

The Addictive Personality

A Bible Study

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Purpose of This Study

Through these four lessons we will look at various characters in the Bible and what they can teach us about addictive personalities and behaviors. Each week there are suggested sections for individual or small group work and sections for whole group discussion.

Leader's Guide: Introduction & Session One

Addicted to Grumbling – We'll start out with a quick quiz (below) to highlight some addictive behaviors and then look at the story of the Israelites and their complaining. Before you teach this lesson, take a few minutes to consider its message for your own life, especially concerning your role as Bible study leader or youth director. Grumbling is an addiction that every person involved in youth work must battle. What recent situations with your group have caused you to grumble? About whom do you complain? To whom do you grumble? Spend a few minutes laying your complaints before the Lord in prayer. Ask for changes in these situations, but also ask for changes in your own heart as you battle with the addiction of grumbling.

Start with introduction and prayer – see Student Page.

Then, before the Napoleon Dynamite questions, have your students take this quiz:

Do you have an addictive personality? How many think yes? How many think no? How many have no idea what an addictive personality is? Well, take this quick quiz. Write down your answers on a scrap of paper, and then we'll find out whether you do or not. You won't have to show your answers to any one else.

1. Your best friend borrows and ruins your favorite pair of jeans or favorite video game. Do you:
 - A. think nothing of it and laugh about it?
 - B. never speak to your "friend" again?
 - C. ask them to buy you another one.
 - D. tell your friend, "No big deal," and mooch the money for a new one from your parents?

2. For lunch, the cafeteria is serving some kind of meat-thing that might be hamburger and tater-tots. Do you:
 - A. exclaim, "Yes! Tater-tots rule!"?
 - B. go through the line, eat your food, and think nothing of it?
 - C. complain for the rest of the day about the lunch lady and the horrible meals?
 - D. shove the tater-tots in your pocket to eat later in class, Napoleon-Dynamite style?

3. Your boyfriend or girlfriend asks you to do something that you know is wrong. Do you:
 - A. ask if you can talk about it and then try to dissuade him or her?
 - B. speak your mind and stand up for what's right?
 - C. break up?
 - D. give in?

4. Your brother wakes you up early Saturday morning because he or she is practicing for band. Do you:
 - A. wait until the next Saturday morning, plug in your electric guitar and wail?
 - B. pull the covers up over your head and go back into hibernation?
 - C. shout out, "Mom, make him stop!"
 - D. get up, have a bowl of Captain Crunch, and thank him for the wake-up call?

Now, let's see how you did. Each question has one addictive behavior among the four possibilities.

1. The addictive-prone answer is "B. never speak to your friend again." Grudges are extremely addicting. Especially when someone close to you hurts you, it's easy to resent the person and end up holding a never-ending, addictive grudge. We're going to deal with grudges in the third Bible study.

2. The addictive-prone answer is "C. complain for the rest of the day about the lunch lady and the horrible meals." Complaining about something minor, like school lunch, can easily lead to complaining about your school, your family, your friends, and eventually everything. We're going to talk about this addiction in this first Bible study.

3. The addictive-prone answer is "D. give in." Obviously you like the person a lot and want to make them happy. You want to keep going out with him or her. What do you do when he or she wants to do something you're not comfortable with? Giving in and not saying what's on your mind can lead to all sorts of problems. The addiction to giving in might mean that you draw your self-esteem and self-worth totally from how the opposite sex thinks about you. We're going to talk about it in Bible study number four.

4. The addictive-prone answer is "A. wait until the next Saturday morning, plug in your electric guitar and wail." Now, maybe you don't see this as revenge. You have to return the favor, so to speak, when somebody plays a practical joke on you, right? When someone actually does do something really mean, we often start plotting how we are going to get revenge. This type of reaction can become an addiction. We'll talk about this in the second Bible study.

Continue on the Student Page with the Napoleon Dynamite questions and the Bible study.

