

Drug Crisis

Intro – Everyone you know has been touched by the drug crisis in America!

- Many parents have a child addicted to drugs. As a result, many grandparents are raising their grandchildren.
- Many children have parents addicted to drugs. Sadly, those children are often forced into foster care because there's nowhere else for them to go.
- Some of you have bosses, coworkers, classmates, and even in leaders in your circle of influence who have thrown everything away for drugs.

Drugs is unlike many other problems we have because it is so far-reaching. And yet, it has this in common with every other problem we know – JESUS is the answer!!

Let's take a fresh look at the problem and discover what the church can do to be part of the solution.

1. What do we mean by drug crisis?

- When we talk about drugs, we are talking about legal and illegal substances that people use to get a feeling of intoxication (being high).
- Examples of illegal drugs – marijuana, crack, cocaine, meth, heroin, ecstasy, LSD, mushrooms, etc.
- Example of legal “drugs” (substances) – painkillers, huffing glue, paint, cleaners, etc.
- Drug abuse is defined as “the habitual taking of addictive or illegal drugs.” Some drugs can be very useful or very lethal when they're abused.

2. How old is the drug crisis?

- We know that abusing certain substances is as old as the Scripture, and even older in some cases.
- For instance, the Bible warns at length about the dangers of abusing wine & strong drink. Solomon said, “Wine is a mocker and strong drink is a brawler, and he who is led astray by them is not wise” (Prov. 20:1).
- In this country, before the 19th century, substance abuse was primarily related to plant-products and alcohol. The drugs that were commonly used in the early history of the country were obtained from poppy plants or similar plants that helped reduce feelings of pain.
- These primitive forms of drugs that were not synthetically created were still dangerous and addictive.
- Opium and alcohol were common substances that were used in early American history.
- Doctors would use opium to dull pain during surgical or medical procedures. When opium was not available, the doctors would turn to alcohol to dull or mask the symptoms of the health problem.
- Although the drugs were used for medical purposes, the addictive qualities of the drugs were not fully understood before the Civil War. Many soldiers were given opium to dull pain during surgery and became addicted to the drug.
- During the 1800s, developments in medicine led to the creation of morphine, codeine and cocaine. Initially, the drugs were unregulated and readily available.

- When it became clear that the drugs were a serious problem, regulations were developed and laws were made to help contain the problem. In 1906, regulations passed to make it harder to obtain certain substances.
- In 1914, the Harrison Act passed, and it caused the development of positive changes in drug treatment. By 1918, clinics were established for drug maintenance, and addiction to narcotics became illegal.
- By 1939, the Federal Bureau of Narcotics began taking a harsh stand against illegal drug abuse and started prosecuting medical doctors who enabled addiction by giving prescriptions that violated laws.
- Despite efforts to prevent substance abuse and the laws that regulated drugs on a federal and state level, substance abuse did not stop with the legal changes. Many men and women continued to abuse drugs and alcohol.
- During the 1960s, consumers began using drugs for recreational purposes. Illegal drugs of choice were marijuana, cocaine, crack, heroin, LSD, and mushrooms. The drug culture began to thrive!
- The 1980s saw a shift in the type of drugs that were abused. The drug of choice shifted from hallucinogens to cocaine, which resulted in a wave of violence and violent crimes.
- By the year 2000, the number of arrests related to illicit substance abuse increased dramatically. More than 1.5 million arrests were related to drug abuse.

- Even in crimes that were not directly associated with buying or selling drugs, many criminals were also abusing drugs at the time of the crime, which resulted in a secondary charge.
- In the 21st century, the shift in drug abuse has definitely turned to opioids and meth. One are prescribed medications that are often purchased on the black market, while the other are often home creations that endanger every around it.

3. How bad is the drug crisis?

- The stats are too many to share, but let me share just a few about opioids.
- 1. In 2017, health care providers across the US wrote more than 191 million prescriptions for opioid pain medication—a rate of 58.7 prescriptions per 100 people.
- 2. Despite guidelines to limit opioids as a first approach to managing most chronic pain, a study found primary care clinicians write 45% of all opioid prescriptions in the United States.
- 3. More than 11 million people misused prescription opioids in 2017.
- 4. Every day, more than 1,000 people are treated in emergency departments for misusing prescription opioids.
- 5. In 2017, prescription opioids were involved in more than 35% of all opioid overdose deaths: nearly 17,000.
- 6. From 1999 to 2017, almost 218,000 people in the United States died from overdoses related to prescription opioids.

- 7. The CDC estimates the total economic burden of prescription opioid misuse in the US is \$78.5 billion a year, including the costs of health care, lost productivity, addiction treatment, and criminal justice involvement.
- These stats are overwhelming, but don't talk about all the emotional trauma that families and coworkers have suffered as they've watched their loved ones die. Truly this is an epidemic only Jesus can fix.

4. What can the church to do help?

- **We MUST be like Jesus and meet people WHERE THEY ARE, and not where we want them to be.** Remember, Jesus was called “a friend of tax collectors and sinners” because he was willing to befriend those that society had brushed aside.
- **The church must become a safe-place for those battling with drugs and addiction.** Our churches must create the kind of environment where addicts don't feel judged and condemned, while still having the opportunity to hear the truth.
- **We need to partner with ministries that are on the front lines with drug addicts.** One such partnership for us is Angelic Ministries. We also have a partnership with Western Heights and many of our folks volunteer “under the bridge.”
- **If you know someone struggling with addiction, intervene before it's too late.** Be prepared – they may hate you and fight you, but when they're finally in their right mind they will love you and thank you.