

SMOKING / DRUGS

THE TRUTH
ABOUT

DRUGS



HELPLINE²

GEORGE'S STORY

George never imagined in his wildest dreams that he would be the guy who got addicted to drugs. He was smart, had a job and lots of friends. That first time he tried something... well, it was just a one off. Everyone else at the party was doing it, he wanted to fit in, wanted to try something new, wanted to forget all his worries for a while. He was sure to be in control, 'just one time' he thought, but before he knew it, the drugs were in control of him.

**DRUG ADDICTION CAN HAPPEN TO ANYBODY.
DRUG ADDICTION CAN HAPPEN AT ANYTIME.**

HOW DOES IT HAPPEN ...

No drug addict sets out to become one. And yet the number of addicts is rising daily. The problem of drug abuse is threatening many people in our country.

Drug dealers promise that drugs will make you happy and make you feel free. But the truth is: they will say anything to get your money. In fact, drugs will always take more than they give. In the end, drugs will take your family, your friends, your freedom and your life.

Fear or pressure at school or life in general can also drive people to start taking drugs. Some believe it will help them

be more courageous when performing a ritual or facing a conflict. But there is one important fact you should know:

YOU ARE LOVED

No matter who you are. No matter what you have done. You are loved. The God who made you, knows you, sees you and longs to show you His love and give you a new life. No one is meant to be a slave to any kind of addiction. Rather, each one of us is called to be free.

JESUS SAYS, "I HAVE COME THAT THEY MAY HAVE LIFE, AND HAVE IT TO THE FULL." (JOHN 10:10)

AND ALSO, "IF THE SON (JESUS CHRIST) SETS YOU FREE, YOU WILL BE FREE INDEED." (JOHN 8:36)

Jesus Christ came to this earth more than 2000 years ago. He lived and died to show us God's unending love. He was crucified by the people of His time, although He had done no wrong. As He hung on the cross, He took the punishment for all the wrong things we have done. He died and was buried, and three days later, in the greatest miracle of all time, was raised from the dead. He conquered the power of evil, darkness and death.

WHAT MUST I DO?

Come to Jesus Christ in prayer, admitting your sinfulness, ready to follow God's way of life. When you believe that Jesus paid for all your sins, He promises to set you free from all the evil in your life, He promises to give you new life. He will give you full satisfaction and you will become a son or daughter of God. "To all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God" (John 1:12,13).

By the help and strength of God you can now live a new life. Deliverance can happen immediately, but often it is a long way until you reach complete freedom.

You should also be aware, that the underlying problems that caused you to take drugs in the first place, must be dealt with. We advise you to seek counselling with a mature Christian.

DRUGS CAN NEVER SAVE US FROM OUR PROBLEMS, OR BRING ANYTHING GOOD TO OUR LIVES. INSTEAD, THEY WILL ONLY BRING DEATH AND DESTRUCTION. JESUS CHRIST WILL BRING US LIFE, AND LIFE TO THE FULL.

Drug addicts often say, that if they had really known what drugs are and what they can do, they would never have

touched them. Please read the facts about different kinds of drugs and arm yourself with knowledge to make the right decisions:

THE TRUTH ABOUT ...

... Smoking cigarettes

Nicotine is found in the leaves of the tobacco plant and is highly addictive. Once a person has started to smoke on a regular basis, he or she gets hooked to it. An addiction can develop that is hard to break because an emotional bond has taken place. The addiction lies deep in the desires and longings of a person. At any time, any occasion, a strong craving for the favourite brand of cigarettes or locally grown tobacco surges through their whole being like a mighty wave that seemingly cannot be resisted. Smoking easily sneaks into the life of people by social pressure and pride. Then it becomes a habit, hard to quit.

Be aware of the fact that, very often, a smoker will inevitably face health problems such as cancer. Doctors are convinced that every cigarette a person smokes will shorten his or her life by 15 minutes. Smoking makes people feel good for the moment, and so they enjoy smoking. But they don't realize that their precious life is being shortened with every packet of cigarettes they smoke.

Think about the money you spend on cigarettes. Such money is not only wasted, but it will also cause damage to your health. Often this money is lacking to buy food or

other essentials of life and many families have suffered unnecessarily as a result of money problems.

... Marijuana (Wee)

The most abused and cheapest drug substance in West Africa is marijuana (wee). The use of marijuana has become one of the main causes of mental illness. More than half the inmates in many psychiatric hospitals are youths, mostly drop-outs from junior or senior high schools.