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Leader's Guide: Session Two

Addicted to Getting Even – This week we will review the story of Saul and David. In youth work, there are certainly times when people unjustly accuse you of leading the youth group or a particular youth down the wrong path. You might even be convinced that someone has put a price on your head! Have you ever been tempted to get even by excluding their kid from an event? Getting even feels so good when someone does something totally wrong and you did nothing to deserve it. Take some time to consider situations in your life and youth ministry in which you got even. Offer any present opportunities to get even to our loving Savior who cried out on the cross, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34).

Start with prayer – see Student Page.

Before jumping into the Bible study, tell a story of a time in your own life when someone did something hurtful to you, and you got revenge. What did this do to your relationship with this person? What did it do to you? How did it get resolved? Share something real with your youth, something that you really struggled with. Your opening up about getting even will get their minds going about tough stuff in their own lives. You may want to offer this analogy. Trying to get even is like taking a loaded shot-gun, pointing it at your head, pulling the trigger and hoping your enemy is hurt from the recoil. How smart is this?

Continue on Student Page with the Bible study and questions.

Leader's Guide: Session Three

Addicted to Grudges – We'll look at the up and down relationship between Jacob and Esau this week. As we'll see in this Bible study, holding a grudge means holding on to memories of bad times. Are there perhaps bad memories of past events in your youth work that you have held on to? How do these affect how you interact with your youth now? Has anyone in the current group done something that has lingered in your memory? Take a few moments and confess those lingering memories, those grudges to the Lord who Himself forgives our sins and remembers them no more.

The entire lesson is on the Student Page. Note for question 2: Perhaps divide the group between the oldest on one side of the room and the middle/youngest on the other. Have them debate why or why not it was fair that the oldest got the inheritance.

Leader's Guide: Session Four

Addicted to Always Trying to Please the Opposite Sex (Giving In) – Samson and Delilah offer some practical examples this week. Desiring the opposite sex is not a sin in and of itself. Certainly every teenager begins at some point to long for companionship from opposite sex. However, cute puppy love somewhere crosses the line and can get very painful. This Bible study may open up some wounds. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, be ready to deal with a topic with which a lot of your kids are most likely struggling. Many teenage relationships go through these four phases: Rush them, Mush them, Crush them, Flush them.

Start with prayer – see Student Page.

Before jumping into the Bible study, make copies of the lyrics of “Behind These Hazel Eyes” by Kelly Clarkson (last page of study). Try to find the CD so the class can hear the song—someone from the youth group will surely have the CD.

After listening once to the song, lead a discussion about verse two: What does she mean when she says that she opened up to him and he made her feel alright for once in her life? What does she mean when she says “Just thought you were the one”? Have you ever thought you were dating “the one”? Do you think that people in the Bible dealt with this kind of stuff?

Continue on Student Page with the Bible reading and questions.

The Addictive Personality: Session One - Grumbling

Some people talk about being addicted to things like drugs, alcohol, sex, or gambling. In this Bible study, we're going to be talking about being addicted to certain behaviors, certain sins. Even after confession and absolution on Sunday morning, even though we've promised to turn from our sinful behaviors, all too often we can still be addicted to sins like grumbling, getting even, grudges, and giving in.

During these next four weeks, we are going to enter into the world of the Old Testament and see many of God's people addicted to the exact same sins that we struggle with today. In some cases, we will see how they are not able to turn from their addictions and the consequences that develop. In other cases, we will see how, by our Lord's grace, they were able to turn from their addictive behaviors.

Let's pray: Dearest Father in Heaven, You know everything about us. You don't need to take a quiz to know that we have fallen prey to addictive behaviors many times in our lives. You know the addictions that we are struggling with right now. We know that we are Your forgiven, baptized children, and so we want to quit these addictive behaviors: grumbling, grudges, getting even, and giving in. Open our ears, our minds, and our hearts. Speak, Lord. We, Your servants, are ready to listen. In the Name of Jesus we ask this. Amen.

