yourself to feel loved by Him. Allow yourself to believe that you are precious to Him. This is hard to do if you still believe God is just like your old man. Saturate yourself in the truth of the Bible.

The Sword of the Spirit is the Word of God, the Bible. The God that said “Let there be light” has revealed Himself to us in His Word. Read it, study it, meditate on it, and believe it. Get a translation you can really read and understand, join a Bible study at a church. You will recognize the lies of Satan if you know the truth of God’s Word.

Pray in the Spirit. If you need courage, ask Him for it. He’ll give it to you. If you need comfort, ask Him for it, He’ll comfort you. If you need wisdom to know what to do, ask Him for it, He’ll give it to you. If you need to know His will for your life, ask Him and He’ll tell you. He speaks to you in His Word and in the voice of your conscience. You will know what to do.

Let Us Pray

Lord, your forgiveness is a mighty power. With it you hold your lambs close to your heart, and lead the weak, the vulnerable, the addicted, and the brain damaged into the holy presence of the Father, who loves them. All glory and honor are Yours, Almighty God, forever and ever. Amen.