



“For I take delight in the law of God, in my inner self, but I see in my members another principle at war with the law of my mind, taking me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.” - Romans 7:22-23

ADDICTION AND GOD’S SAVING GRACE

In today's competitive world, parents face immense pressure to keep up. However, our children are blessed to have loving parents and supportive schools and churches. So let's take a deep breath and be mindful when exposing our children to technology and screens, as physiological addiction is a preventable outcome that can derail even the best-laid plans.

Christ's warning about potentially addictive behavior is extreme enough to take note--"If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one of your members than to have your whole body thrown into Gehenna" (Matthew 5:29). There is a strong Christian tradition of avoidance when behaviors become too self-indulgent and pull us away from a good relationship with God. That's why Smart Families is creating communities that draw some hard lines like delaying smartphones until at least high school and social media accounts until at least 16.

No parent wants their child to be uncontrollably addicted to a substance or device.

Addiction* is a vicious cycle to break, and online addictions are especially difficult given the easy access and the powerful manipulative tactics utilized by the attention economy. Adolescents are especially vulnerable because their prefrontal cortex, which is responsible for decision-making and self-regulation, is still maturing.



God designed us with a reward system that clings to life-sustaining activities like food, sex, and social connection. However, repetitive overstimulation can disrupt and disorder this system and lead to addiction. Without reflection or intervention, the addiction will pull you deeper into darkness and isolation from God and others. As addicts know, overcoming addiction is impossible without help. We need someone to save us.

CHRIST SETS THE CAPTIVES FREE

While we obviously want our children to avoid being enslaved by addiction, we know there is hope. “Miserable one that I am! Who will deliver me from this mortal body? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 7:24-25).

**Prioritize Family and Values.
Delay Social Media.**

**Delay the Smartphone.
No Phones Used in Schools.**



We have a savior! We have Jesus who comes to bring good news to the afflicted and to set the captives free (Isaiah 61)! God the Creator became human, and he fully understands our proclivity to temptation and how that can spiral into addiction.

Christ teaches us how to respond. We are to repent and accept His mercy and forgiveness. Christ came to rescue us and wants us to be free from addiction. His grace is sufficient (2 Corinthians 12:19) and it is through Him alone that we can be free.

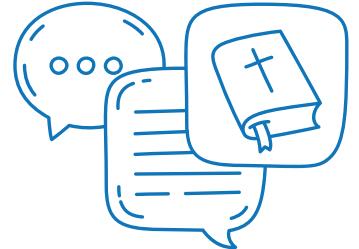


There are things more powerful than these addictions. By turning away from worldly pleasures and seeking God, we can experience true contentment and find salvation. As Catholics, we believe that God often uses the hollowness, disappointment, and shame associated with these earthly pleasures to lead us to His grace and ultimate salvation.

God has wonderful plans for our lives and He wants us to be set free from addiction. "For I know well the plans I have in mind for you, plans for your welfare and not for woe, so as to give you a future of hope." (Jeremiah 29:11). We must acknowledge our problem and turn to God for help, as simply "deleting the app" won't solve the issue. We cannot be set free from addiction if we first don't acknowledge that we have a problem and we cannot save ourselves. The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous emphasizes admitting the seriousness of the addiction and then turning to God to help heal and conquer it.

REFLECTION - WHERE IS MY FAMILY?

Screens and technology are engineered and utilize techniques to be deceptively addictive. How many times have we seen the family at a restaurant all looking at their phones? How many times have we been that family, even in our own home? How many times have we found ourselves losing track of time mindlessly scrolling? It's easy to get lost in screens and neglect our loved ones when they need us.



We need to reflect. Which online behaviors do you do in the dark or when alone? What shameful behaviors are weighing on you the most? How are your behaviors impacting your relationship with God, your prayer life, your family, and your vocation? What needs to change so you can avoid temptation? Christ came to bring us joy. We need to let Him in so we can live fully. "I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly." (John 10:10)

LET US PRAY

Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and **lead us not into temptation**, but deliver us from evil.

*We define addiction as frequent or repetitive compulsive behavior in response to an external stimulus.

Smart Families' mission is to empower families to build communities that engage with technology in a healthy, intentional way that is respectful of our innate human dignity.

To learn more, visit www.smart-families.org