Would you call Napoleon Dynamite a grumbler or a complainer? What kind of stuff did he complain about? Do you think that he quit complaining at the end of the movie? If so, why?

Getting Into the Story

Read Exodus 16:1-12 out loud or individually.

- 1) Verse 1 tells us that it has been just one month since the Israelites left Egypt. What was it like for them in Egypt? (see Exodus 1:11-14)
- 2) Now check out 16:2-3. Were the Israelites being honest about what life used to be like and what it was now like?
- 3) Have you ever said, "Man, I wish things were now the way they used to be."? Remember the good old days when you didn't have to go to school or the homework wasn't as hard? What made your past so much better?
- 4) Who do the Israelites blame for bringing them out of Egypt and into the wilderness?
- 5) Who really brought them out of Egypt? (see Exodus 6:6-7)
- 6) So, who are the Israelites really complaining about?
- 7) If you were God at this point, what would you have done to these people who are complaining about how bad they have it? What would you remind them of? What would you want to say to them?

- 8) We get to see what kind of a God we have, though, in 16:4-5. Yahweh, (God's proper name in Hebrew, which English versions translate LORD) tells Moses what He's about to do. What is it?
- 9) Now Moses and Aaron are ticked at the Israelites! What do they remind them of in 16:6?

Do you remember the Fourth Petition of the Lord's Prayer? Here's a review: "Give us this day our daily bread. What does this mean? God gives daily bread indeed without our prayer, also to all the wicked; but we pray in this petition that He would lead us to know it, and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving." We know that "daily bread" includes just about everything: breakfast, lunch, supper, Nikes, allowance, loving parents, loving siblings, good friends, good teachers, etc.

Break into small groups for the next three questions. Write your answers down and be ready to share them with the class.

- 10) What kinds of things do you complain about? What is a situation going on right now that you are grumbling about?
- 11) When you complain about these things, to whom do you complain? Do you complain to the people who seem to be causing your problem? If you have a lot of homework, do you complain to your teachers? Do you complain to friends?
- 12) Can you become addicted to grumbling and complaining? What happens when you are addicted to grumbling?

Let's look at the Israelites again. It might have just seemed like the Israelites were grumbling about food and against Moses and Aaron.

- 13) Against whom are they really grumbling?
- 14) Do you think Yahweh wanted the Israelites to actually ask Him for the things they needed rather than complain to Moses and Aaron? What do you think about "complaining" to Jesus about the bad things in your life?

The great news, though, is that Yahweh did not just strike the Israelites with bolts of lightning because of their complaining. Instead, Yahweh heard and answered the grumbings of the Israelites. He listened to their complaints and did something about it.

- 15) Against whom are they really grumbling?

Yahweh didn't stop providing for His people, though! That's not the end of the story. Read John 6:48-51. Part of the way our Father in heaven provided for us was by sending His Son Jesus to give us His flesh, so that we may have life forever.

- 16) Where do you receive Jesus' flesh given for you?

17) Why is this comforting to you? What does it tell you about how concerned Jesus is for you and your daily life?

18) When you start to complain this week, what can you do with your complaints and grumblings?

Closing Prayer

Dearest Heavenly Father, You heard the grumblings of Your people Israel in the wilderness long ago. In Your loving way, You provided all that they needed. We thank You that You not only provide for our meals today but also that You have provided the true bread from heaven, our Savior Jesus Christ. Help us this week to address our grumblings to You, the God who is always listening. In the Name of Jesus we ask it. Amen.

The Addictive Personality: Session Two - Getting Even

Prayer: Come Holy Spirit. Be at work in and through Your Word as You have promised to be. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

Getting Into the Story

Read 1 Samuel 24:1-12.