... Cocaine

Cocaine produces a fast 'flash', excitement and stimulation at first. Later the user may feel stomach pain, and prolonged use will cause loss of weight, loss of appetite and concentration, and a wasting away of the body. Cocaine in particular will lead to addiction in a very short time, sometimes even after the first or second try.

... Other drugs

Today there are lots of other drugs in circulation. Whether they are taken to feel high, for sex stimulation or other promised results, they are very harmful, and too soon cause the user to need more and more – typical signs of addiction.

The ever growing number of people depending on drugs confirms the sinister facts of drug abuse. Once more we

see the subtle work of Satan who strikes at precious young people with deadly weapons – in the prime of their lives. The death rate resulting from drug addiction is a sad reality confirming God's truth, "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23).

SOCIAL AND OTHER EFFECTS

Drugs show the following implications within a short time:

- Financially: the desire for the drugs becomes so strong, that users will do anything to get money for their fix. This can begin with lying to get money from family members, and eventually stealing, begging and prostitution.
- Physically: weakness, tiredness and lack of strength
- Psychologically: people who depend on drugs often become mentally and physically unfit to attend school or go to work.
- Socially: drug abuse has devastating effects on the families of users and their environment.

Drug addicts often deny that they have a problem. They feel ashamed to admit that this addiction has such power over them. Many addicts try to cover up their dealings, not only because of the police but also because they do not want to admit defeat. Most people can't quit on their own and need help.

WE DO NOT WANT THE CURSE OF DRUGS TO RIP APART OUR FAMILIES, OUR COMMUNITIES AND OUR COUNTRY. WE DO NOT WANT OUR CHILDREN'S FUTURE TO BE STOLEN AND DESTROYED BY THIS EVIL. WE NEED TO JOIN TOGETHER AND SAY NO TO DRUGS, TO PROTECT THE FUTURE GENERATION AND TO SAVE OUR COUNTRY FROM RUIN.

WHY DO PEOPLE TAKE DRUGS?

Some people take drugs out of curiosity, just to see what they taste like, or what it feels like to get high. Some try them because their friends are doing it, and they don't want to be left out. For others it may be because life feels too difficult, and they want to escape their problems for a while. And sometimes people take drugs out of pure boredom. They want to have some excitement.

In very many cases, drugs find a way into a person's life because there is something missing. Perhaps a person feels empty inside, they don't feel that they are worth anything. It can be that they have suffered abuse of some kind, and are living in shame and fear. Many people suffer from loneliness, and are desperate to fit in. People use drugs to try to fill these voids, and feel better, with no idea of the consequences, pain and destruction.

THE WAY OUT

Our friend George had been taking drugs for some weeks before he realized he had a problem. But – it was too late. He couldn't stop taking them. He needed them. George spent all the money he could get on drugs. He became aggressive even towards the people he loved. He was unreliable at work, turning up late and unable to concentrate on anything. When his boss caught him stealing from the cashbox he was fired in disgrace. The drug he had started taking for fun was destroying his life and causing him to steal anything from anybody. He became lonely and desperate.

Is there any hope for someone who has become addicted to drugs?

THE TRUTH IS – YES – THERE IS HOPE

The first step to conquer addiction is to admit that there is a problem that you can't solve on your own. Even if you don't like to admit your weakness, there is no other way in order to receive help. Maybe you think it is enough just to join a treatment programme and learn to stop using drugs. But recovery doesn't only involve abstinence; it starts with hope of a new life. A real change can only come through help for your soul, from inside out. If you or a loved one has problems with addiction, please do not

hesitate to get in contact with a Christian Rehab centre or a counsellor of a Bible based church.

Social help without God	The help from God (from within)
works from the outside	works from the inside out
people are taken out of the slums	Christ takes the slums out of people
people are moulded by changing their environment	Christ changes people, who then change their environment
tries to shape human behaviour	Christ changes human nature

In his desperation, George called an old friend who he knew was a Christian. "You have to help me or I'll die", he said. His friend came over and listened as George finally admitted his addiction and the mess he was in. The friend brought George to a Christian Rehab Centre, where, for the first time in his life, he realized that he was loved by God, and that his life was really worth something. He said, "I was so afraid that I would be stuck in my miserable existence forever, but God heard my cry and offered me salvation. I am trusting Jesus Christ to help me because I know that his power is greater than the chains of my addiction. With his help I can be free."