- 1) In verses 1-2, Saul is on the hunt for David. Why? (see 1 Samuel 23:15)
- 2) Why does Saul want to kill David? (see 1 Samuel 18:28-29; 20:30-31)
- 3) Do you think Saul is addicted to getting even? (see 1 Samuel 18:8-11; 20:32-33)
- 4) Being addicted to getting even means that your automatic response when someone hurts you is to hurt that person back. It's like a reflex. How many times when you were a kid did you justify hitting your siblings because they hit you first? Why do you think we have this addiction to getting even?
- 5) Who says the Bible is boring and glosses over the realities of life? Briefly set up the scene of 24:3 in your own words.
- 6) What do David's friends tell him he should do?
- 7) It is not recorded anywhere in the Bible that the Lord actually said what David's friends were claiming He said. Commentators think that David's friends were putting words in the mouth of the Lord. They realized that David had the perfect opportunity to kill Saul, and they decided that the Lord must have given David this opportunity. Do you think the Lord really wanted David to kill Saul?
- 8) How does David feel after he cuts off the corner of Saul's robe?
- 9) What does David tell his men then?
- 10) So, over all, how do David and Saul deal with the addiction of getting even? Who has the addictive personality?

Break up into small groups and record your answers to these two questions. Be ready to share your answers with the class.

- 11) Have you ever been in a situation where you had the opportunity to get even? What had the person done to you in the first place?
- 12) Did your friends encourage you to get even or to forgive the person? Did you get even or did you forgive the person?

Let's look at Saul and David again.

- 13) Why do you think David tells Saul that he could have killed him but didn't?
- 14) How does David resolve the matter? In whose hands does he leave Saul and what Saul has tried to do to him?
- 15) Read Romans 12:19-21 and 2 Cor. 5:17. What happens when we leave the "getting even" up to God? What are we empowered to do as new creations in Jesus Christ?
- 16) Read Luke 23:34. What did our God do once and for all with all revenge? In other words, how did the Lord "get even" with us?

The tense of the verb here indicates that Jesus didn't say this once, but rather over and over again – so deep is His forgiving love!

- 17) What is the opposite of getting even? How might this change your potential addiction to getting even?

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, You died on the cross for our sins when You could have really gotten even. Help us now to live in Your forgiveness, so that we might forgive others as well. Amen.

The Addictive Personality: Session Three - Grudges

Prayer: Come Holy Spirit. Be at work in and through Your Word as You have promised to be. Open our eyes and hearts to Your grace and forgiveness. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

There are all sorts of grudges to be found in "Star Wars: Episode III – Revenge of the Sith." Why did Anakin Skywalker hold a grudge against Mace Windu? Do you think this led to Mace Windu's death? Against whom else did Anakin hold grudges? What did these grudges do to Anakin?

Getting Into the Story

Read Genesis 27:41-43 out loud or individually.

- 1) How did Jacob get Esau's birthright? (see Genesis 27:1-29)
- 2) For the firstborn class members: If you were entitled to inherit basically everything of your parents' and then your younger sibling somehow swindled you out of it, would you be mad?

For all the middle or last born class members: Do you think it was fair that the oldest always got everything? Would you have done what Jacob did to get the birthright?

- 3) According to 27:41, how did Esau end up feeling toward Jacob?
- 4) The Greek translation of the Old Testament, called the Septuagint, uses a word for "holding a grudge" which literally means "remembering the bad." Every time Esau saw Jacob, what did he remember?
- 5) In the next few verses, 42-45, what happens between the two brothers on account of Esau's grudge?

For questions 6 to 9, break up into small groups and write down your answers. Be ready to report back to the class.

- 6) Do you have any grudges against anyone in your family? What kinds of "bad memories" or grudges do you have?
- 7) Do you think there are any grudges among people in the youth group?
- 8) If so, how do these affect the group?
- 9) How might we break down these grudges?

Now let's look at Jacob and Esau again. They did not speak to each other for over 20 years!

- 10) Read Genesis 32:13-18. When Jacob finds out that he is about to meet up with Esau again after all those years, what does he do?

- 11) What else does Jacob do according to Genesis 33:1-3? Do you think Jacob is afraid of his brother? How has Esau's grudge affected Jacob?
- 12) What do you expect Esau to do when they meet? What actually happens according to 33:4?
- 13) In verses 10-11 of chapter 33, what does Jacob mean when he tells Esau that to see him is like seeing the face of God?
- 14) Recall the grudges that you discussed earlier in your small groups, how do you think the people against whom you hold grudges would react if you apologized and told them you no longer hold a grudge?

Read St. Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26. "In remembrance of me." Instead of holding grudges or as we heard earlier, "remembering the bad," the Lord invites us to remember something altogether different. Each time we go to the Lord's Supper, a remembrance of His death on the cross takes place. This remembering not only forgives us from our sin but also empowers us to offer forgiveness to others.

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, you fill our memories with good things. You Yourself have not held on to the memories of our sins. You Yourself hold no grudges! Empower us to do likewise. Amen.

The Addictive Personality: Session Four - Giving In

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, we're glad you brought each one of us to youth group today. As we dig into Your Word for us, help us to open our mind and heart. You are the Great Physician, and only You can bind up many of the wounds we carry. Come once again among us by the power of Your Holy Spirit as we dig into Your Word. We are so bold to ask this because of Jesus, our Savior. Amen.

Getting Into the Story

Read Judges 16:4-22 out loud or individually.

Delilah wasn't Samson's first love. In Judges 14:1-3 he falls in love with a Philistine woman. He wasn't just a lovebird, though. He was a man's man, too. Read Judges 14:5-6; 15:11-15.

- 1) Based on these passages, what modern-day person would you compare Samson to?
- 2) Why did Delilah want to find out the source of Samson's great strength? (see also Judges 15:20)
- 3) What would happen to the Israelites if Delilah and the Philistines found out the source of Samson's strength?
- 4) How many times did Samson give her the wrong information about his strength? Was he just lying to be mean or did he have a purpose to not giving in to Delilah?
- 5) How does Delilah eventually break down Samson? Do guys and girls ever say this kind of stuff to the opposite sex today?
- 6) What was the secret to Samson's strength?
- 7) Why was it such a big deal that she cut off his hair? (see Judges 13:7)
- 8) What did hair have to do with this Nazirite vow? (see Numbers 6:1-2, 5)
- 9) Read Numbers 6:13 and 18 to see how the Nazirite vow ended. To whom did Samson's hair belong?

Now, none of us have taken an oath to be a Nazirite. However, at your confirmation, you made a vow to keep the Ten Commandments, one of which was the 6th – You shall not commit adultery. As a teenager in today's society, you often hear the message that it's no big deal to mess around with the opposite sex.

- 10) Do you think Kelly Clarkson's song changes that message? Do you think Kelly Clarkson agrees that it's no big deal to give in to the opposite sex?

- 11) What affect does it have on you when you give in to the opposite sex? How does it affect your relationship with Jesus?
- 12) What affect did it have on Samson when he gave in to Delilah?
- 13) Why did Samson ultimately have no strength?
- 14) Why did the author of Judges include 16:22? What's the big deal that Samson's hair was growing back?
- 15) How does Samson's life end? Was he reconciled to the Lord? (see Judges 16:25-30)
- 16) What does this say about Samson's Nazirite vow? Do you think he was allowed to take up his vow again?
- 17) What does it mean for us that Samson's hair grew back and that the Lord again gave him his strength back?
- 18) What other examples of our God's "second chances" are in Jonah 3:1 and John 21:15-19?
- 19) How does this "God of the second chance" empower you to break free of this addiction to always trying to please people of the opposite sex?

Closing Prayer

Dear Jesus, we claim Your promise that if You set us free, we are free indeed! Free us from all addictive sins that keep us in bondage. Do this so that our lives are more and more glorious testimonies to Your love. We ask this in Your name. Amen.