The road to recovery was not easy. George had tried and fallen back more than once. But God is patient and never gives anybody up. He will always forgive when we are sorry, and lift us back on our feet to start again. Never, ever give up trusting Him.

WARNING SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Perhaps as you read this leaflet, you are filled with concern about a loved one who has or you suspect has become involved with drugs. Below is a list of signs a person taking drugs might show. Obviously, individual symptoms can have other causes, but if a person is displaying several signs over an extended period of time, then this may be a warning that they are taking drugs.

Cocaine

- tremors
- muscle twitches
- paranoia (fear, anxiety, panic)
- dilated pupils
- increased heart rate
- increased blood pressure
- decreased sexual function

Marijuana (Wee)

- red eyes, dilated pupils
- cough

- rapid heartbeat
- hunger
- dry mouth
- paranoia (fear, anxiety, panic)
- poor memory
- poor coordination
- strange behaviour
- psychosis, hallucinations
- dizziness
- depression
- suicidal thoughts

Smoking tobacco

- decreased appetite
- headache
- eye: cataracts, macular degeneration
- loss of sense, of smell and taste
- tooth decay
- cancer
- impaired immune system
- coughing

PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE

What if you have never touched drugs, but are curious about them? Or if you are the parent of a teenager who may be confronted with drugs?

These wise words come from recovering drug addicts themselves:

- I wish I had never done it for the first time.
- If you think you can control it, you can't. It will take hold of you quicker than you ever thought possible.
- The problems you had before you got high will still be there when you come down.
- You are choosing death over life when you take drugs.

SO TODAY - CHOOSE LIFE

Walk away from any situation involving drugs. Tell your children the truth about drugs and the destruction they bring. Do not be blinded by quick money from trading or producing drugs, it will only be a curse to you.

Choose life to the full in Jesus Christ. Come to Him, tell Him all the wrong in your life and He will forgive you and give you new life. Bring Him your problems and He will be your help and your guide. Find a local Bible-based church, where people love you, support you and pray for you. If possible, seek advice from a committed counsellor who will support you with prayer and practical help.

Keep away from anything that draws you away from God. Keep yourself pure in your attitudes and behaviours, especially in regard to contacts with the opposite sex. Remember that a sexual relationship must only belong to a committed married life. When there is AIDS or pregnancy

involved, seek Christian advice and never let abortion be your 'solution'. God will help you.

May God help you and protect you from the evil danger of drugs.

TESTIMONY

My family was Christian but I myself did not really know Jesus Christ personally. I didn't live a bad life though. I was a good student, obeyed my parents and got along well with everybody.


In High School I got to know more friends, some of whom were a bad influence on my life. Smoking cigarettes started as a habit, but soon I was smoking weed with the others as well. We had regular drinking parties on weekends and we girls often ended up in bed with the older guys.

It was a shock when I discovered that I was pregnant. I didn't know what to do. My friend advised me to have an abortion. But I didn't and continued to go out and enjoy excessive parties, just trying to forget my problems. One day the damage was done. I got incredibly painful stomach cramps and miscarried. For days I felt weak from loss of blood and sick with guilt and remorse. But no one felt sorry for me. Even my boyfriend turned his back on me and said it was my own fault. After that experience I started isolating myself

from friends and family and played truant. I lost all interest in the things which had been important in my life and spent many hours just hanging around feeling lonely and depressed. I wondered, "Why am I here? Why did I have to go through this terrible situation?" All the time my heart was aching for something bigger and better than the world of parties, booze, drugs and sex. I wanted peace and didn't know where to find it.

Looking back, I realize God was there all the time. Although I didn't feel his presence, I remembered how my parents had taught me to pray. So I said, "God, if there's still hope for me, give me a sign that you care about me." In resignation I looked up and was surprised to see a church board right in front of me, with a clear invitation to a service later that week. My heart began to race madly. Was this the answer to my prayer?

I ran back to my dorm and cried, and cried. I couldn't believe God had listened to me. Following the invitation that I'd seen, I went to the church service later that week. There I was overwhelmed by the presence of God. I didn't give my life to him right then but I got in touch with the people, asking them to help me. Two weeks later I finally accepted Christ as my personal Lord and Saviour. Since then, he has become my Comforter, my Counsellor, my wonderful Friend, guiding me step by step into the new life I had always missed before.



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